

to U.S. interests, and, like his superiors, he completely underestimated the determination of Mao Tse-tung and his followers to pursue the revolution with or without Soviet support and regardless of U.S. support for Chiang Kai-shek.

As the importance of U.S. policy revealed itself, conspiratorial delusions began to permeate the attitudes of Hurley, Wedemeyer (Stilwell's replacement), and those seeking an excuse for Chiang's failure. "Wedemeyer like Hurley, believed that China's problems were caused largely by the meddling of diplomatic officials of dubious intelligence and loyalty." Lacking any sense of the underlying social and political catastrophe for which Chiang had no answer, Americans, including such organs as the *New York Times*, could not understand the reasons for America's failures. Fortunately, circumstances limited the Truman administration's ability to perpetuate the gamble on Chiang. It was gradually realized that Chiang's regime could not be saved from its self-destructive tendencies. But the disappointment of those who had staked their reputations on Chiang's victory gave birth to one of the great witch-hunts of American history.

Contrary to Richard Hofstadter, the paranoid style is not exclusively Ameri-

can. The Germans had their stab-in-the-back legend, and French politics has been perennially poisoned by the rancor of movements and groups that have lost. But the fact that others have succumbed to the same evil in no way mitigates the bitterness with which the fall of Chiang's regime burdened U.S. political life and diplomacy for the next thirty years. Schaller concludes that the "arrogance and self-deceit of this American vision" of Asian nationalism as a housebroken version of American democracy that somehow ought to serve American interests originated in policies adopted to create a Chinese barrier to Japanese imperialism and was later carried over into a policy designed to stop communism. In neither case were we successful, because we did not appreciate the depth of the exploitation, starvation, and despair that marked the life of the Chinese. In China we were fortunate to have escaped a much deeper military involvement. But, as Schaller notes, Vietnam became the macabre fulfillment of Joseph Stilwell's cherished reform strategy. "There the Johnson administration did all that was humanly possible to create a viable government that would form the basis of a bona fide nationalist regime and in the end it all went the same way as China for almost the same variety of reasons." 

in Despair." From the outset, then, the central themes are clear: spy vs. spy conspiracy and resigned despair in the face of seemingly invincible totalitarian power.

These two dark, ominous themes pervade the entire book even to the point of being reflected in Colebrook's lush portraits of cities in the United States, Europe, and Mexico. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, she notes that the city is "under a heavy fog of pollution, creating a gloom more oppressive than any created by nature." New York reminds her of the "polluted, choking, tired, overworked, industrialized West." In London she finds the "shabby" buildings unfortunately "stained by the droppings of pigeons." Greenwich Village in Manhattan exudes "a pervasive feeling of the disintegrations which have taken place in the 1960's." And even beautiful, civilized Paris is overwhelmed with a "pall of fumes, dust, chemicals."

Just as Colebrook seems to have missed the nicer aspects of Western urban life, she also overlooks many—if not most—of the momentous political trends and events of the decade. Her journal entries for the politically volatile and remarkable year 1968 do not contain a single entry or comment about Senator Eugene McCarthy's campaign for president; there is scarcely a word about President Lyndon Johnson; and George Wallace, Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, and Hubert Humphrey pass by unnoticed as if they were inconsequential figures, mere "walk-ons" on the political stage. If Colebrook had written a literary journal or travelogue, her omissions would be excusable, even expected. But her book purports to be a serious and thoughtful political record of the 1960's. With such astonishing omissions, one immediately doubts Colebrook's credibility as a political observer.

How did Colebrook, who lived in the United States for most of the decade, manage to gloss over important political events that, in large measure, reshaped America's democratic polity? She missed them—or purposely ignored them—because of her intense preoccupation with the internecine conflicts and absurd rhetoric of sectarian Trotskyists, Stalinists, self-styled Maoists, and exotic Black Panthers.

This is not to say that a narrow, specialized study of the violent, self-destructive, and antidemocratic ele-

Innocents of the West by Joan Colebrook

(Basic Books; 454 pp.; \$15.00)

Michael Kerper

In *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton warned the British public against the solicitude of "the candid friend," the type of person always on hand with supposedly honest insights, courageous social criticism, and frank, commonsensical analyses of the times. "What is bad in the candid friend," Chesterton noted, "is that he is not candid. He is keeping something back—his own gloomy pleasure in saying unpleasant things."

Joan Colebrook, an Australian novelist with a delicate and highly personable writing style, hopes to be a "candid friend" to the United States, indeed to Western civilization. But as she reports

on her "travels through the Sixties," her "gloomy pleasure" in describing what she sees as the gradual crumbling of the West overpowers and distorts her perspective. As a result, *Innocents of the West* becomes a mass of highly dubious political conclusions spiced with sometimes bizarre innuendo.

