

Vietnam has been a recrudescence of isolationism and America First-ism among the American people. They have reverted to the belief of the '20s and '30s that the security, but especially the prosperity of America can best be assured by non-intervention in the conflicts of other nations. There is no doubt that the American people feel a profound sympathy for the Israeli people. Indeed, since 1947, this has been translated into some 30 billion dollars of economic and military aid. Also there is no doubt that so long as Israel continues to survive, aid in substantial amounts will continue. But the sympathy that prompts it will not, as matters stand, be translated into military intervention, even to save Israel. Golda Meir remembers what a younger generation of Israelis do not remember, that the even greater sympathy Americans felt for the French and the British in 1940-41 did not incline them to join the terrible battle against Hitler. France fell, England was falling and still Americans did not intervene. It took Pearl Harbor to translate sympathy into military action.

Golda Meir does not blink the realities of US-Israel relations. In the days of the Yom Kippur war, when US diplomatic pressure forced Israel to accept cease fire terms hurtful to its best interests, she told her cabinet, "There is only one country to which we can turn, and sometimes we have to give in to it—even when we know we shouldn't. But it is the only real friend we have, and a very powerful one. We don't have to say yes to everything, but let's call things by their proper name. There is nothing to be ashamed of when a small country like Israel has to give in sometimes to the United States. And when we do say yes, let's for God's sake, not pretend that it is otherwise and that black is white."

Golda Meir knows that Israel's hope of survival depends both on continued—and massive—economic and defense aid and diplomatic support from the United States, and on the courage and political unity of the Israeli people. Neither the one nor the other alone will suffice to keep Israel free in the decade ahead.

And she has no illusions about ultimate Arab intentions. "I have never doubted for an instant that the true aim of the Arab states has been, and still is,

the total destruction of the State of Israel."

In passing, one of Meir's dearest illusions—certainly *the* dearest—was shattered during the Yom Kippur war. This was the illusion that the Socialist countries of the West would rally to the support of Israel in its great hour of danger. "For my own good," she told Socialist Willy Brandt, "I need to know what possible meaning socialism can have when not a single Socialist country in all of Europe was prepared to come to the aid of the only democracy in the Middle East." She discovered the answer at a meeting of the Socialist International in London: Arab oil is thicker than Jewish blood, even in the Socialist democracies. Socialism had been her secular religion. One can only guess how cruelly hurt she must have been by the wholesale betrayal of her fellow Socialists.

I cannot forbear mentioning that she felt there was one leader of the West who did not betray her—or Israel: Richard Nixon. Recounting the appeals she made to Washington in the early days of the Yom Kippur war, she wrote, "President Nixon had promised to help us, and I knew from my past experience he would not let us down. Let me . . . repeat something that I have said often before (usually to the extreme annoyance of many of my American friends). However history judges Richard Nixon . . . it must also be put on the record forever that he did not break a single one of the promises he made to us."

It will take enormous wisdom on the part of Israeli leaders to "sweat out" the dangerous decade ahead. The Founding Fathers, who brought Israel into existence, Chaim Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, Eshkol, have all passed on. Golda Meir, the "Founding Mother," is the last living link with the giants who made the dream of Zion come true. She is the living symbol of Jewish courage. What a pity that she is no longer in a position of leadership. Who better could "illuminate" the gloom that seems to have descended on the Israeli spirit.

I hope the length of this letter has persuaded you that my failure to write the review was not because of lack of interest in the subject, but because I did not think I could do justice to it.

Sincerely, Clare Boothe Luce

Mrs. Luce is a playwright who has served as a member of Congress and as US ambassador to Italy.

