

*Ayn Rand and Song of Russia: Communism and Anti-Communism in 1940s Hollywood.* By Robert Mayhew.  
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ON OCTOBER 20, 1947, the novelist Ayn Rand testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) about communist influence in a Hollywood film, *Song of Russia* (MGM, 1944). For a number of reasons, that event, insignificant in itself, is a fitting subject for a book.

Rand was one of the twentieth century's most powerful creative writers and remains a major influence on libertarian thought. Disagreeing with some of the positions taken by other libertarians, she eventually refused to call herself one, preferring the title "individualist" or "radical for capitalism" or "Objectivist" (after the name of her self-created philosophy, Objectivism). These matters need not detain us here. She was a libertarian, an advocate of minimal government and the capitalist economic system.

As a persistent critic of government encroachment in the private sphere, Rand might have been expected not to cooperate with congressional investigations of other people's ideological tendencies. The fact that she did cooperate indicates the strength of her opposition to communist ideas in any form. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, she had emigrated to America to escape the Bolsheviks' grand social experiment, and she maintained a well-justified fear of their designs, recognizing in communism a peculiarly dangerous form of the "humanitarian" hypocrisy that leads to tyranny. She believed that attempts to arouse sympathy for the communist cause should be opposed in every way consistent with individual rights.

Certainly she did not advocate putting communists in jail for their beliefs. She did think that the people who operated movie studios should refuse to hire communists for jobs in which they would infect public opinion. That would be a simple act of self-protection on the part of the capitalists whom Stalin's sympathizers aimed to destroy. It would also be a defense of freedom.

So Rand's testimony had a plausible motive. It also had a plausible target—a film that, as Robert Mayhew shows, was unmistakably communist propaganda. What makes her testimony worth arguing about, at the length of a book, is the currently fashionable

view of such incidents, which is that any testimony against communism that could possibly cost anybody a job is a morally contemptible “witch-hunt.”

Many of the people who have popularized this view have been sincere civil libertarians. Others have been just the opposite—communists and fellow travelers. When, at the age of 17, I first encountered a book about the Committee on Un-American Activities, I was very much impressed by its attack on the committee and all its works, not realizing that it was published by a communist front group. Its false report of Rand’s testimony gave me a very unfavorable opinion of her. During the four decades since then, popular opinions about anticommunist activity, circa 1950, have become indistinguishable from the opinions suggested by that book.

Mayhew does a great deal to correct the historical record. His detailed account of the making of *Song of Russia*—one of the most detailed accounts available for any Hollywood movie not considered a classic—shows how easy it was for people to use the capitalist film industry to compliment Stalinism in ways that would make a greeting-card poet blush.

*Song of Russia* is a story about an American symphony conductor, John Meredith (Robert Taylor), who visits Russia to perform a series of concerts. So cultured are the masses under socialism that he is greeted with the kind of enthusiasm one associates with the second coming of Christ. Everyone is ecstatically happy; everyone is excruciatingly nice; everyone is exuberantly anxious for closer relations with this distinguished representative of the American people. Especially anxious is a pretty young comrade from a collective farm, who also happens to be a brilliant pianist. Undeterred by any of the obstacles to travel that exist in totalitarian states—pesky things like the absence of money and the necessity of internal passports and leave permits, designed to keep the natives from getting anywhere close to a foreigner, or even an airport—the pianist, Nadya Stepanova (Susan Peters), hurries right over to Moscow, where she has no trouble striking up a friendship with the handsome Mr. Meredith.

