

ists, far from glorifying the self, chronicle its disintegration. He jokingly displays a self-deprecating pseudo-awareness of his own condition, while finding it increasingly difficult to make any lasting commitment or to mourn his personal losses. He finds that old age and death are becoming an obsession, and, most basically, he finds that he wishes to be vastly admired, not for his accomplishments, but simply for himself, uncritically and without reservation.

A large share of the horror Lasch depicts he blames on the self-deception practiced by many in positions of cultural power. The author, an historian, holds such intellectuals responsible for trivializing the past, rendering it banal or camp, and eviscerating protest by transforming cultural criticism into something chic and escapist: "strategies of narcissistic survival present themselves as emancipation from the repressive conditions of the past." Genuine soul-searching notwithstanding, Lasch is skeptical of middle-aged hippies dropping out from Exxon, "getting in touch with their feelings," and taking up weaving. It is the superficial and temporary nature of these "conversions" that Lasch finds narcissistic. In the world of letters, he notes, authors are relying on "anti-confession," pretending to work courageously through their memories but, in reality, merely titillating the reader with tidbits from the lives of celebrities. The interior world is thereby rendered slightly droll. Less obviously, contemporary novelists on the apparent verge of an insight "often draw back into self-parody, seeking to disarm criticism by anticipating it. They try to charm the reader instead of claiming significance for their narrative."

Lasch's book is arresting and provocative, synthesizing the work of such men as Otto Kernberg, Heinz Kohut, Jan Huizinga, Joseph Heller, Donald Barthelme, and others from an extremely wide range of American culture. Despite the obvious utility of Narcissus as the book's controlling symbol, however, there is a real lack of unity and direction. Many of the chapters are too obviously recycled magazine articles, forced to confront Procrustes before they meet Narcissus.

This impression is strengthened by the absence of a clear rationale for those subjects discussed at length vs. those

"In the seventies, it appears that the prostitute, not the salesman, best exemplifies the qualities indispensable to success in American society. She too sells herself for a living, but her seductiveness hardly signifies a wish to be well liked. She craves admiration but scorns those who provide it and thus derives little gratification from her social successes....She remains a loner, dependent on others only as a hawk depends on chickens. She exploits the ethic of pleasure that has replaced the ethic of achievement, but her career more than any other reminds us that contemporary hedonism, of which she is the supreme symbol, originates not in the pursuit of pleasure but in a war of all against all, in which even the most intimate encounters become a form of mutual exploitation."

—The Culture of Narcissism

lightly touched upon. An obvious gap in Lasch's discussion, for example, is any meaningful treatment of American religion. He notes that "the ideology of personal growth, superficially optimistic, radiates a profound despair and resignation," and he calls it "the faith of those without faith." One senses that he might have worthwhile things to say about the effects of "the therapeutic mentality" on religion, but they are left unsaid. Many readers, perhaps most, will find themselves agreeing with Lasch's jeremiad, but he is disappointing in his hints of solutions to the vast array of societal problems. The book is weighted by the accumulation of detail, and occasionally seems lost in the miasma it describes. Lasch begins by noting that Americans are preoccupied with the "sense of an ending" in society, adding to the irony that his book ends quite abruptly, even arbitrarily.

"In a dying culture," Lasch writes, "narcissism appears to embody...the highest attainment of spiritual enlightenment. The custodians of culture hope, at bottom, merely to survive its collapse. The will to build a better society, however, survives, along with traditions of localism, self-help, and community action that only need the vision of a new society, a decent society, to give them new vigor." Coming after the devastating account of America's narcissism, this hint of an almost mystical light of truth residing in the common man and woman seems to lack conviction. Yet moral conviction, Lasch says, is the one quality most needed in today's society. The reader must wonder, therefore, whether Lasch's book suggests an enabling vision or simply another set of self-perpetuating qualities that the new narcissist must add to his already extensive list. 

The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945

by *Michael Schaller*

(Columbia University Press; xiii + 364 pp.; \$14.95)

David McLellan

We have had many books on America's wartime relations with China, but none as readable, revealing, and free of tendentious argument as this one. Schaller has made magnificent use of his archival research to rest his narrative as much as

possible upon the actual words and recommendations of the actors themselves. And what a cast of characters comes tumbling forth! The follies, deceptions, and chicaneries of Chinese and American officials are recorded in their own

words, words that Schaller has woven into an absorbing narrative analysis of the colossal failure of Americans either to understand the Chinese or to understand the dynamics of Asian nationalism. While we might question Schaller's tendency to take the Chinese Communists' wartime avowals of pro-Americanism at face value, they clearly were more seriously intended than was appreciated at the time. Schaller does not make heroes out of Stilwell and the foreign service officers whose careers and lives were later blasted, but it is evident that they were far better informed and far more realistic about China than the emissaries sent out by Roosevelt and Truman to mediate the incipient civil war, and far more honest than the pro-Chiang clique in Washington.