Alger Hiss: The True Story By John Chabot Smith (Holt, Rinehart and Winston; \$15)

The deception begins with the title. Nowhere in this book, once you get past the cover and the title pages, does John Chabot Smith have the gall to say that the theory he concocts to support his belief that Alger Hiss was wrongly convicted of perjury by a federal court jury in New York on January 21, 1950, is "the true story." Instead he writes (pages 405-406) that "the whole truth . . . may never be known in all its details" and that he here undertakes "to put together an explanation that is more likely to be true than the guesses made by either Murphy (the prosecutor) or Cross (the chief defense attorney at Hiss' second trial)." The most that Smith says for his theory is that "it is the only explanation that fits all the undisputed facts." He concludes his feeble justification with one of many jabs at Whittaker Chambers, the sometime Communist spy who had accused Hiss of being a Communist, too, and of supplying Chambers with secret documents and other information while Hiss was a rising official in the State Department in the late 1930s. Smith says that his "explanation" is "consistent with most of Chambers' testimony, though not all. Nothing could be consistent with all of Chambers' testimony, because he contradicted himself so much."

Smith, then, is honest. The book is not: the full, deceptive title recurs at the top of every even-numbered page. It thus sustains the central thrust of the account, which is that Whittaker Chambers was a lying psychopath who was moved by hatred and a dreadful need to fulfill his "fantasies" to frame and destroy Alger Hiss. A major fault of the book arises from a major difficulty that the author evidently had throughout the writing of it. Too many awkward facts must be accommodated to make any theoretical solution wholly convincing. Chambers unquestionably lied, often and in many different circumstances—under oath to the House Committee on Un-American Activities and to a grand jury, and, after he broke with the Communist party and with the Soviet intelligence service, to his employers at Time Inc. But, as I shall try to show on the basis of an acquaintance and a relationship with Whittaker Chambers that Smith never had,

Chambers was not the chronic and compulsive liar that he is assumed in this book to have been.

"Fantasies" Chambers may have had. Smith toys again and again with the notion, still popular among the cult of Hiss defenders, that Chambers' entire story of secret spying for the Soviet Union and of friendship with Hiss was a product of fantasy. "The undisputed facts" deny Smith and other apologists for Alger Hiss that comforting way out. It is beyond dispute that Whittaker Chambers was a Communist, that he was a Soviet spy, and that he knew Alger Hiss during the period when he said he did and Hiss first said he didn't.

The same facts, along with Smith's manifestly genuine conviction that Alger Hiss was and is a wronged innocent, drive Smith to several preposterous suppositions. One of them—simplified here—is that Chambers during a visit to or stay in one of the Hiss homes in Washington saw Priscilla Hiss' old Woodstock typewriter and bought one like it from a second-hand dealer who did business with *The New Masses* when Chambers was one of its Communist writers and editors. The theory continues that Chambers with this typewriter—not the Hiss

Woodstock exhibited at the second trial—copied the State Department documents that he accused Alger and perhaps Priscilla Hiss of copying for him. Out with this theory went the allegation, long propounded by Hiss and still fondly recited by Smith, that somebody had a copy of the Hiss Woodstock manufactured and thus enabled Chambers to commit "forgery by typewriter." The reader is left rather confused as to which typewriter defense Smith prefers. Smith, indeed, is so determined to prove Hiss innocent and Whittaker Chambers guilty of perjury that he finds it impossible to abandon altogether any of the many theories, including other explanations of the damning Woodstock, that have been invoked since 1949 to acquit Hiss and condemn Chambers. Allen Weinstein's conclusion in this journal's February 14 issue and in the April 1 *New York Review of Books* that documents obtained by him from the FBI and from Hiss' files prove that Hiss is and has been the principal liar seems convincing to me. This I have believed since Chambers publicly accused Hiss in 1948. Why I have believed and still believe that Chambers in his final story told the truth is set forth in the remainder of this account.

When Chambers came to work for *Time* as a book reviewer in April 1939, I was a *Time* writer specializing in labor affairs. Many of my friends in New York were Communists or, like me, sympathizers with what I understood to be the Communist approach to many though not all world and domestic issues. I was occasionally asked to join the Communist party and probably would have done so if I had not been a habitual non-joiner. Some of these friends had asked me about Chambers and what he was doing on *Time*. They were merely inquisitive, not hostile, so far as I could tell. I gathered from their inquiries that Chambers, then unknown to me, knew a lot of people I did or was known to them. Why, I didn't know.