John and Nadya spend their time doing what everyone else in Russia seems to be doing: dining in fabulous restaurants, dancing in beautiful night clubs, appreciating the marvels of Stalin’s building program. Soon John follows Nadya to her collective farm, where he witnesses the natives hoeing fields in the morning and performing Tchaikovsky at night, and assuming, every one of them, the kind of attitude toward Life and Art and the New Socialist Reality that alumni of Notre Dame assume toward a winning season for the Irish. Pausing briefly from the consumption of elaborate meals and the

rapt contemplation of grain bins and farm machinery, our friends call in the local priest and unite themselves in holy matrimony. There is no reference to the recent starvation of a large percentage of Soviet citizens, the current imprisonment of another large percentage, or the perpetual impoverishment of almost everyone else. There is no allusion to the Bolsheviks' savage persecution of Christianity. Our heroine never says anything remotely like, "Please John, get me out of this repulsive place."

All would be well, in fact perfect, if it were not for Hitler, who takes this happy occasion to invade the Soviet Union. Curiously, the film never mentions that John decided to take his tour of Russia at a time when the Workers' Paradise was Hitler's ally, or, indeed, that it ever was Hitler's ally. And you would never guess that the Russian border guards, the nice people whom you see peacefully listening to classical music when the German army bursts in on them, are actually guarding, not the margins of Mother Russia, but the frontier that Hitler and Stalin sliced across the body of Poland. What you do see is the Germans' destruction of Nadya's village, the peasants' grim determination to fight for their homeland, John's grim determination to return to the United States to arouse enthusiasm for the Soviet cause, and other predictable features of a film like this.

The most conspicuous feature is the scriptwriters' grim determination to allow nothing in the film that is not an advertisement for the Soviet way of life. *Song of Russia* is hundred-proof, pledge-of-allegiance, praise-the-Lord-and-pass-the-ammunition communist propaganda. And that is what Rand's testimony easily makes it out to be.

She is clear on her definition of the term:

Communist propaganda is anything which gives a good impression of communism as a way of life. Anything that sells people the idea that life in Russia is good and that people are free and happy would be Communist propaganda. Am I not correct? (p. 181)

Of course you're correct, Miss Rand. She is also clear and correct in her analysis of the specific features of the film. As every writer knows, you don't need to say, "Stalinism is good for people; the communists are happy and healthy," in order to convey the conception that this is the case. You just need to omit anything that is unhappy and unhealthy from your portrayal of Stalinist life. It makes no difference that a film is touted as "a *great* love story. . . . See it with someone you love!" (p. 51). It may still be communist propaganda.

What would people think if the same methods were used in another political context? "Visualize a picture," Rand suggests, that is

laid in Nazi Germany. If anybody laid a plot just based on a pleasant little romance in Germany and played Wagner music and said

that people are just happy there, would you say that that was propaganda or not . . . You would not dare to put just a happy love story into Germany, and for every one of the same reasons you should not do it about Russia. (pp. 186–87)

Rand's logic was compelling, but there is no indication that the congressmen were compelled by it. Nor is there any indication that the communists, fellow travelers, sympathetic "liberals" and other swimming-pool intellectuals of Hollywoodland appreciated it, either, although one would have expected the same logic to occur, at some point, even to the densest thinker. And *Song of Russia* is by no means the worst example of leftwing propaganda in Hollywood films. The most effective instances appear in the many movies, such as *The Little Foxes* (Samuel Goldwyn, 1941; written by the communist Lillian Hellman) that had nothing to do with foreign affairs but simply portrayed private profit as a voracious wolf and us common folk as the innocent sheep. Propaganda like that can be found sticking out like a sore red thumb even in the world's greatest movie, *Citizen Kane*. But, passing over all that, who could fail to mention *Mission to Moscow* (Warner Brothers, 1943; with distinguished cast and direction), in which we are treated to the picture of America's ambassador to Russia, a self-proclaimed conservative, witnessing Stalin's purge trials and pronouncing them fair and just? *Mission to Moscow* was made at the insistence, and with the insistent advice, of that very ambassador, Joseph E. Davies.

