# George Viereck: American Martyr

The career of one of America's great literary geniuses came to an abrupt end, for all intents and purposes, when he earned the ire of President Franklin D. Roosevelt by speaking out against the involvement of America in the genocidal conflict known as World War II. For daring to stand up to the warmongers, he was locked up, charged with sedition, defamed and nearly erased from history. But the name of patriot George Sylvester Viereck is one that should be known by all peace-loving Americans, not just afficionados of mid-20th-century literature.

#### **By Marc Roland**

ot that anyone much noticed, but American literature died on July 31, 2012. To be sure, its moribund condition had been preceded decades before the death three years ago of Gore Vidal, generally recognized as the last representative of a literary heritage going back to Washington Irving and Mark Twain. That cultural continuity ended with him not merely because no one measured up as Vidal's successor. Until 30 or 40 years ago, millions of readers in the United States could still anticipate the publication of works like his *Burr* or *Lincoln* as widely heralded literary milestones.

But such events are today as obsolete as the type-writers he used to compose these masterpieces. The silent extinction of their genre attracted no attention, distracted as our generation has become by visual stimuli, political correctness, declining literacy and decreasing attention span. American literature was among the various, forgotten trappings of our civilization's free fall. Hard to believe we were once a nation of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville and George Sylvester Viereck.

While the first three names are still revered by mid-

dle-aged and older readers, their unfamiliarity with the last may be excused. Yet Viereck attained—if not enduringly—the same heights of literary glory the others knew and would be just as well-remembered today by that aging, dwindling minority to whom the printed word is yet valuable, had he not undertaken the most dangerous thing a man can attempt. For publicly declaring the truth in an age of lies, his name was erased from all school textbooks, his career ruined; he was expelled from the country's leading professional societies where he had been their guiding star; he was threatened with death by a lynch mob and imprisoned for five years.

Previously, Viereck was celebrated across the country as the most important writer of the early 20th century. He single-handedly shattered the late Victorian pomposity, banality and prudity in which American writing had become mired. As his biographer, Elmer Gertz, explained:

America was intent upon ignoring the entire current of modern literature that was already commonplace in France and in Germany and, to a lesser degree, in England. Nothing that may offend the prim maiden aunts who guarded the literary nurseries stood a chance in the reading rooms of the respectable publishing houses.<sup>1</sup>

Viereck's incisive wit, colorful evocation, and lean style won such a broad following among readers and writers alike, that the entire literary landscape was transformed. His personal accomplishment was all the more remarkable, because English was his second language. Until he was 11 years old, he could only speak German. In this, he was not unlike another great novelist, Polishborn Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, who only learned enough English to write in it by his 20s, when he anglicized his name to Joseph Conrad. As Viereck later recalled, "The splendid heritage of two languages has fallen to me from a German father and an American mother. My ears have listened to the music of two worlds."

#### **EARLY CAREER**

Born 1884, in Munich, young George migrated with his family to the United States less than 10 years later. Incredibly, his first published article appeared in the prestigious New York Times, attracting popular attention on its own merits, not only for its authorship by a grammar school student. His juvenile genius blossomed with various essays that won him regional fame, until nationwide recognition came at just 22 years of age with the publication of Nineveh and Other Poems, in 1907. Poetry was then the "pop culture" of America, where Viereck's bestselling collection shot him overnight to the top of the charts, as it were. But in so doing, his writing—presented in simple, clear, original and imaginative language—invigorated and elevated, as does the best art, our country's general level of contemporary literacy. Inspired by those past masters of verbal hues and tones— Poe, Wilde and Swinburne—Viereck's style from the beginning was flecked with allusion to an unsettling future in the midst of Western civilization's Gilded Age. His early offerings occasionally darkened with that ominously prophetic quality, such as found among these lines describing turn-of-the-century New Yorkers in their glittering city:

They sing in mimic joy, and crown Their temples to the flutes of sin; But no sweet noise shall ever drown The whisper of the worm within.

Sit not too proudly on thy throne! Think on thy sisters, them that fell! Not all the hosts of Babylon Could save her from the jaws of Hell.<sup>3</sup>



Famed American poet and iconoclast George Sylvester Viereck, a German-American by heritage and an energetic publicist on behalf of Germany by choice, was one of the more prominent defendants indicted for sedition by the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. While Viereck was languishing in a Washington, D.C. jail, his son George Jr. died in combat, a casualty of the war his father had so heartily condemned. The following poem by Viereck is entitled "The Wanderers."

Sweet is the highroad when the skylarks call, When we and Love go rambling through the land. But shall we still walk gayly, hand in hand, At the road's turning and the twilight's fall? Then darkness shall divide us like a wall, And uncouth evil nightbirds flap their wings; The solitude of all created things Will creep upon us shuddering like a pall.

This is the knowledge I have wrung from pain: We, yea, all lovers, are not one, but twain, Each by strange wisps to strange abysses drawn; But through the black immensity of night Love's little lantern, like a glowworm's, bright, May lead our steps to some stupendous dawn.

