

a fight—indeed, pugnaciously seeking out conflict—sacrificed professional prestige and put off academic work to combat communism. In the academic world, he was, he wrote to a friend, about as popular as a porcupine. “God knows I’d like to keep my mouth shut and pen quiet for a while, but unfortunately when I do nobody else does (with a few exceptions, of course). The result is that even when my colleagues agree with me, they don’t like me.”

Sidney Hook never stopped arguing. Devoted to discovering the truth and committed to democratic values, he may have done more than any other American intellectual to combat one of the great evils of the twentieth century. Our country and our culture are the better for his confrontations with communism.

### Notes

1. Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982), 210.
2. Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 5.
3. Judy Kutulas, *The Long War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 200.

## Organized Resistance to the Campus Revolution

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Violent revolutionary turmoil engulfed American institutions of higher education in the late 1960s and continued to do so well into the next decade. The beginning of these upheavals roughly coincided with Sidney Hook’s retirement as chairman of New York University’s philosophy department, and when Hook stepped down from that post he took up the intellectual struggle against the countercultural agitators. His pro bono activities of this period are not widely known, but the recently published *Letters of Sidney Hook* reveals that his resistance against domestic totalitarian impulses and aggressive new-left radicalism was as significant for the restoration of campus tranquility and for America’s educational and cultural future as was his earlier fight against external totalitarian enemies. During this later period of his life, I had the almost daily privilege of assisting him in these intra-academic endeavors.

I met Sidney Hook in 1968, a leap year that brought the usual campaign for U.S. presidency and a summer ripe with political rhetoric. One of the candidates was Senator Eugene McCarthy, a man of considerable integrity but ques-

tionable wisdom, particularly in matters of foreign affairs. The Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev was getting ready to quash Alexander Dubček's Prague Spring experiment. Subversive and expansionist communist activities were in full swing around the globe, and democracies faced constant pressure and threat from the capital of what Ronald Reagan later characterized as the "Evil Empire." Still the senator from Minnesota, a potential U.S. president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, seemed willing during the campaign to discount that menace and downplay the signs of danger. As someone who remembered Neville Chamberlain and other prewar naifs and who had lived through both Nazi and communist totalitarianism, I felt that something should be done to alert the American voter to the danger of McCarthy's appeasement.

At the time, a similar concern bothered Gerald Pinsky, an economist teaching at a unit of The City University of New York. Pinsky was worried about the intrusion of totalitarian activism into numerous areas of American intellectual, educational, and political life. He had organized the Coordinating Center for Democratic Opinion (CCDO) as a clearing house for information and a rallying point around which to establish an intellectual defense perimeter to counter the propaganda of the rising New Left. The militant counterculture, after disrupting the University of California at Berkeley, fanned out from one educational institution to the next, latching on to every real or imaginary campus grievance, fomenting sit-ins and other violent takeovers, and making instruction impossible. At Columbia, for instance, one of the leaders of the Students for Democratic Society was reported to have said: "As much as we would like to, we are not strong enough to destroy the United States. But we are strong enough to destroy Columbia."

Sidney Hook was already recognized as one of the foremost antitotalitarian fighters of the day, crisscrossing the country to encourage colleges not to yield to militant students' blackmail and telling his fellow educators that only courage tames fanatics. He was a kindred spirit and a natural ally. I knew him, at the time, only from a distance, having read many of his probing books and incisive essays.

At a May 1968 New York University dinner celebrating his sixty-fifth birthday and marking his impending retirement, Hook declared emphatically:

The first casualty of the strategy of the campus rebels is academic freedom. It is manifest in their bold and arrogant claim that the university drop its research in whatever fields these students deem unfit for academic inquiry and investigation. This note was already sounded in Berkeley. It is focal at Columbia. It is a shameless attempt to usurp powers of decision that the faculty alone should have. After all, it is preposterous for callow and immature adolescents who presumably have come to the university to get an education to set themselves up as authorities on what research by their teachers is educationally permissible.

Let us not delude ourselves. Even when these militant students fail to achieve their ultimate purpose, they succeed in demoralizing the university by deliber-

ately forcing a confrontation upon the academic community that it is not prepared to face and the costs of which it is fearful of accepting. In forcing the hand of the academic community to meet force with force, the citadel of reason becomes a battlefield. The students glory in it, but the faint of heart among their teachers turn on their own administrative leaders. These militants succeed in sowing distrust among students who do not see through their strategy. They also succeed in dividing the faculties.

