

## *The Other McCarthy*

**McCarthy**, by Roy Cohn, *New York: The New American Library, 1968. 279 pp. \$5.95.*

IN THE TITLE the author should have indicated that the subject of this memoir is not the poetic pacifist from Minnesota, but the man from Wisconsin who became the center of one of the stormiest controversies in American political history. From 1950 until his death in 1957, virtually the whole nation was divided into McCarthyites and anti-McCarthyites—there were scarcely any neutrals. To his enemies, and these included most of the liberal politicians and journalists, Joseph McCarthy was a sinister demagogue who made a career of destroying the reputations of innocent persons; to

his admirers, and they were multitudinous, he was a brave and loyal American who brought slander and villification on his own head by attempting to expose Communist infiltrations into the government of the United States.

Curiously enough, in the eleven years since McCarthy's death, little has been written to show McCarthy as he really was. It is perhaps fitting that Roy Cohn should be first to break the ice. For eighteen months as counsel to the Senate Committee on Government Operations, he shared with its chairman both the spotlight and the abuse. Even those whose memory of "the McCarthy era" and its *dramatis personae* remains strong and vivid will find Roy Cohn's book informative and even fascinating. It is not, however, a comprehensive history of the era. A much better title for it might have been "Cohn and McCarthy;" for as the author admits, it is "part autobiography, part analysis and part confession." Thus he sets out to confess not only the errors of Senator McCarthy, but also his own errors—though some may think he has chosen the wrong ones. In so doing he contrives to represent himself as an authentic whiz-kid and his chief as an amiable bumbler. As Mr. Cohn seems to realize, he has failed to erase his public image of "a cocky young bastard" of twenty-seven, and it is too late to do anything about it now. As for McCarthy, time and history will remove him from the cloud of prejudice in which his memory is now enshrouded and will judge whether the importance of his revelations and prophecies does not outweigh his mistakes.

Meanwhile, Cohn has set aright a number of misconceptions which have badly needed correction; for instance, the much-repeated charge that Senator McCarthy's "methods" had the effect of smirching the innocent. Actually, McCarthy followed the established Congressional rules for investigating committees. These permit a suspected or unwilling witness to be accompanied by a lawyer of his own choosing. Cohn points out the many advantages en-

joyed by a Congressional committee witness that are not allowed to defendants at a grand jury session or in a court trial. For one very important thing, such a witness is allowed to ask the advice of counsel before answering questions put by the interrogators, and this applies in both closed and open hearings. Cohn, however, does not mention the circumstances attending McCarthy's early allegations concerning suspected Communists or other security risks—eighty-one cases in all—in the United States Department of State. McCarthy had refused to identify these persons publicly until the evidence had been heard *in camera*. That was to give any who might be innocent a chance to clear themselves without obloquy. It was the late Senator Millard Tydings, then chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee, who broke the Congressional rule for preliminary executive hearings and forced McCarthy to give the names in public.

Still, the kernel of the nut so far as the Liberal Establishment was concerned was not McCarthy's methods but the scope of his investigations. The Eisenhower Administration, however reluctantly and unhappily, was prepared to go along with his exposure of Communists in the Army's secret radar laboratory at Fort Monmouth. (Such was the Senator's popularity at the time that it was politically hazardous to challenge him.) But the drill of inquiry bored a bit too deep and touched a live nerve when McCarthy issued subpoenas to the members of the Army's Loyalty and Security Screening Board to find out how Communists and security risks had got through the net—especially when the board was in possession of the F.B.I. reports. Twice, Cohn tells us, the Administration sought to persuade McCarthy to recall those subpoenas; when he refused, the fat was in the fire. Certain key advisers to the White House met in secret to determine how McCarthy's embarrassing investigations could be stopped once and for all. The result was the tragi-farcical Army-McCarthy hearings, and it did the trick. McCar-

thy held no further hearings of importance during the remaining months of his chairmanship. In the elections of 1954 the Democrats regained the majority.

Cohn sheds a bit of light on the so-called "book burning" episode which aroused McCarthy's adversaries to such a high pitch of fury. As so often happens, the uproar obscured the facts. Cohn tells us that in the libraries set up by the United States Government in European cities as part of its information program, "we discovered that more than thirty thousand works by Communists, [Communist] sympathizers and unwilling promoters of the Communist cause were on the shelves." To support this allegation he gives several excerpts from such books. One example from *World Monopoly and Peace* by James Stuart Allen will suffice for flavor.

The Soviet Union plays a role of clearing the path, of facilitating world progress, of proving by its own example the superiority of the socialist system.

Cohn also tells us something of his early career. At the age of twenty-one, he became a prosecutor for the United States Department of Justice and played an important part in several Communist cases, including those of the eleven tried before Judge Mendoza, of Sobell and Greenglass, and of the government economist William Walter Remington. Rather an infant prodigy, one might say!

Reviewed by ELIZABETH CHURCHILL BROWN