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REVIEWS

Exiled: Stories from Conservative and Moderate Professors Who Have Been Ridiculed, Ostracized, Marginalized, Demonized, and Frozen Out, edited by Mary Grabar. Scottdale, GA: Dissident Prof Press, 2013, 110 pp., $12.00 paperback.

Testimonies

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Not so many years ago, in Washington, D.C., I spoke at a conference of high-level international diplomats. The subject of the event was the future of Europe. Everyone present, as far as I could tell, agreed that Europe, under the wise and steady guidance of the EU bureaucracy, had glorious days ahead of it—economically, socially, culturally, and in terms of international power and influence—and that the U.S. needed urgently to follow its lead in pretty much every respect if it wished to keep up. I was the keynote speaker (how this happened, I have no idea) and my message, about the alarming appeasement of Islam by European governments and the grim prospect of gradual Islamization that it portended, could hardly have been more at odds with the sentiments of the other speakers and, indeed, of the audience. My talk consisted of nothing but hard facts; yet while I was speaking I could feel my listeners recoiling in disgust, and as soon as I was done I found myself being dismissed with imperial condescension. "These are just… *anecdotes*!" one Foreign Service veteran sniffed, and the whole audience nodded, obviously eager to resume celebrating the European miracle. Recognizing that I wouldn't be able to win over this crowd if I parted the Red Sea, I collected my check and cleared out.

I was reminded of that episode while reading *Exiled: Stories from Conservative and Moderate Professors Who Have Been Ridiculed, Ostracized, Marginalized, Demonized, and Frozen Out.* Mary Grabar, the editor of this collection of personal accounts by six individuals with humanities

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Ph.D.s whose academic careers have suffered—or been derailed—because they're considered politically incompatible with the prevailing campus culture, acknowledges that her contributors' stories may well be dismissed as "anecdotal" by leftist academics. To which one can only respond, as I should perhaps have said to that audience in Washington: Yes, these are anecdotes; there are thousands more like them—*and you know it.* Any humanities professor at a North American college or university today knows very well that all the rhapsodic rhetoric about the importance of "diversity" in the academy simply does not apply to political or ideological diversity. What's more, it is not just conservatives who are being frozen out at many institutions; also on thin ice are centrists, moderates, classical liberals, and (not infrequently) pretty much anyone who doesn't subscribe to every last jot and tittle of contemporary Far Left academic dogma.

Grabar's contributors are an interestingly varied lot—varied not only in their politics, but in personality, personal history, style, tone, and approach. In a piece that neatly succeeds in combining charm, wit, and righteous anger, British conservative M.D. Allen, who has taught English at a college in the University of Wisconsin system for over two decades, recounts several episodes in the history of his encounter with the leftist academic establishment. Among them: a conference audience that found a paper he delivered on "English Women Travelers in the Middle East" insufficiently PC, a panel discussion about *The Vagina Monologues* at which he was treated like "the Village Idiot," and a talk by a Dickens scholar in which each character in *Barnaby Rudge* was compared to a member of the George W. Bush administration.

To be sure, Allen, perhaps because he kept relatively mum about his conservatism during the early years of his academic career, has suffered less for his politics than most of the other contributors to Grabar's book; but this does not make him any more complacent about the academy's ideological tyranny or, for that matter, any less insightful about it. When academic leftists, he keenly observes, seek "to humiliate into silence an unfashionable view" or (as has happened to him) call an ideological opponent a "fool" to his face, they don't think for a moment that they're being rude. On the contrary, they are certain that they're "on the side of the angels" and that anyone who doesn't share their point of view is, by definition, "well, on the

other side." To be willing to engage the likes of him in civil discourse, then, would be to welcome an attack upon "*the most sacred part*" of themselves (Allen's italics), and, indeed, to open the door to the possible triumph of evil over good. This diagnosis, in my view, is right on the money.

