

amount of emergency shelter space. He also recognizes the limitations of such stopgaps and worries that such measures might signal a return to the poorhouse of old. He recommends political efforts, principally litigation and activism by the homeless themselves, as ways of pressuring society to recognize housing, as opposed to mere shelter, as a basic human right.

In estimating the potential clout of the homeless Ropers waxes a bit romantic. Despite his invocation of Piven and Cloward's arguments on the disruptive capacity of the poor, the reader remains unconvinced as to the efficacy of such strategies. True, the politically active among the homeless do help keep the problem in the public eye, and they remind us that homeless people are citizens, not merely clients. Yet there is little to suggest that the homeless are likely candidates for political mobilization.

Most activity on behalf of the homeless in the immediate future is likely to be centered in the courts. It is there that most advances in housing rights have been made during the past decade. It would have been useful, however, if Ropers had turned his analytical skills to the long-run utility of litigation as a tool for social change. While groups such as the Coalition for the Homeless have proved invaluable in the short term, going to court as a way to make social policy has a number of drawbacks, not least the fact that litigation, unlike legislation, does not build political coalitions that can protect gains once they are won.

If we are to move beyond these "finger in the dike" strategies it is imperative that those of us on the left start to think about more long-term solutions. This requires seeing the homeless for who they are: a heterogeneous group that includes many very troubled people with a host of special needs. At the same time we must insist that the problems of the homeless are to a large degree problems of poverty. The current shameful situation cannot be addressed without coming to grips with the problems of the poor as a whole. □

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Todd Gitlin

MUDDLED THOUGHTS

DESTRUCTIVE GENERATION: SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE '60s, by Peter Collier and David Horowitz. New York: Summit Books. 352 pp. \$19.95.

The struggle which the Bolsheviks began more than half a century ago is still in its early stages—indeed, in a sense, is just beginning. . . . The dimension of the struggle, as Lenin and the Bolsheviks so clearly saw, is international: its road is the socialist revolution.

—David Horowitz, *Empire and Revolution*, 1969

Totalitarianism is the possession of reality by a political Idea—the Idea of the socialist kingdom of heaven on earth, the redemption of humanity by political force. . . . What motivates the Left is the Idea of the future in which everything is changed, everything *transcended*. . . . What motivates the Left is an Idea whose true consciousness is this: *Everything human is alien*.

—David Horowitz, "Letter to a Political Friend,"

in Collier and Horowitz,

Destructive Generation, 1989

The point is not that Horowitz thought badly twenty years ago. Nineteen hundred and sixty-nine was a bad year for political sense. I, for example, wrote a favorable review of *Empire and Revolution* in *Ramparts*, the New Left monthly of which Horowitz was an editor. Horowitz assigned me the book and published the review. But I won't blame him for my errors.

My point is rather that the same style of thought that drove the Horowitz book of 1969 drives the juicier, jazzier, nastier Collier-Horowitz book of 1989. The style is fanatical, apocalyptic, harsh, Manichaeian, frantic. There are enemies everywhere. "The socialist revolution" is on the march. The world divides niftily between the saved and the unsaved, the blind and the all-seeing. On one side, capitalism. On the other side, communism. Sign up. If you don't, you're fronting for the enemy.

There is no enraged like a revolutionary betrayed. And so the *bête noire* of the Collier and Horowitz of 1989 is the Horowitz of 1969—and of 1973–74, when Horowitz went to the aid of the party that the Idea had evidently chosen to carry out Its labors. This was the Black Panther party.

Here and there in their fragmented diatribe, Collier and Horowitz do succeed in evoking the frequently phantasmagorical political atmosphere of Berkeley, California. The country was tilted, and everything loose rolled to California—there was

sociological truth in the late sixties wisecrack. Berkeley featured a cut-loose recklessness whose political form on the white left was what later came to be known to its critics as Third Worldism—a fixation on revolutionary white hats placed on nonwhite heads. Victimhood was taken to confer the mantle of revolutionary leadership. The Panthers set themselves up to exploit this indiscriminate fancy—Panther co-founders Huey Newton and Bobby Seale raised the money to buy shotguns by selling copies of Mao's Little Red Book, which they hadn't yet read, on the Berkeley campus—and so did vicious imprisoned desperadoes the likes of George Jackson. But what put the Panthers on the national map was *Ramparts*, the San Francisco-based magazine that Collier worked for starting in 1967 and which Horowitz joined on returning to the United States in January 1968 after four years in England. It was *Ramparts* that promoted paroled rapist Eldridge Cleaver to the status of major writer and sage. The Panthers played white radicals like violins.