I am reasonably sure that Chambers' conclusion and certainty that I was a secret Communist originated at the moment, which must have been soon after he joined *Time*, when he appeared at the door of my cubbyhole and introduced himself. I recall him at the moment as a pallid, plump and dumpy man who seemed to be apologizing with his timid smile for intruding upon me. It happened that I'd been invited to a cocktail party for the producers and cast of *The Cradle Will Rock*, a musical darling of the Left. I asked Chambers if

he'd like to accompany me. The effect upon him was unforgettable. He stiffened. The little blood below the skin of his pale face drained away. He truly "went white." Without a word he whirled and ran from my office. When I asked others about this behavior, I first heard that Chambers was an ex-Communist who had recently left the party, feared for his life, carried a gun (probably untrue) and seldom spent more than one night in the same hotel when he was in New York (his family was secluded for safety on a small Maryland farm). It all sounded weird to me, but Chambers' manner as just described made it believable.

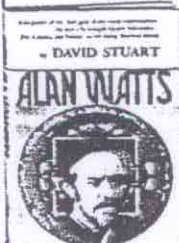
Some years later, when I was the foreign editor of *Time*, another episode made it believable that he'd been more deeply involved in Soviet-Communist activity than any of us then knew. He came to my office with a carbon copy of a story about wartime Russia. It included a few lines describing a feature of Odessa. He said flatly that the description was incorrect; the street or section or building or whatever the lines described looked so-and-so. I said, "Oh, you've been there?" Again he went rigid and unusually pale, stammered that he'd never been to Russia, and ran from my office. After Chambers disclosed that he'd been a working Soviet spy, another ex-Communist told me that Whit had been secretly to Russia at least once. It was never established that he had.

Chambers testified during the preliminaries to the Hiss case and during the two Hiss trials that he'd told Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle in 1939 about his secret spy role and given Berle a list of his confederates, Hiss among them. Berle told me in 1961, when he was again an Assistant Secretary of State in the Kennedy administration, that Chambers had also given him a list of *Time* Inc. employees whom he knew or believed to be Communists. My recollection is that Berle said I was on that list, but I could be wrong about his telling me this. I could have assumed that I was on the Berle list because I knew that Chambers had been certain, and had told my employers, that I was a secret Communist.

Now we come to the point of all this and its bearing upon my analysis of Whittaker Chambers and his credibility. Chambers went wrong and was unbelievable when he deduced this or that from what he knew. He was seldom wrong and always believable, in my observation of him, when he spoke of what he'd done and knew others to have done. Thus it would have been in

Alan Watts

David Stuart



The story of the chief guru of the recent counterculture, the man who brought Eastern phi-

losophy—Zen, Vedanta, and Taoism—to the young American masses. Advocated free love, free wine, free spirit and NOW—which he called Zen Buddhism. "... a fast-moving, peppery, very readable story of a hero of counterculture; the author obviously enjoyed writing the book."—*Publisher's Weekly*. 250 pages. \$8.95.

CHILTON BOOK COMPANY
Radnor, Pa. 19089

character for him to be wrong if he deduced from what he'd heard or observed of Hiss' behavior that Hiss was a Communist. When he said that he and Hiss had met at such and such times in such and such places for this or that purpose, he was believable. Eight of 12 jurors believed him at Hiss' first trial. Twelve of 12 believed him at the second trial. John Chabot Smith reported both trials for the *New York Herald Tribune* and in his stories made it obvious that he believed Hiss and disbelieved Chambers. I was among the *Herald Tribune* readers who, as Smith acknowledges in his book, "said my reporting was pro-Hiss." I was convinced then and am convinced now that Smith simply did not comprehend Whittaker Chambers and didn't know how to distinguish his truth from his lies—or, more accurately and charitably, his misjudgments.

I had an unusual education in the perception of Whittaker Chambers. By his lights, Chambers had every reason not only to suppose but to affirm as fact, to employers and officials who could have ruined me, that I was a secret Communist. When I established beyond doubt in the mid-1940s that he was saying as much to my editors, I sent word to him that I'd beat his goddam face to a pulp if I heard of his saying it again. So far as I know, he didn't say it again. But he continued to act upon the belief.