What is of the first importance is to preserve...the absolute intellectual integrity of our classrooms and laboratories, of our teaching and research against any attempt to curb it. We must defend it not only against the traditional enemies, who still exist even when they are dormant, but also against those who think they have the infallible remedies for the world's complex problems, and that all they need is sincerity as patent of authority. Fanatics don't lack sincerity. It is their long suit. They drip with sincerity—and when they have power, with blood—other people's blood.

We need more, however, than a defensive strategy, safeguarding the intellectual integrity of our vocation against those who threaten it... We need—and I know this sounds paradoxical—to counterpose to the revolt of the emotionally committed the revolt of the rationally committed. I do not want to identify this with the revolt of the moderates. There are some things one should not be moderate about. In the long run the preservation of democracy depends upon a passion for freedom, for the logic and ethics of free discussion and inquiry, upon refusal to countenance the measures of violence that cut short the processes of intelligence upon which the possibility of shared values depends.

This was the constellation of mood, events, and people when, on the eve of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, Gerald Pinsky came up with the suggestion that an open letter to Senator McCarthy would be in order. He felt that it was appropriate to probe and, by inference, expose the dangerously naive foreign policy positions of the contender for Democratic candidacy. The final draft was in the form of questions to the senator, and Pinsky thought that if Sidney Hook would be willing to associate his wisdom and reputation to the project, one could assemble a credible group of cosigners.

Upon learning that I planned to visit a friend in northern Vermont, Pinsky asked me to make a side trip to Wardsborough where Sidney Hook was spending the summer in a tiny vacation home. As I finally turned onto his rustic road, I counted the houses on the left in order not to miss the Hook residence and soon was parked in front of a sizable lawn with a building in the back. To the right, the gentle downhill slope provided a splendid view of the lush green Vermont landscape. The bespectacled philosopher in improvised working clothes was mowing the lawn.

I was accosting a man whom I knew only from his writing with the direct purpose of enlisting him in what could be a costly political action. Sidney must have noticed my apprehension since he broke the ice with neutral questions. Soon we were discussing the Balkans, and I discovered to my surprise that this American professor of philosophy knew more about my native region and its

history than many of my former compatriots. The same happened when the conversation shifted to the interpretations of modern physics, which is one of the foci of my professional concern. It turned out that philosopher Hook had a more comprehensive and a deeper understanding of physical theories than did some of my professional colleagues. Many long summers of exchanges with his neighbor Ernest Nagel—an expert in the philosophy of science—must have contributed to his mastery of the subject. Be that as it may, Sidney Hook and I established within a few hours a rapport as close as if we had known one another for years. To his enemies, he was an implacable foe. But his energy and the seductive power of his reasoning drew people to him and must have been the reason why—without substantial material means, just by writing letters and statements, publishing a bulletin, licking stamps, and addressing audiences—he and some 3,000 of his friends and academic admirers were able in the late sixties and early seventies to contribute significantly to the restoration of campus tranquility following the turbulent years at the start of the American cultural revolution.

As the afternoon progressed, I must have made my points somewhat eloquently since Sidney accepted, with only minor modifications, the proposed CCDO draft of the open letter to Senator Eugene McCarthy. He suggested a dozen or so potential cosigners and permitted, without hesitation, the use of his name in approaching them. He only insisted that the letter-advertisement be published in the liberal-leaning Chicago *Sun-Times* rather than the Chicago *Tribune*. After all, this was a *Democratic* convention.

Once the proposed text acquired the Hookian trademark, it was not difficult to line up a team of respectable endorsers endowed with impeccable credentials. Money was also not a problem since during that era the cost of a full-page newspaper advertisement was still within the reach of bona fide, pro bono groups.

Gerald Pinsky and his small group of New York activists had considerable expectations for their intervention in the 1968 Democratic convention. The actual effect of our punditry, overshadowed as it was by the violent confrontations on Chicago's streets, may have been negligible. However, one consequence proved durable: Sidney Hook "hooked" me on activism for the rest of my academic life.

Campus events toward the end of 1968 precipitated the need for action. Reports of violent takeovers, sit-ins, and vandalism continued to mount in the aftermath of that year's election, and Sidney concluded that the time had arrived when one needed "to counterpose to the revolt of the emotionally committed the revolt of the rationally committed." He invited all his many friends in the academy to help him establish the University Centers for Rational Alternatives (UCRA). The letter of invitation went out in a couple of versions, cosigned by S.I. Hayakawa, Paul Kurtz, Oscar Handlin, Paul Seabury, and Jack Hirshleifer.