Mayhew has chosen to limit his analysis to one movie, *Song of Russia*, and to Ayn Rand's comments upon it. For reasons that I will mention later, I believe this was an unfortunate decision. Yet his book makes a substantial contribution to knowledge. Using hitherto unpublished sources and extensive interviews with a (formerly) communist author of the screenplay, he shows how the film evolved from one draft and influence to another. He provides a fascinating illustration of Hollywood at work. He also deals with the persistent idea that *Song of Russia*, like *Mission to Moscow* and other communist propaganda films, was simply an aid to the American war effort, and mandated by Washington. The situation, as he demonstrates, was more complex.

The original story for *Song of Russia* materialized ("came to our attention," in the words of Louis B. Mayer, head of MGM) in early 1942, soon after America's entry into the world war (p. 14). It was the product of three writers, at least two of whom were Communist Party members. Mayer, an anticommunist, probably wanted to make a Russian musical and didn't care what its political context might be. He interested himself in the story idea, and two more communists were assigned to write a screenplay. Technical advice was provided

by Anna Louise Strong, one the most notorious Red propagandists of the age. Strong, who was paid a small fortune for her contributions, was such a fanatic that she suffered a mental breakdown over Khrushchev's "revelation" of Stalin's crimes. She felt "betrayed": "We knew all these things for twenty-five years, and I kept silent for the cause of socialism. What am I supposed to say?" (Tracy B. Strong and Helene Keyssar, *Right in Her Soul: The Life of Anna Louise Strong* [1983], pp. 204, 283).

Many noncommunists and anticommunists, such as Robert Taylor, were enlisted in the *Song of Russia* project. Some modifications were made to satisfy them, and Mr. Mayer; others were made to satisfy requirements of plausibility that even the communists wanted. And yes, the United States government did get involved. The Office of War Information supported *Song of Russia*. The OWI script reviewer considered it "a very excellent story about Russia." She did object to its suggestion that "Russia is not only as good as the United States, but better." Nevertheless, she thought the film would present "a truthful and heartening picture of the life of ordinary people in Russia" (p. 31). Other OWI reviewers sent helpful comments. Presidential assistant Lowell Mellett, head of OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures and evidently a prize ass, went so far as to send the script to the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, so that he could comment on it too. This gentleman expressed approval of OWI's suggestions and offered advice of his own, all of which was presumably forwarded to MGM with the imprimatur of the U.S. government (pp. 36–37).

*Song of Russia* wasn't exactly mandated by Washington officials, but the government's collaboration with the studio was culpable, on both sides. After the war ended and the political climate changed, Mayer and other Hollywood bigwigs tried to make it seem as if nothing significant had happened, and if it had, they were not responsible. One of Rand's purposes in testifying before HUAC was to puncture that balloon. Her analysis of the movie made the obvious explicit: *Song of Russia* was foreign propaganda, to a ludicrous extreme. As for the hypothesis that America was at war, its ally was Stalinist Russia, and Stalinist Russia therefore deserved to be supported in the court of public opinion, Rand's testimony goes to the heart of the issue. She said that "if we had good reason" to be allied with Russia, "why not tell the truth? Say it is a dictatorship, but . . . it is worthwhile being associated with the devil, as Churchill said, in order to defeat another evil." In any case, tell the people the truth. And if you're lying "to please the Russians, I don't see how you can please the Russians by telling them that we are fools" (pp. 188, 186).

It was a brave thing to do, making MGM look ridiculous. Hollywood is famous for exacting revenge on those who embarrass it. And while Rand worked for a producer (Hal Wallis) who seems not to have minded what she did, it seems probable that she would never have gotten another job in pictures if Wallis had gotten rid of her. Other Hollywood anticommunists were victims of the corporate mentality. In their new book, *Red Star over Hollywood: The Film Colony's Long Romance with the Left* (2005), Ronald and Allis Radosh report the comments of studio executive Harry Warner, explaining why he is firing an anticommunist writer: "I don't give a shit what kind of Communist you are, get out of here!" (p. 179). Relying on Rand's statements and on stray FBI records about such anticommunist friends as Adolphe Menjou, Mayhew suggests that many outspoken anticommunists suffered worse than the communists who were ultimately "blacklisted" by the studios. Certainly ideological individualism never became endemic to Hollywood, unlike leftwing radicalism, which flourished in the thirties and forties and flourishes still—in an environment in which the capitalist system keeps producing fabulous wealth for people who might otherwise be working the graveyard shift at Denny's.