And why not? For instance, I twice persuaded the company to increase its payments to the Federated Press, a mailed news service that was dominated by Communists and was always on the verge of bankruptcy. One of its Communist editors was a friend of mine. I didn't care about the Communist presence. My sole interest was that it was the only service that digested news and opinion in the country's labor union press. To me as *Time's* labor writer, it was an invaluable and unique service. To Chambers, my use of and favors to the service were proof positive that I had to be a Communist. He persuaded the managing editor to cancel the Federated Press contract and transfer me to other duty—writing pre-war defense establishment news! During one of the Hiss trials, I forget which one, Chambers cited as evidence of Communist influence on *Time* the fact that I had edited and published a favorable story about Hiss in his role as secretary general of the founding United Nations conference in San Francisco in 1945. Chambers didn't know that Henry Luce, who attended the conference, was

impressed by Hiss and ordered me to have the story written and printed. Luce was furious with me when I killed the first story submitted to me because it was poorly done and severely cut a second version that he had approved.

In the course of changes that I won't bore the reader with, Chambers succeeded me as foreign editor of *Time* in the summer of 1944, outraged most of the magazine's foreign correspondents with his butchering of dispatches that he thought to be pro-Communist, and relinquished the foreign editorship to me when he fell ill. I took the job back only when I got Luce's promise, relayed to me through managing editor T.S. Matthews, that Chambers would never again replace me in any job and that he never again would be put in a position to misuse and distort the reports of *Time's* foreign correspondents. In late 1945, I was offered and welcomed an assignment to head Time Inc.'s London bureau, serving all Luce magazines. Soon after I accepted, Matthews told me that Chambers had recovered from what all of us had assumed to be a permanently disabling illness and that he was again to replace me as foreign editor. I reminded Matthews of the promise that I had from Luce through him and insisted that it be honored. Matthews begged me to skip it and spare him the task of telling Luce that Chambers, who then was still a favorite of his, could not have back a job that he desperately wanted. Matthews pleaded that the promise would not have been made if he and Luce had not thought at the time that Chambers would never again be able to swing a full-time job. I said that I could not prevent the appointment of anyone to any job in Time Inc. but that I would refuse the London assignment if Chambers were brought back to foreign news. Max Ways, the writer whom I had recommended for the job, refused to join me in the battle and I felt very much alone. Matthews finally went to Luce and Luce honored his promise. Robert T. Elson wrote in his company history of Time Inc. that Chambers, bitterly disappointed, first disbelieved and then accepted the official story that the decision was "dictated by management's concern for his health." In a letter conveying the foregoing and other details of a very complex affair, I wrote Elson that "I came to realize long ago that all concerned, except me, expunged the facts from their memories, and, I assume, their memos." They evidently did; Elson omits the story.

Toward the end of Chambers' employment at *Time*, when the disclosure that he had been much more than a simple Communist and had actually been a Soviet spy proved too much for Luce, Whit and I enjoyed a brief season of friendliness. His famous and prescient "Ghosts on the Roof," a fictional account that rightly interpreted the Yalta conference as a triumph for Stalin, came up during one of our conversations. Chambers had assumed that I had inspired and mobilized what he would call in *Witness* "the general malevolence" aroused by the piece among many on the staff. I told him that I had sent my carbon to Matthews with a note to the effect that it was a brilliant piece and should be run as written. Matthews had never told him that. So Whit believed until near the end that I was as dedicated to his professional ruin as he was to mine during most of our association.

John Osborne

Theories of
American Literature
Vol. I, The Native Muse;
Vol. II, A Storied Land
Ed. by Richard Ruland

(Dutton; paper, \$6.95)

How the life of this new country might best be rendered in words is a question that has been argued since the early days of the Plymouth Colony. Governor William Bradford thought that the task required "a plain style, with singular regard to the simple truth in all things." John Cotton of the Bay Colony agreed with him, in his preface to the Bay Song Book, but a few years later Michael Wigglesworth wrote in praise of eloquence, by the power of which, he said, "ould truth receivs a new habit." Debate on this and related topics continued through colonial times and was intensified during the early 19th century. Would or should America have a literature of its own, distinct from English literature? Would the distinction be in style or spirit or subject matter? How did our authors compare