Perhaps the book's most compelling entry is by Paul Kengor, who presents a damning overview of the determination of many professors in the humanities to keep students in the dark about the crimes of communism. "Of all the lectures that I do on college campuses," writes Kengor, who teaches political science at Grove City College in Pennsylvania and has written books about Ronald Reagan and communist history, "none seem to awaken the audience as much as my discourse on the savagery of communism." When he explains to his audiences just how many people were murdered by communist regimes, students are "amazed" and "engaged," because they are "obviously hearing all of these things for the first time in their lives." Meanwhile, "the professors often stare at me with contempt." To be sure, the bias of these faculty members is "not one so much of pro-communism…but a very strong dislike, bordering on disgust in many cases, for *anti*-communism." In short, "they are *anti*-anti-communist more so than pro-communist."

Kengor recalls the case of Vladimir Brodkin, a Soviet refugee who lost a job in Harvard's history department because fellow Sovietologists considered him "too anti-Soviet." One reader of a book proposal Brodkin submitted to Yale University Press actually faulted him for not grasping that inmates were sentenced to the Gulag "in accordance with the laws of the land." As Kengor puts it: "Imagine, by comparison, a scholar on the Nazi concentration camps being chided for not understanding that Jews were sent to Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen 'in accordance with the laws of the land.'" Such attitudes, Kengor underscores, are ubiquitous not only in higher education but in secondary schools, where students are often presented with "a softer side of communism" and told that Marxism is a "'wonderful' but 'misunderstood' system that simply [has] not been tried correctly." The result, of course: widespread voter ignorance about communism that may yet spell disaster for American freedom.

Less dire is Scott Herring's funny, self-mocking "Stalinism Lite," in which he proffers the consolation that most students "can smell a lie"

and that they actually appreciate straight talk that deviates from the academic gospel. Herring's own personal narrative actually has a happy ending: Having once shamelessly marketed himself "as a phony leftist," he has since cleaned up his act and found a niche teaching writing to science students at the University of California, Davis, where he defiantly displays a South Vietnamese flag in his office. Herring concludes affirmatively: "Ideology is a potent thing, but ultimately, reality has a vote."

A not-so-cheerful story is served up by Brian E. Birdnow, who managed to earn a Ph.D. with a serious dissertation about the Missouri Communist Party in the 1940s and 1950s, but then hit the wall, spending years trying to get this politically incorrect work published in book form while he labored as a lowly adjunct, his search for a full-time job stymied by the "tectonic shift" in the profession that was replacing "true history" with "pseudo-historical comic book topics" like Chicana history. Birdnow's, alas, is ultimately a tale of woe: "I am a non-person in academia," he concludes, "and I am now in exile!"

Then there's philosopher Jack Kerwick, who "teaches at a variety of colleges in New Jersey and Pennsylvania" (that doesn't sound good, either), and who makes the cogent point that when faculty members embrace academic orthodoxy unthinkingly, they're "betray[ing] their mission," which is to question orthodoxies—precisely *because* they're orthodoxies.

Also on hand is Martin Slann, a professor of political science at the University of Texas whose post-9/11 alarm at the spectacle of fellow professors teaching that "Islam is a peaceful religion" and "that the deaths of 3000 Americans were essentially our own fault" helped convert him—a longtime Democrat—into "a conservative, Islamophobic, and the West-really-is-better-than-the-rest ghoul." Although Slann is now a nonperson to many of his colleagues, who cheerfully inculcate their students with outrageous lies about both Islam and the West, he's quietly determined to do his best to counter their influence: "After all, I can also teach hundreds of students a year."

Every one of Grabar's contributors is engaging and worth a hearing. One actually finds oneself wishing that the book (which comes in at just over a hundred pages) were twice as long. Heaven knows there are enough horror stories of this ilk to tell, and no two of them are quite the same—and the more evidence one puts on the table, after all, the less effective one renders the "just…

anecdotes" argument. Still, perhaps short and sweet was the way to go here; perhaps a volume of this length stands a better chance of being read by the students, parents, and other public-minded citizens who urgently need to know what's really going on in the ivory tower. Certainly, all of the pieces are written in highly accessible prose and, the grim subject matter notwithstanding, are even genuinely entertaining. Praise be to Grabar for gathering these essays together, and let us hope that they make a difference.