In addition to the story of *Song of Russia*, Mayhew tells the story of Rand's involvement with HUAC, reproduces her testimony in full, and, aware that *Song of Russia* is not available for purchase and is seldom seen on TV, presents a long synopsis of the film. He adds a substantial comparison of the communist system as portrayed in propaganda and the communist system as it actually existed. His book projects, throughout, the spirit of moral indignation appropriate to the discussion of tyranny and lies.

The book has its flaws. Although Mayhew is an admirably clear writer, with none of the usual vices of academics (he is professor of philosophy at Seton Hall University), he needed an editor who would have encouraged him to restrain his tendency to make the same points over and over again. One's curiosity about the errors of *Song of Russia* wears out long before the end of his book, but an alert editor might have gotten him to answer questions that his discussion of the film naturally brings up. To cite one example: Mayhew indicates that Rand was originally invited to testify not only about *Song of Russia* but also about *The Best Years of Our Lives* (Samuel Goldwyn, 1946; winner of the Academy Award for Best Picture), and that she made notes on a wide range of films in which she detected communist propaganda. Any interested reader would want to hear more about this, but Mayhew merely footnotes a reference to Rand's published journals and unpublished jottings (pp. 96, 173, 177–78).

Mayhew's descriptions of scenes and quotations of dialogue from *Song of Russia* display a remarkable number of errors, individually trivial but worrisome as a pattern. There are at least 35 such errors in his eight-page synopsis of the movie. Everyone makes mistakes, but that's too many. Words are altered or omitted from dialogue, and what appears on the screen does not quite appear in the book. Thus, "I still got two hands" becomes "I still have two hands"; "different abilities" becomes "individual abilities"; and a speech delivered by a music teacher becomes a speech delivered by Nadya's father (pp. 10, 8, 7).

Another lapse of scholarship occurs in Mayhew's citation (or absence of citation) of sources bearing on Rand's life and work. Contrary to normal scholarly usage, he credits many of Rand's remarks merely to "Biographical interviews," never indicating by whom the interviews were conducted. He cites and critically evaluates the comments of people who were ideologically opposed to Rand but mentions none of the mountain of sympathetic scholarship, outside of that produced by people associated with the Ayn Rand Institute, whose grants in aid he acknowledges. If Mayhew is unfamiliar with the variety of work that is relevant to his subject, he should have extended his research; if he disagrees with it, he should have subjected it to critical challenge. Again, this is normal scholarly practice.

But what is most regrettable about Mayhew's book is the severe intellectual limits he has imposed on it, limits that are unjust both to his topic and to his own qualifications as a philosopher and historian. He barely touches on the moral and psychological drama that surrounds his subject—the drama of individuals, living and working in the same community, who responded in radically different ways to its political problems. To learn why they decided to promote, condone, or oppose the communist movement; to learn what fates awaited them as a result of their decisions—that would be a real education in the history of America in the twentieth century; that would have enormous impact. But Mayhew is unwilling to follow up on his leads. He presents some perfunctory examples of artists who succeeded in Hollywood despite being "blacklisted" for supporting communism, and he provides some equally perfunctory examples of artists whose careers may have been ruined for opposing it. None of this goes very far. Information on the latter (which would be particularly interesting in light of the fact that, as Mayhew says, few books have had much to say about them) consists mainly of brief excerpts from FBI reports on the affairs of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, and the excerpts stop in 1949.