Hints about Colebrook's basic approach and temperament appear in the first pages of the book. The epigram comes from William Stevenson's introduction to his spy book, *A Man Called Intrepid*, and in the foreword she confesses that her journal "owes its existence to the reading of *Diary of a Man*

ments of the "Left" would not produce many useful insights about the 1960's. It most certainly would. Indeed, a number of fine studies and essays already exist, the best of them written by people on the democratic Left like Steven Kelman (whose *Push Comes to Shove* was a minor classic in its day), Irving Howe, Sidney Hook, Daniel Bell, and a handful of other socialist intellectuals. Colebrook's approach, by contrast, lacks discrimination, delicacy, and most of all historical and social perspective. She is far too eager to score polemical points at the expense of sensible, balanced analysis. In fact, she seems to have all the answers before anyone starts asking questions.

While Colebrook's oversimplified account of the "Left" grates on the sensibilities of anyone sincerely interested in understanding the politics and cultural trends of the 1960's, her fascination—or obsession—with conspiracy theories is even more annoying. She starts by declaring that "a conspiracy from the Left" might reasonably explain the murder of President Kennedy. Among other things, she notes that Lee Harvey Oswald listened to Radio Havana, subscribed to the *Militant* (a Trotskyist weekly), and read publications of the Communist Party, USA. "Unfortunately," she commented, "the Warren Commission did not completely fulfill its task in that it did not assess what effect such reading and listening—actually the only method of absorbing political knowledge open to this 'difficult' yet naive 'loner'—had upon Oswald's mind." Later she noted the increasing "likelihood that Oswald was groomed and sent by the KGB for his task." Like those who theorize that the CIA assassinated Kennedy, Colebrook claims more expertise than the experts.

From the Kennedy assassination, she proceeds to suggest that Martin Luther King, Jr.—she snidely refers to him as "supposedly the High Priest of non-violence"—and Robert F. Kennedy were both victims of foreign-instigated, left-wing plots. Of course she never once mentions King or Kennedy as important political influences in the 1960's. They are interesting to her only as victims of conspiracies.

Colebrook also raises doubts about the civil rights movement and, curiously enough, the Roman Catholic Church. In her view many civil rights leaders—she avoids distinguishing Black Pan-

thers and urban rioters from King and other nonviolent figures—were sometimes unwitting cooperators in following the game plan prepared in Moscow. As for the Catholics, she sees a vague, shadowy linkage between increased electoral support for the Italian Communists and "the liberalization of religious doctrine under Pope John XXIII." On still another page she complains that reforms within Catholicism are "being used—along with Pope John's belief in 'melting the Russian ice'—to push Finlandization of the churches of the West."

In a peculiar way Colebrook's approach to politics contains nihilistic as well as romantic elements. Her emphasis on conspiracy and the purposeful but hidden manipulation of public opinion and culture by foreign powers tends to debase political life by transforming it into a cynical contest between warring cliques of spies and dupes. According to such a view, ordinary people, mass political parties, and even national leaders have little or no real control over their collective destinies; in a sense they are mere pawns, "innocents" at the hands of the true influentials. Under such conditions politics is essentially a question of sheer power or, more correctly, superior cleverness. Politics thus becomes nihilistic.

Colebrook's accidental nihilism is somewhat obscured and tempered by a strong and unmistakable strain of romanticism. From her standpoint the world is manifestly divided into forces of light and darkness. As in many other romantic tales the heroes, in this case the Western nations, are hopelessly outnumbered, afflicted by internal dissension, weakened by traitors, and apt to take the genteel high road when a good kick in the enemy's groin is called for. Some romances, of course, end happily. But the best ones, the most moving ones, end tragically. Colebrook understands this point well, and therefore paints an incredibly bleak picture of things to come.

Just as Colebrook may possibly have experienced a "gloomy pleasure" in writing this book, some people with disturbing memories of the 1960's will almost surely experience that same "gloomy pleasure" as they see many of their attitudes, suspicions, and prejudices confirmed by Colebrook. After all, this is a book written for the convinced. But for those who want

dispassionately to probe the political meaning, consequences, and lasting influences of the decade, *Innocents of the West* should be read with Chesterton's valuable admonition in mind. 

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Briefly Noted

Judaism and the American Idea

by Milton R. Konvitz

(Cornell University Press; xxxi + 201 pp.; \$9.95)

Constitutional democracy, with its major premise that people in society have inalienable rights that it is the duty of the law to protect, is usually associated with the theories of John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Hobbes, and others. Milton R. Konvitz's *Judaism and the American Idea* examines the meaning of a democracy in a different context. Konvitz believes that American democratic theory springs from Old Testament injunctions that stressed a love of law and justice and the acquisi-

tion of material comforts. This link between contemporary American political values and their ancient Hebrew counterparts he calls the American-Hebraic idea. In this slim volume the author, professor emeritus at Cornell University and an authority on constitutional law, demonstrates this concept as it is manifested in the ideals of human dignity, the rule of law, the democratic ideal, the rights of conscience, and the pursuit of happiness.