By the spring of 1969, UCRA had acquired a modest headquarters, and 175 U.S. institutions of higher learning were already charter sponsors. On 15 April 1969, in the first issue of UCRA's now bimonthly booklet, *Measure*, an editorial by Sidney Hook titled "The Illusion of Sanctuary" read in part:

Among the errors of thought and action which have aggravated the current crisis in American higher education is one that may be called "the illusion of sanctuary." It is shared not only by members of the faculties but by some administrators. On some campuses it has had fateful consequences. The illusion consists in mistaking the university's traditional ideal of providing a sanctuary for heretical thought and a haven for the intellectually persecuted as if it implied that the university were a refuge for the physically lawless. According to this transposition, the civil authority does not extend to university premises, the rule of law does not obtain on campuses, and the officers of the law, if they appear, necessarily arrive as invaders, enemies of free inquiry.

The first issue of *Measure* also told about the efforts of a small contingent of brave professors at the then-shut-down City College of New York who requested on behalf of their campus UCRA chapter that the national office conduct a mail ballot of all the CCNY faculty. UCRA polled the entire teaching staff and found that tenured faculty members favored reopening by a two-to-one margin (among the untenured, the vote was seven to six in favor). Armed with these data, two of the authors of the ballot went before the New York Board of Higher Education. As a result, not only did the board promptly reopen the campus, but also it took steps that led to the ultimate resignation of CCNY president Buell G. Gallagher.

Although the presence of UCRA and its chapters was encouraging to many a faculty member, some academics continued to play the appeasement game. To one of them, Professor Everet E. Hayes of the Economics and Political Science Department at MIT, historian and member of the UCRA board Oscar Handlin wrote a letter reprinted in the Number 6 issue of *Measure*:

Perhaps you have not yet had to enter a faculty meeting by passing through a crowd of students, some of whom carried axes. Perhaps you have not had to spend a night on guard in a great library to prevent an attack by students. I hope that these are experiences you are spared. But they are experiences through which I have passed and you will understand why I seem to be more conscious of the threat than you.

Bombings, arson, physical assaults and intimidation, the sacking of libraries and laboratories, and other academic horrors continued. Late summer of 1970 saw what might have been the nadir of campus turmoil when a truck loaded with explosives destroyed Sterling Hall at the University of Wisconsin, killing Robert Fassnacht, a thirty-three-year-old postdoctoral researcher and father of three children. Sidney Hook and other members of UCRA's board of direc-

tors raised the only faculty voice squarely condemning the act and appealing to educators nationwide to take the lead in transforming the climate that made it possible.

Sidney Hook drafted the condemnation and appeal himself. His statement came at a turning point that marked the end of the period of greatest violence. Campus terrorists seemed to lose momentum, and a calm of exhaustion descended on the nation's campuses. Hook's voice, as amplified by UCRA, had presented the loudest bid for reason. What was clear for Sidney and his associates was the enormous psychological damage suffered by U.S. institutions of higher learning. They recognized the need for patient protracted action to provide needed remedies.

True to his beliefs, for the next quarter century and up to his death, Sidney continued to write, testify, debate, and argue in defense of the causes of human decency, intellectual liberty, and educational integrity. For *Measure* alone, he composed more than sixty editorials, appeals, and full-length articles. His great disappointment came when George Shultz and other self-appointed social-engineers of the Nixon administration promulgated the President's Affirmative Action Order 11246. In his ground-breaking October 1971 *Measure* essay, "Discrimination, Color Blindness and the Quota System" (reproduced in full in the *New York Times*), Sidney decried the government's reliance on employment statistics to punish schools for discriminating.

[A] persuasive case can be made that those who have issued these guidelines and ultimata to universities, whether they are male or female, black or white, Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant are unqualified for the offices they hold and therefore unable properly to enforce the Presidential Executive Order. For they are guilty of fostering the very radicalism and discrimination the Executive Order was issued to correct and forestall.

Further to advance the "revolt of the rationally committed" at a time when everybody else was running for cover, UCRA sponsored four conferences between 1972 and 1976 at Rockefeller and George Washington universities. Only a call by Sidney Hook could have brought together such eminent assemblages of scholars, administrators, journalists, and government officials.

By the mid-seventies, campuses were finally back to some semblance of normalcy, and, while the war was not over, efforts to restore what had been lost reverted to traditional academic channels. Also, by the time the second politically correct phase of the American cultural revolution arrived, younger forces emerged to provide the required organizational framework. UCRA willingly passed the baton, and so it is that Sidney Hook's intellectual courage, so pivotal in the first phase of the revolution, continues as an abiding legacy in the National Association of Scholars.