Neither does Mayhew concern himself with the issue of why some Hollywood people became communist or anticommunist activists, while others, such as Gregory Ratoff, the Russian emigré who directed *Song of Russia*, just trudged in any direction they were told to trudge. According to the Radoshes (and this is in line with the literary evidence), an “average” writer might make the modern equivalent of \$1,800 a week and a really “good” one \$38,000 a week (pp. 22, 200). One wonders: Why would a visit to Uncle Scrooge’s money vault turn Huey, Dewey, and Louie into Young Pioneers?

The Radoshes’ book retails the usual folk wisdom about motivations: some of the Hollywood leftists were making a lot of money, they felt they hadn’t done much to deserve it, they accordingly felt guilty, and they turned to advocating . . . the policy of confiscating the money earned by *other* people, and giving it away. (Radosh and Radosh don’t say it quite like this, but that’s what it amounts to.) Other motives included addlebrained convictions of a quasi-religious nature, the laziness that encourages people to believe in political claims without investigating their veracity, the self-importance that comes from being a member of an all-knowing in-group, the desire for professional advancement in a climate socially congenial to leftist sentiments, the desire for power in the coming New Society, and (again, this is not the Radoshes’ phrase, but it’s the truth), sheer lack of intelligence.

There is a difference between being intelligent and being verbal. You didn’t have to be *extremely* smart to be a writer, actor, or director—not in a Hollywood that produced hundreds of films a year, each staffed by an army of “culture workers”; not in a Hollywood riddled, then as now, by cronyism and nepotism. But you might like to think you were smart, and associated with smart people. The Radoshes record a Hollywood writer’s expression of awe about a communist organizer, whom he regarded as “absolutely brilliant” because he “could explain Marx’s theory of surplus value without a hitch” (p. 31). This is something I expect my sophomore students to do.

Again, these explanations are folk wisdom, or common sense. One would like to see a more concerted analysis of the phenomenon. Mayhew leaves it with a quoted remark by a former communist about the ability of Red friendships to get jobs for people in Hollywood (p. 99). He doesn’t offer networking as the sole explanation for the popularity of communism in the film community, but neither does he pursue the question. It’s one of the many things that are “beyond the scope of this book” (p. 93).

Mayhew is a philosopher. The most disappointing of his self-imposed limitations is therefore his unwillingness to follow the ethical



issues raised by Rand's testimony much beyond the point at which Rand herself specifically registered an opinion about them. One of these issues is of special importance to everyone who believes in limited government. Does Congress have a constitutional or other legitimate right to conduct hearings on "un-American activities"? If not, what course should be taken by a believer in limited government, such as Rand, when she is faced with a request to cooperate with an investigation of that kind?

I want to stress the fact that the constitutional issue is one that arises for believers in limited government, not (alas) for other Americans. People ordinarily do not question the right of congressional committees to pry into anything they want to pry into. The Hollywood communists were asked no more outrageous questions than congressional committees had been putting, decade after decade, to other people, questions about matters ranging from the business dealings of Jay Gould to the *New York Times'* interviews with survivors of the *Titanic*. If the communists had wanted to show their moral vigilance, they would have objected to all government intrusions into the private sphere. They didn't. They objected only to intrusions into their own sphere.

Still, the issue is difficult, and much more difficult than Mayhew makes it out to be. It cannot be reduced to pat answers on either side. It's right to oppose communism, but that doesn't mean that Congress has the power to investigate communist influence in the movies. Yet the fact that a congressional investigation is unconstitutional doesn't automatically mean that one is morally obligated not to cooperate with it. Social Security is manifestly unconstitutional, but that doesn't automatically mean that a libertarian must refuse to cash his Social Security check.

