

cash, a proceeding of which some approved, some disapproved....Muggeridge has some claim to be the first writer of his sort to disturb this Left Wing complacency in a lively manner.³

But the essence of Muggeridge remains, as far as I can see, yet undiscovered. Who is he really? His writings have depth of personality, but no writer can get completely out of his skin and see himself as others see him. This is especially true in Muggeridge's case, for he confesses to an exorbitant egotism. The biographer's task is made more difficult exactly because Muggeridge converted to orthodox Christianity. It is inescapable that in the modern world a Christian personality will appear superficial and somehow fraudulent. This is what T.S. Eliot no doubt meant when he said there could be no Pascal in the twentieth century. But, one way or another, the difficult job needs to be done, especially, in the present case, because Muggeridge is the most interesting recent example we have of a Christian in concord or discord—with the world.

Reviewed by KENNETH ZARETZKE

¹*Part of My Life* (London, 1977), p. 273. ²*Debts of Honour* (London, 1980), p. 124. ³*Faces in My Time* (New York, 1980), p. 84.

The Investigatory Net

Naming Names, by Victor Navasky, *New York: Viking Press, 1980. xvi + 482 pp. \$15.95.*

NATION EDITOR Victor Navasky's prolix account of the torments, real and imaginary, which the House Committee on Un-American Activities inflicted on defiant Hollywood witnesses about a quarter of a century ago is a book that I found hard to put down for fear that I would not pick it up again.

Mr. Navasky's book is the misbegotten result of mating history with sermonizing. As in the medieval miracle plays, Good wrestles with Evil. The incarnation of Evil is not the Soviet Union with its death camps, its pyramids of skulls, its global crusade to stifle human freedom. Nor is it the American agents of this monstrous machine. The evil ones, in Navasky's distorted vision, are the internal security agencies which investigated communist infiltration of the motion picture industry and those witnesses who testified truthfully concerning the matter.

Should Americans have cooperated with the House Committee? The law seems clear enough. Although the Constitution is silent on the matter, English Common Law gave Parliament wide powers of inquiry; the Supreme Court has held that a Congressional investigation should be presumed to be legitimate; nor is there doubt that Congress can compel testimony.

The Hollywood investigations occurred shortly after the transition from war alliance with Russia to the cold war and the Korean conflict. At the time, the American motion picture industry was the most powerful unofficial agency of indirect propaganda and indoctrination in the world. Communists and fellow travellers were entrenched in strategic positions throughout the film industry, mainly as writers and actors. They did what they could to use motion pictures as class-war and pro-Soviet weapons. They worked to prevent anti-Communists from getting jobs in Hollywood and, where they could, destroyed their positions.

Ten hard-core Hollywood Communists defied the Committee, dishonorably wrapping themselves in the First Amendment and posing as Jeffersonian democrats. The First Amendment prevents Congress from passing laws abridging freedom of speech. It guarantees the right to speak, but not the right to be heard. It does not compel the motion picture industry to employ people it believes disloyal to their country. Nor does it give the latter *carte blanche* to defy the Congress of the United States. Hence, the ten defiant ones went to prison.

Budd Schulberg, one of the most talented of screen writers, was in the Party briefly in the 1930's, left it, testified, and named names. Years after attending a conference of Soviet writers in the U.S.S.R., Schulberg observed:

Later on, it struck me that every single one of the [Russian] speakers—every single one—went to their death or disappeared. And these people—Lillian [Hellman], Dalton [Trumbo], and Ring [Lardner]—bullshit about freedom. These are Nazis posing as libertarians. If the [John Howard] Lawsons and Hellmans ever got into power, I think no one would have any freedom....

I think it would be very hard to get Lillian to criticize the death of a Soviet writer. They could be stretched on the rack at Lubianka Prison and Lillian would go back on the ferry to Martha's Vineyard....

Ninety percent didn't give names [before the House Committee] because they were under Communist Party discipline....It's easy to say that the Communist Party discipline was weak—but it was a splinter in the heart of the United States....

Without being paranoid, once I realized that all the writers I knew in the USSR were dead (or nonpersons) I felt that if the [V.J.] Jeromes were in power here, I'd be in the same kind of salt mine. So I didn't feel ashamed [in front of the Committee]. I felt sad. It's always sad to talk about something that disappoints....