By 1973, Cleaver, having fled abroad to avoid criminal charges he later admitted were justified, was raving about Kim Il Sung. A number of Panthers were dead from a combination of their own provocations and police ambushes. Some white radicals in the Bay Area had belatedly disabused themselves of their guilty, gullible, fearful, and finally racist attachments to the Panthers. But not enough. Horowitz, overriding what he calls "surface betrayals of character that provided warnings to others but were dismissed by me as the legacies of an oppression that radical politics would overcome," concluded that the Panthers had gone straight and decided to help them. He convinced a bookkeeper to go to work for them. In 1974, she found out they were cooking their books, and they murdered her.

Collier and Horowitz are right about this much: There is, *among other tendencies* on the left, a need not to know—a refusal to recognize that people declared to be agents of history by some Leninist version of the Marxist metaphysic commit crimes. The crimes have been bloody and frequent enough to require that the metaphysic be given the most withering scrutiny. We have heard enough of the familiar structure of alibi: As some wag once put it about the Stalinist gulag, "It didn't happen, it was necessary, and they're not doing it anymore." There are always people to whom these facts are news, and so careful documentation and analysis are always welcome. Had Collier and Horowitz chosen to give us more in that vein, they would have given us something of great value.

Instead, they start with three chilling cautionary tales and then start ranting. One is the horrifying

story of Fay Stender, a white radical lawyer who was shot in 1979 and left paralyzed by a black ex-prisoner who accused her of having "betrayed" George Jackson, whom she had defended. (This is news that even as late as 1981, when the authors first published the Fay Stender story, many in the Bay Area left didn't want to hear.) There follows the go-for-broke sexual nihilism and political insanity of the Weathermen, founded in 1969. There is also the tale of an apolitical black criminal Vietnam vet. If the point is that there is evil in the world, and that some of it is lodged in a black criminal subculture, fine.

But notice: this version of "the sixties" begins circa late 1967 and—like the worst of the late sixties' iconography—walks only on the wild side. In 338 pages, I count a grand total of five (to be generous) that touch on the events of the years between November 1963, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and November 1967, when Huey Newton killed an Oakland policeman. The escalation of a horrendous war, the assassination of Malcolm X, the liberal betrayal and the deepening liberal-radical divide, the growing estrangement of millions of American youth who lacked any tutelage in "the radical Idea"—these things rate barely a mention. No, "the sixties" really begin for Collier and Horowitz *when things get exciting*, when "the radical Idea" sashays into town and buckles on its guns.

Now in principle it is possible to argue that late events condemn early ideas. It is even easier to argue that early events or bad ideas create conditions for later events or worse ideas. Such arguments rage about Lenin and Stalin, for example, and legitimately so. But these arguments cannot be presupposed; they have to be *made*. To comprehend how a potential becomes actual, you have to look at history as it is lived, on the ground—have to turn it over, weigh factors, look at not only ideas but social situations and the whole cultural gestalt of a time. That is not what Collier and Horowitz do. Instead, they grab the reader by the lapels and start yelling.