Rand's view was that "Congress has no right to inquire into ideas or opinions, but has every right to inquire into criminal activities" (p. 85). She considered the Communist Party an organization that "not merely preaches, but actually engages in acts of violence, murder, sabotage, and spying in the interests of a foreign government" (p. 84). But she was not invited to testify before HUAC because of any knowledge she had of activities like that. She was invited to testify because she had been writing for the Motion Picture Alliance on the subject of propaganda in film (pp. 78–79). Her testimony, which (ironically, given all the fuss that has been made about it) did not identify any individual as a communist, concerned the ideological implications of one particular film. She was disappointed that the committee didn't allow her to elaborate on the fallacies of communist ideas. The testimony she wanted to give was "ideological . . . philosophical" (p. 97).

Communist ideas did not exist in a world apart from the communist movement, which certainly did engage in criminal activities. Nevertheless, if Rand's assertion that Congress lacks legitimate power to investigate ideas has any meaning, a definition of constitutionally protected communist ideas must exist somewhere. Where should the protective line be drawn? Mayhew is in an excellent position to think this question through, but he never acknowledges its existence.

He does discuss the question of "naming names," that is, telling the truth about communism and communists, to congressmen or anyone else, under circumstances in which the truth might lose people their jobs. He is right to do so. It is a more important issue than either *Song of Russia* or Rand's remarks thereon, because it is the major preoccupation of most people who think they know something about the "Hollywood witch-hunts." The pattern for this preoccupation was set by the so-called Hollywood Ten, current and recent adherents of the Communist Party who were briefly imprisoned for refusing to be responsive to questions asked by HUAC. In his statement to the committee, Hollywood Ten member John Howard Lawson, a communist writer, characterized himself as dedicated to the "free-exchange of ideas" but called those who exchanged anticommunist ideas with the committee "a parade of stool-pigeons, neurotics, publicity-seeking clowns, Gestapo agents, paid informers, and a few ignorant and frightened Hollywood artists" (Radosh and Radosh, p. 153).

Some of Lawson's terms are not currently fashionable. The "Gestapo" charge has died out. What survives is the notion that there was something weird, abhorrent, fraught with psychological and political disease about anticommunism. Notice the provenance of Lawson's language. Some of it comes from psychiatry, business, and the elite professions in general: "neurotics," "publicity-seeking," "ignorant." This mirrors the elitism of the communist movement itself. But some of it comes from an opposite source, the hoodlum underground. "Stool-pigeons," "informers," and what has become the most common phrase of all, "naming names," are underworld talk for reporting criminal actions to the authorities. It's the convict code: whatever happens, don't tell the screws.

The assumption built into this language is that American communists really were involved with criminal activity, or at least were involved with activity that society at large considered in that way. And so they were. Although few Hollywood communists were in any position to spy for Stalin or directly try to overthrow the American government, they were ideologically committed to overthrowing it, by force if necessary, and I am unaware of any strong resentment they may have shown toward leftists who actually were

spying for Stalin. The kind of language they used to defend themselves at once reveals and conceals a guilty conscience. Yet the idea that there is something wrong about “naming names” has become a cliché of mainstream American culture.

Let us suppose that support for the Stalinist movement aroused no guilty conscience in anyone. Let us suppose that it was motivated in all cases exactly as it claimed to be, as support for freedom of speech, the economic betterment of the working class, a utopian society, antifascism (or, prior to Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, world peace). Suppose that by some remarkable streak of ignorance the friends of Stalinism really did not know that instead of supporting freedom they were in fact supporting a ruthless dictatorship, reeking with the blood of men, women, and children slaughtered by the tens of millions. Also suppose that the Hollywood Stalinists felt that other Americans somehow misunderstood their ideas and aims. What would have been the most honorable way to proceed?