There was a real cancer in the industry. Hollywood was loath to purge its ranks of subversives without the tremendous public-opinion pressure that the House Committee public hearings generated. Those who testified truthfully about their Communist past and named others were given House Committee endorsement and were again employable. Those who refused to testify fully were blacklisted. The theory behind this procedure was the generally accepted one that an offender can expiate his of-

fense by confession and remorse. It was, perhaps, about as civilized a way of eradicating a social evil as could have been devised though the Committee, I believe, should have concentrated on Communists with influence in the industry and on the Stalinist cadres, leaving the little off-and-on fellow travellers alone. An alternative would have been to fire the accused on the basis of the complete FBI files of Communist Party membership in Hollywood obtained from undercover informants. But this would have denied the accused the right to rebut the charges.

Naming Names deals at great length with the hyper-emotional reactions of left-wing directors, writers, and actors caught in the investigatory net. It regurgitates their longwinded self-justifications or else their hysterical and masochistic self-denunciations. Navasky taped the afterthoughts of the survivors of the House Committee probes, recording their incredibly prolix and, at times, maudlin, incoherent or scatological expressions of remorse or self-pity. Navasky himself characterizes some of these effusions as "petty, glib, talmudic, vitriolic."

Retrospectively, most of these witnesses, including many of the cooperative ones, vented their fury not on the Communist apparatus but on the House Committee. They give further evidence of the alienation of the Hollywood-TV elite from American society and traditional American values. Ben Stein points out in his brilliant 1979 book, *The View from Sunset Boulevard*, that the writer-director lords of the media perceive themselves as underdogs and outsiders, hate the rich, fear the military, see small-town middle America as a festering mass of corruption, but find kind hearts and noble souls in the slums. They fear an imaginary resurrection of Nazis, but are blind to the clear and present danger of Soviet-orchestrated terrorism.

The men and women whom Navasky interviewed thirty years later had little remorse about having served Stalin's engine of genocide. They seemed, for the most part, ideologically frozen in the

popular front mythology of the 1930's. They emerge as people with pathetically weak ego structures. Ambitious, greedy, mendacious, sometimes treacherous and hysterical, they were almost always insecure. When they lost their pocket commissars, psychoanalysts filled the vacuum as surrogate authority figures. Today, according to articles in *TV Guide*, cocaine has become the ego prop and the dope peddler is a rising figure in the power structure of this deformed micro-society.

Under Navasky's editorship, the *Nation* has presented unsound arguments and false testimony to show that convicted Soviet spy Alger Hiss was in reality the innocent victim of a frame-up. Thus, it is not strange that Navasky, like Hellman and Caute, makes little distinction between innocent and guilty witnesses. To him all informers are evil.

As Navasky observes, most of the Hollywood witnesses were Jews. Most failed to perceive the similarity between Nazi and Soviet genocide. Most of the 20 million or so human beings sent to their deaths by the Stalin dictatorship were non-Jews. Did they suffer less than Hitler's victims? Were they not equally innocent?

"Norman Thomas, who should have known better, talked of red fascism," Navasky observes mournfully. Ever the didact, he tells us that Thomas overlooked "the profound difference between Marxists, who identified with the weak and spoke the language of social justice, and fascists, who identified with an élite and spoke the language of racism and violence."

Men of good will (myself, I believe, among them) were drawn into the Communist labyrinth. But advancement within that order, as in the Nazi and other totalitarian systems, was a process of incremental moral perversion in which humanitarianism was alchemized in reverse into total obedience to a genocidal

power. Anybody who looks with a candid eye at current Soviet military-police state conduct will need little persuasion that Navasky's distinction is either cynical deception of others or naive self-delusion.

Navasky argues that the witnesses should have defied the Committee, taken the First Amendment, and closed ranks to quash the investigation. He seeks to justify this with an emotional attack on informers. He quotes Christian anathemas against Judas Iscariot. But Judas betrayed his countryman and his faith. An American witness who named former Communist associates at a time when international Communism was killing 50,000 Americans in Korea, was informing not on his compatriots but on his country's enemies.

Navasky quotes with gusto a silly judgment by E.M. Forster: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." The morality of testifying against friends or former friends is a matter of weighing conflicting values. What sort of friendship is involved? What sort of betrayal of country? In Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia children were praised for eavesdropping on their parents and thus sometimes sending them to their deaths. Civilized people would go to prison rather than act in this fashion. But if a man discovers that a friend adheres to an enemy power and gives that power aid and comfort, the situation is different.

Naming Names reinforces the Soviet disinformation line that Communists are not conspirators committed to betrayal of their country. In his small way, Navasky is one of those "terrible oversimplifiers," who, according to Jacob Burckhardt, cause so much moral havoc and so many pernicious ideologies in the modern world. It is a pity that a good mind and a fluent pen should be chained to an evil cause.

Reviewed by NATHANIEL WEYL