The basic flaw in American policy was the gap between Roosevelt's aspiration to see China a united and effective ally in the war against Japan (and later against Soviet encroachments) and the incapacities of Chiang's regime. Roosevelt hoped to reform Chiang's government along liberal American lines, and few American officials understood that Chiang, albeit a nationalist, was totally incapable of transcending the rapacious and outmoded social system with which he had come to terms in 1926. Schaller observes: "More than any other factor, the social crisis of the masses determined China's political evolution and its eventual relation with the United States. Yet almost all contemporary observers ignored this point." Without land reform and attention to the needs of the peasants, Chiang was doomed. Unable to tap the power of the masses, Chiang's regime rested on the deadwood of the past; his personal power was so much at the mercy of the landlords, the moneylending classes, and the warlords that he could not risk making the reforms indispensable to the survival of his rule.

Given the strategic situation of 1942 and 1943, Washington's support of Chiang is understandable, but when the point was reached at which it was pure folly to continue that support, then the judgments made must be questioned. But by 1944 and 1945 there were Americans, notably Ambassador Hurley and General Wedemeyer, for whom Chiang's salvation had become a personal crusade. While American planners hoped to use Chinese manpower as a vast force against Japan, the National-

ist regime intended to use the American alliance to accumulate reserves of money, weapons, and influence to support its palsied existence and to defeat the Communists. Only monumental arrogance can explain the presumption with which Chiang and the Soongs, abetted by their American friends, expected the U.S. to dole out billions for which no accounting was to be asked. Chiang's war effort consisted largely of reinforcing his personal power at the expense of the Communists, relying on his conviction that no matter what happened Washington would have no choice but to bail him out. This attitude was almost totally ignored by relevant American decisionmakers, and thus the myth of Chiang and the KMT as the only authentic expression of Chinese nationalism was perpetuated. The Communist alternative was not only ignored, but its pro-American potential was dismissed out of hand.

Chiang, Soong, and Joe Alsop, promised that airpower alone could defeat the Japanese and that therefore there was no need to place Chinese forces under Stilwell's command. Stilwell, whose own view was fatally flawed by the belief that if only he could get rid of Chiang all would be well, was later undercut by Hurley, who in turn was being undercut by the foreign service officers who correctly thought that his understanding of the situation was preposterous. Yet another bureaucracy, Naval Group China, tried to exert the Navy's influence and ended up by bolstering the most reactionary and anti-Communist faction within China—Chiang's secret police under Ti Lai. While the other American officials tried to avert the Chinese civil war by moderating the ineradicable conflict, Naval Group China (under Admiral Milton Miles, who was infatuated by Ti Lai's fanatic anticommunism) worked to sab-

"More than any other factor, the social crisis of the masses determined China's political evolution and its eventual relation with the United States. Yet almost all contemporary observers ignored this point."

—The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945

Schaller notes that even Stilwell shared the liberal assumption that there was no alternative to the American model for bringing about reform. If only a democratic and reformist alternative to Chiang could be found, Stilwell believed, America's aspirations for China would be achieved. Only the foreign service officers were daring enough to suggest that the alternative to Chiang might be the Communists, and that Washington should cultivate them, since they were not all that tied to Moscow. Schaller suggests that a more pragmatic approach might have reduced our overblown expectations and produced a more detached attitude toward Chiang instead of putting him in a position to dictate to America the terms for his support.

Another result of the gap between Roosevelt's aspirations and Chinese realities was the personal and bureaucratic bitterness that further poisoned the atmosphere during the postmortems on who lost China. Stilwell found himself opposed by Chennault who, backed by

otage U.S. contacts with Yen-an and served as a training and supply unit for Chiang's secret police and goon squads. By playing off one American against another, Chiang gradually succeeded in having only officials acceptable to him assigned to China.

Patrick Hurley, whom Roosevelt appointed as special emissary, brought a special brand of ignorance and naiveté to the scene. He carried over into China his bizarre obsession with French and British imperialism that had earlier afflicted his role in the Near East. The threat of European imperialism to democracy and "free enterprise" was, in Hurley's view, as great as the threat of Stalinism. His understanding of China was even more confused than that of Roosevelt, Hopkins, Truman, and other American officials who believed that civil war could be averted and the Chinese Communists stymied if Stalin could be induced to recognize Chiang and limit his support of the Maoists. Like most Americans, Hurley's idea of a nationalist was an Asian who deferred

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*