The obvious answer is: Tell the truth, to everyone who wants to know it. Say that you’re a communist. (HUAC presumes that you are, anyway, or you wouldn’t have been called to testify. And probably everyone else suspects that you are, too.) Say what you think the communist movement stands for. Describe what the movement has done and intends to do, from your own point of view. But that’s not what the communists and fellow travelers did. Their preferred course of action was to refuse any facts, any admissions, no matter what degree of suspicion and fear their refusal aroused. The people who followed the obvious course were the anticommunists, many of whom had once been communists or fellow travelers but were now convinced—as was true—that they were testifying against the agents, witting or unwitting, of a hostile foreign power. Yet the communists, and everyone who proceeded to follow the communist line on this issue, assumed that even these witnesses were morally bound not to “snitch.”

That commonly used word, with all its criminal associations, argues eloquently against the assumption it was intended to enforce. But I’m not sure that the philosophical problem has been fully solved. What was Rand’s approach, and what is Mayhew’s, to the ethics of “naming names”?

Mayhew says that “Ayn Rand apparently never discussed the propriety of naming names. But since the Left seems to view naming names—in the context of the HUAC investigation of Communism in Hollywood (and only in that context)—as the essence of immorality, it is worth discussing” (p. 93). His discussion comes down to this: “Naming names must be discussed in a certain context.” Rand would have condemned anyone “who ‘named names’ in Stalin’s

Russia . . . by reporting a neighbor's anti-Soviet statements to the authorities," because Stalinism was an evil. "The real issue is not whether one has named names, but whether one is supporting what is good or what is evil" (p. 94).

But this cannot be the whole philosophical solution. It may be "evil" for Joe to drive at 90 m.p.h. on a road posted at 55, or to lie to his spouse, or to join a group advocating dictatorship, but that does not imply that his friend Jerry should write a letter to the *Times* advertising Joe's misbehavior. You might say that Jerry shouldn't be Joe's friend in the first place, but that's an evasion. Once he knows about his friend's nefarious conduct, should he tell?

Anyone who values the sanctity of private life must feel uneasy about the public announcement of information originally meant to remain private and confidential. The simple response is to invoke a scale of values, a reference to various magnitudes of "good" and "evil." Few people would sympathize with someone who went to the police and "informed" on a friend for neglecting to pay a library fine, but few people would sympathize with someone who failed to "inform" on a friend who had committed murder or treason. But this is not an adequate account of the issue, either. We need to consider the issue of contractual obligation to a given moral standard.

This is what I mean. If Joe goes to the county library and steals Robert Mayhew's book, you might blame Joe's friend Jerry for his disloyalty in reporting him to the circulation department, but you probably would not blame a librarian for doing so, no matter how much Joe and the librarian happened to like each other. The difference is that the librarian agreed to enforce certain standards when he took his job. He did not say, "I will enforce the rules, except on my friend." If he had said that, he would not have gotten the job, and he knew it. Contractual relationships make a difference to our way of apportioning praise or blame when someone "informs" or refuses to "inform."

All contractual obligations are limited, of course, by the nature of contract itself. No contract includes a proviso that neither party shall ever "inform" on the other, no matter what. That would be equivalent to saying, "Go ahead, do whatever you like." You don't need a contract to say that. Any contract that did say it would, in effect, negate the significance of any moral consideration except fulfillment of contract, which in that case would be meaningless. We need to recognize, also, that the absence of an explicit contract makes little or no difference to the issue of moral obligation. The world runs on contracts, but the vast majority of them are implicit. If I see one of my students standing beside the road and offer him a ride, then, once we're on the freeway, command him to jump out of the car, I cannot convincingly argue that it's my property, after all, and I never explicitly promised

to provide for his safety until he reached a good place to leave. No, my promise was real, if only implicit, and he wouldn't have accepted a ride on any other terms.

