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Edward Dmytryk. *Odd Man Out: A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten.* Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996. viii + 210 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8093-1999-2; $22.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8093-1998-5.

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A Double Outsider

As readers of this journal know, the Hollywood Ten were the directors, screenwriters, and producers sent to prison for refusing to answer questions about their political associations before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947. Their refusal to testify was based upon the Constitution's First Amendment that guarantees freedom of speech and association. They could have invoked the Fifth Amendment's protection against self-incrimination, but this they would not do, on the very good grounds that they had done nothing wrong in the first place. The courts did not accept their free speech and association defense which thereby upheld their contempt of Congress citations and sending them to prison. The Ten were not alone in suffering the consequences of the police state tactics now known as McCarthyism; thousands of others in Hollywood, in the schools and universities, in the government, and in the labor movement, were relentlessly smeared, fired, and blacklisted; some were deported, jailed, or forced to seek asylum abroad; and two–Julius and Ethel Rosenberg–were executed for spying. While the causes of McCarthyism are sharply debated, one consequence is clear: the Left in the United States was dealt a blow from which it has yet to recover.

McCarthyism could never have succeeded without the active collaboration of the liberals and former radicals who testified against their friends and comrades–those who, in Victor Navasky's telling phrase, "named names." In this regard, Edward Dmytryk is unique among the period's players. The director of such outstanding films as Crossfire (one of Hollywood's first films to deal effectively with anti-Semitism), The Caine Mutiny, and *A Walk on the Wild Side*, Dmytryk was both one of the Hollywood Ten and an informer. In fact, he was the only one of the Ten to recant and then testify as a friendly witness before HUAC. In this memoir, he offers an account of his life and times. Although Dmytryk claims that he feels no guilt over his testimony, he still appears to find it necessary to explain it, in great detail, and with every possible justification. What is more, this is his second memoir, and he covered some of the same ground in the first one (*It's a Hell of a Life But Not a Bad Living*).

There are many interesting stories and anecdotes in this well-written (but not so well-edited) book, from his encounters with the right-wingers John Wayne, Ward Bond, and Adolph Menjou, to his forays in England work when he was blacklisted, to his character sketches of communist stalwarts such as John Howard Lawson, Alvah Bessie, and Albert Maltz, to, of course, his work as a director. And while he obviously loathes and pities the Communists, he condemns the Right as well and HUAC in particular. However, the underlying theme of the book is Dmytryk's attempt to cast himself as a double outsider, a man who hated both the yoke of communism and the incipient fascism of McCarthyism. In other words, he characterizes himself as the "odd man out." And given this self-portrayal, it is incumbent upon any reviewer to evaluate his arguments.

In *Naming Names*, Navasky suggests four defenses which informers have used to justify their actions: "I didn't hurt anybody;" "They deserved what they got;" "I wasn't responsible for my actions;" and "I was acting in obedience to a higher authority." Mr. Dmytryk uses the first, second, and fourth of these. Unfortunately, none of them stands up very well to close scrutiny. He says that he only named persons who had already been named. This is not true; he named at least three persons publicly for the first time and one person for the first time ever (Navasky 283). His vivid condemnations of his former comrades and his assertion that the communists were absolutely cynical in their defense of free speech strongly implies that they got what they deserved. On more than one occasion he blames them more for his plight than those who instituted the purges and the blacklists. Yet what exactly had they done? Yes, some had been dogmatic and authoritarian. Yes, some had been blind to

Stalinism. But they had committed no crimes. Dmytryk condemns the brutal treatment by the Communist Party of writer and communist, Albert Maltz, but Maltz, himself, accepted the Party's criticism of his essay on literary freedom. What is more, can it possibly be said that the moguls of Hollywood for whom Dmytryk worked and for whom–I am sure–made many artistic compromises, were any less authoritarian or any less blind to a hundred and one atrocities, from the slaughter of Native Americans to the deaths of millions of slaves? I found especially disconcerting Dmytryk's efforts to distance himself from Maltz, a person who was his close friend, prison mate, and best man. He even has the gall to say that the bitterness, anger, and hate which people like Maltz held toward those who informed is a sign of "inner rot."

Finally, Dmytryk argues that the evils of communism were so great that they aloe warranted his HUAC testimony. What makes this argument so weak is a simple question: was it necessary to name names before the HUAC and the FBI and thereby aid and abet those bent on destroying our Constitution (and, inadvertently, ruining the lives of thousands of decent people) in order to condemn Stalinist communism? How is it that some managed to be neither Stalinists nor informers and, at the same time, maintain their commitment to the ideals which had motivated most people to join the party in the first place? Why not take the stances of Carey McWilliams, I.F. Stone, Thomas Emerson, and Y.I. Harburg? Dmytryk does not seem to grasp that, when you get down into the mud with scum like anti-Semitic Congressman John Rankin or attorney Roy Cohn, you get pretty dirty. They and their brethren championed the very values which Dmytryk claims to despise. What is worse, they had the power to begin to impose their values on all of us. Dmytryk and the rest of the informers only helped them along.

Despite my antipathy toward Dmytryk, I recommend his book. The more perspectives we have on this historical period the better. I also welcome correspondence from those who have a different take on this book.

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