Their cartoon view of "the sixties" comes in part (but only in part) from their lofty vantage point. In the view from Collier and Horowitz, the New Left consisted of Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, Bob Scheer, Noam Chomsky (at his worst), Tom Hayden (at his worst), this reviewer, the Weathermen, Ron Dellums, and a few other names—well, that *is* what the world looked like from the *Ramparts* office, headquarters of radical chic. The civil rights movement barely existed, and no one on the left gets credit for it. (The Martin Luther King whom Collier and Horowitz trot out to discredit black radicals is a

stick figure—not the King who denounced the Vietnam war and American materialism.) The women's movement is invisible. There was no mass youth upheaval—just “the radical Idea” and its larkly high jinks. No one might rationally have concluded that the Saigon government the U.S. installed was a fraud. No one could rationally have concluded that there was no political aim that could justify mass slaughter in Vietnam. Collier writes about his post-Mississippi conversion to antiwar work: “Like others, I passed through the early stages of the foreign policy debate painlessly: It was necessary to support the NLF [Vietnamese National Liberation Front] and work against the U.S.” For many others, including this reviewer, the passage through foreign policy positions was not painless, and it didn't settle with quite so much sang froid on the NLF.

“We didn't check facts very energetically,” Collier writes of his days at *Ramparts*, “and paranoia and ideology always overcame professional skepticism.” When they step away from the Stender and Weatherman stories, professional skepticism is still not doing well under the weight of the *idée fixe*. As they fling accusations around, factual botches abound (for some, see Paul Berman's review in the *New Republic* [April 24], his subsequent exchange with Collier and Horowitz [June 26], Hendrik Hertzberg's review in *Washington Monthly* [May] and his letter in the *New Republic* [July 10]). But you can't make a counterrevolution without breaking eggs, right? The Revolution is Dead, Long Live the Revolution—still absolute, still simple-minded, still global. Parachute tours of the Third World are still available for drop-in (counter)revolutionaries, this time in Nicaragua. Careers are still available in instant expertise. The world is still a faceoff between America and communism, only this time the jerseys have been switched. In this phantasmagorical light, potholes in the Berkeley streets and some other dubious policies are the result of the city government's knack for establishing sister-city arrangements in the Third World. (Let's see, then: How shall we account for potholes in New York? Ed Koch's counterrevolutionary tourism in Nicaragua?) There is no fiscal crisis, no race tension, no bureaucratic blindness.

There is just original sin: insufficient love of America, which seems to mean the American executive branch, especially its most brutal wing. Naiveté, stupidity, ignorance, cowardice, bad ideas, malice, and communism are the same. There is no tragedy, only barbarism, Fifth Columns, left-wing McCarthyism. Ideas they detest are really disease: “In the inchoate attack against authority, we had weakened our culture's immune system, making it

vulnerable to opportunistic diseases. The origins of metaphorical epidemics of crime and drugs could be traced to the Sixties, as could literal ones such as AIDS.” People caught “moral scurvy.” Christopher Hitchens is guilty of “moral epilepsy.” “The war lowered our resistance to the intellectual toxins in the air.” Their motto might as well be: *Everything hideous comes from aliens*.

The American situation today deserves the overworked word “crisis.” Poverty and wealth grow, race festers, cities rot. In racial, abortion, and other decisions, the Supreme Court turns the screw toward cultural civil war. Never mind that the cold war is clearly superannuated, both political parties refuse to whisper the secret aloud. America since the sixties is a disappointment, to put it mildly. Some of what is wrong arguably has roots in the sixties. So this is a particularly opportune, indeed necessary time to think carefully about what the sixties and the left were good and bad for. Instead, bellowing as if they were the only veterans of the sixties to wrestle with the meaning of the revolutionary idea or socialism or the United States, Collier and Horowitz give second thoughts a bad name. □

Gerda Lerner

Women's History

A HISTORY OF THEIR OWN: WOMEN IN EUROPE FROM PREHISTORY TO THE PRESENT, by Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, vol. I and vol. II. Vol. I, 591 pp., vol. II, 572 pp. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

The authors of these important and informative volumes, Bonnie S. Anderson, a historian at Brooklyn College, and Judith P. Zinsser, a member of the humanities department of the United Nations International School, came to their task because of the disparity between their traditional training in European history, which omitted the history and activities of women, and their own growing knowledge of women's history. They decided to synthesize recent scholarship in women's history in order “to counter the subtly denigrating myth that women either ‘have no history’ or have achieved little worthy of inclusion in the historical record. . . .”

They have succeeded admirably. Their book is interesting and well-based in representative scholarship in European women's history. It is an excellent introduction to the subject of European women's