Laugh as we may at John Locke's use of the concept of implicit contract to cover all the embarrassments of his consent theory of government, implicit contracts are formative to some degree in virtually every relationship, from the one you establish when you hand the meat clerk a five dollar bill, expecting to be given a steak in return, to the one you establish when you marry, thereby creating a relationship the confidential nature of which is sanctioned by law. Law or no law, private relationships cannot exist without implicit contracts, many of which include a proviso of confidentiality. You and I simply cannot be friends if one of us suspects that the other considers himself perfectly free to turn the other one in, whenever he decides that his friend has taken some "evil" course. (I am not disputing the existence of evil, which is more real than most people think, but only referring to the problems of using the concept of "evil" in a given case.) This, I believe, is the foundation of our almost universal conviction that confidential loyalty is a virtue, of our frequent inability to define its proper limits, and of the communists' continuing ability to arouse sympathetic concern for themselves.

What gets lost in the various convenient solutions to the loyalty question is the real possibility of tragedy, not the tragedy that results from a moral flaw but the tragedy that results from a fatally flawed situation, the kind of situation in which one type of loyalty must be violated to serve another. Sophocles knew this. That is why he motivated Antigone and her antagonist Creon by authentic yet incompatible loyalties. But we don't need to go to Sophocles to be instructed. We can see the roots of tragic conflict in any family in which someone has been trusted with confidential information that reveals the madness or criminality of a brother or sister, mother or father. Whatever that knowing person does, legitimate loyalty to someone may be violated.

Someone, or something; for the matter is further complicated by the fact that loyalty, like love, exists in relationship to impersonal as well as personal entities. The scholar who destroys records, the artist who willingly markets trash, the intellectual who—like many sympathizers of the Communist Party—cynically endorses intellectual cunning and deceit is showing rank disloyalty to the abstract entities (learning, beauty, truth) to which he has supposedly committed his life. It's a unilateral contract, but it's real.

Yet—to introduce still another complication—loyalty, like love, cannot be the result of a cold intellectual calculus. Joe cannot continue friendly relations with Jerry if he sees that Jerry is weighing his

every moral virtue and defect, hunting out facts, indulging theoretical speculations, and waiting for the opportunity to demonstrate his own sense of justice by announcing any evil quality, once found, to other people. By the same token, an intellectual who lurked like a toad, doing nothing for the cause of truth until he was absolutely certain that no one could possibly be harmed by his testimony, would hardly be a paragon of loyalty to human intelligence.

Where is Ayn Rand in this picture? Although the constitutional authority of HUAC remains a vexing issue, the farther we go in investigating the question of loyalty, the clearer her role in the moral drama becomes. No private relationship was violated when she testified as she did about *Song of Russia*. Indeed, it would have been the depth of cold calculation for her to have reasoned within herself, “I won’t risk testifying in this matter. My testimony might lead to someone’s depriving someone else of a job that he or she may or may not merit and that he or she may or may not use to help create a totalitarian state. So it’s apparent that I must reject the committee’s invitation, despite my intellectual duty to expose communist propaganda.” What nonsense that would have been.

But the fact that Rand had no personal loyalty to the people who created the communist propaganda of the 1940s, and was therefore free to testify about the malignity of their influence on Hollywood, merely emphasizes the potential for moral tragedy in the case of those who did have conflicting personal and political or intellectual loyalties. There is a real drama here, but it is a drama unrealized either by the would-be tragedian Arthur Miller (*The Crucible*, 1953; film version Twentieth Century Fox, 1996), who believed that there were no witches to hunt, or by Robert Mayhew, who believes that it was unambiguously right to hunt them.

Mayhew might have used Rand’s testimony against *Song of Russia* as the gateway to his own exploration of larger issues of loyalty, psychology, and constitutionality, perhaps reaching conclusions more enlightening than my own. He might have used it as other authors—Barbara Tuchman with the Zimmermann telegram, Leslie Fiedler with the Rosenberg case, Harold Nicolson with Castlereagh’s performance at the Council of Vienna—have used particular incidents to bring to light the great world of ideas and individuals engaged in dramatic conflict. Instead, he wrote a specialist study about Ayn Rand, a study that will satisfy many specialists in the Ayn Rand field, and challenge other people to conduct inquiries of their own.

Stephen Cox  
University of California, San Diego