"On the whole," says Konvitz in his introduction, "I believe that Americans remain Hebraic-Biblical in their spiritual culture, and heirs of Greece and Rome, of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment. We continue to seek ways and means to fulfill the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness....The underlying principles on which our institutions of government were founded remain largely unchanged...." Konvitz begins with the idea of men as divinely created beings who are invested from birth with certain inalienable rights and freedoms. After allegiance to God as supreme lawmaker, the Israelites owed allegiance to their own laws which insured the preservation of freedom. In classical Judaism the "bonds of humanity" come ahead of the covenant between God and Israel. This Hebraic vision of universal human rights is, according to Konvitz, reflected in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Similarly, Konvitz sees the refusal by Hebrew midwives to obey the Pharaoh and kill all male infants born to Hebrew women as the forerunner of modern nonviolent civil disobedience. Konvitz contends that American Jews have made a unique contribution to the character and well-being of American democracy. They have brought "to a single focus the philosophy of cultural pluralism, the ideals of the Hebrew prophets, the promises of the Declaration of Independence, and the philosophy of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution." American heirs of the Hebraic tradition—Gentile and Jew alike—are called to revere their written laws, for they portend the ideals of equality and happiness for all.

The major problem with the book is in this focus upon the ideal. Konvitz is concerned "not with being but with ideals and values." The result is sweeping generalizations about the American character and a stunning optimism

about American democracy. There is no room here for the embittered, the disillusioned, the marginal, or the wicked. One has no right to expect a practical book of solutions for every social ill, but Konvitz operates on so abstract a level that the ideals he champions seem impossibly far removed from the America of past and present experience.

—Amy Bernstein

Urban Masses and Moral Order in America 1820-1920

by Paul Boyer

(Harvard University Press; 387 pp.; \$18.50)

An engaging study of the transformation of American thinking about the city over the course of a century. In the early nineteenth century the city was seen as a morally disordered and dangerous mess badly in need of straightening out by various reformers, usually religiously motivated. Beginning with the 1920's, says Boyer, at least the intellectuals began to see the city, not as a distortion of society, but as its happiest expression. Disorder and variety were celebrated while the reforming efforts, aimed at imposing conformity, were feared as the portents of totalitarianism. Or, as Boyer puts it, cultural attitudes changed from "getting right with God" to "getting right with *Gesellschaft*."

Peace in Search of Makers

ed. by Jane Rockman

(Riverside Church; 158 pp.; \$5.95 [paper])

An unabashedly partisan collection of papers delivered at a December, 1978, conference on disarmament at Riverside Church. The equation of a particular analysis with the will of God may be disconcerting to some readers. William Sloane Coffin addresses that problem in the introduction: "Some of what you are about to read is pretty strong....If you disagree with the positions in this book, do not let it bother you. It is like going to church when you are a nonbeliever—you just take what you can....Commit as much of yourself to as much of God as you can." Needless to say, the conference was not distracted by the consideration of alternative analyses; one does not give equal time to the Devil.

The Ageless Chinese: A History

by Dun J. Li

(Scribners; 629 pp.; \$17.50)

The third edition of a standard text covering four thousand years of Chinese history. It is readable and generally considered very reliable, although the treatment of contemporary China only hints at the "China shocks" of the last year and a half. More particularly, Li still subscribes to the agricultural success myth: that, despite the horrendous cost, the Communists have at least solved the problem of hunger in China. That myth has now been thoroughly exposed by Miriam and Ivan London—and others, including officials in Peking—and, being a reasonable man, Professor Li will no doubt take that exposure into account in his fourth edition.

The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics

by Hedley Bull

(Columbia University Press; 335 pp.; \$20.00)

The author teaches at National University, Canberra, and here offers a spirited defense of the sovereign state as the foundation of international order. More precisely, Bull judges there is no believable alternative to the "states system" on the horizon and that, therefore, we had best tend to mending that system rather than joining in the unproductive lament over its supposedly inevitable decline.

Negotiating Security: An Arms Control Reader

ed. by William H. Kincade and Jeffrey D. Porro

(Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; xi + 321 pp.; \$11.00)

Numerous brief articles from *Arms Control Today*, the newsletter of the Arms Control Association, of which Mr. Kincade is executive director. Many of the contributors are prominent in the debate over SALT II, and the introduction is by Senator Frank Church. Here is most of the ammunition needed to enter the current battle on the pro-SALT side.