Of the millions of his readers who delighted in the musicality of such verse, few grasped or even suspected the warning implicit in these words. Just one year later, with the release of another best-seller, *The Saturday Evening Post* called Viereck "the most widely-discussed young literary man in the United States today." Contrasts, however, between 1908, in which his *Confessions of a Barbarian* was written, and our epoch are glaring. Little more than 100 years ago, not only was Viereck as well known as any author writing today, he was also acclaimed for his advocacy of fellow German-Americans. At the time, and for generations before, their numerous contributions to our country were not just universally acknowledged, but celebrated.

#### **GERMAN HERITAGE & VILIFICATION**

As far back as 1690, German colonials had built the first paper mill in North America, and the Bible was printed in America in German before it was printed in English. By the mid-18th century, Germans were the largest non-British minority in North America, and would remain so for another 200 years. Von Steuben Day parades were conducted nationwide every Sept. 17 in honor of the Baron who transformed a rag-tag gaggle of toy soldiers into the victorious Continental Army. Towns and counties in seven states were named after him. He was among many other German volunteers—such as Baker General Ludwick [featured in the July/August 2015 issue.—Ed.], Maj. Gen. Johann De Kalb (hero of the Battle of Camden), and thousands of common soldiers, who fought and died for American liberty.

Unlike all other European nationalities in America during the War for Independence, most German colonists supported it, even though King George III was also the elector of Hanover: large numbers of Germans in his military service deserted to the patriot cause. On May 25, 1776, the Second Continental Congress authorized formation of the 8th Maryland "German Regiment," which distinguished itself at the critical battles of Trenton and Princeton. So too, the foremost men of Viereck's own time were the Rocky Mountain artist Albert Bierstadt, pioneering photographer Alfred Stieglitz, Chicago Symphony Orchestra founder Theodore Thomas, inventor and optometrist John Jacob Bausch, rubber baron Harvey Firestone, automotive innovator Clement Studebaker, and many others to whom the arts and sciences are still indebted. As such, German-Americans were universally respected as important, even decisive, contributors to the birth and greatness of the United States.

All that was forgotten with the advent of World War I. From its beginning in 1914, the English enjoyed a monopoly on all news coming out of Europe, enabling them

to portray their enemies in the worst possible light:

England's greatest ally was the language it shared with America. The British viewpoint could come to this country without the by-play of translation. . . . The sources of America's news were almost entirely British. Serbian news—even French and German news—generally bore a London dateline. Were the lines of communication direct, it would yet have taken the Central Powers many precious months to capture the eyes and ears of America. But the lanes were not direct; all of them led to London. In the very first week of the war, England snapped Germany's one cable to America.

Meanwhile, the grip of economic compulsion held America to the Allied cause. America could not hope to trade with the Central Powers. Its only important European trade had to be with England and the Allies, for Britannia ruled the waves. American trade was dependent more and more upon the success of England. America could be neutral only if it would be content to suffer financially. But the House of Morgan decided otherwise. It became the fiscal agent of the Allies, supplying more and more of the money and credits the Allies needed to carry on the war.<sup>5</sup>

Allied atrocity propaganda, as hysterical as it was contrived, combined with economic forces in a perfect storm of popular hatred against all things German. It seemed incredible that the masses of Americans, who had for many generations venerated their fellow citizens of German descent, could have so suddenly and violently turned on them. Very few had the courage to publicly defend their sorely misrepresented homeland, but George Viereck refused to back down. He continually pointed out in the printed and spoken word that America was being dragged into a suicidal conflict from which she could expect nothing but thousands of dead doughboys, who must perish on behalf of foreign interests inimical to our country. He paid a high price for exercising his First Amendment rights.

A group of the leading writers of the country pledged themselves never to mention Viereck in any of their writings. They would regard him, they said, as if he had never existed. They would keep his name out of the anthologies, out of the magazines, out of books. He would never be mentioned, even abusively. It was a solemn pact, perhaps the first of its kind in literary history, and, to a very great extent, it was observed. . . . The Author's League, stirred on by Viereck's old friends, [Theodore] Roosevelt and Gertrude Atherton [her *Black Oxen* was a best seller], expelled Viereck in an atmosphere suggesting the performance of a holy act. Various writers . . . joined in a group called





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the Vigilantes, having as one of their chief purposes, the obliteration of Viereck. . . .

Men strove desperately to put Viereck behind bars. They did not relax in their efforts from the moment war was declared until long after the Armistice. Viereck never knew when he might be picked up for examination, and these examinations were seldom gentle, particularly when the district attorney was seeking election to a high post. <sup>6</sup>

#### VILIFIED IN AMERICA

At the height of the public fury rising against Viereck, an enraged lynch mob broke into his Mount Vernon, New York home, from which he narrowly escaped with his life. Self-styled patriotism of this kind prompted George Bernard Shaw to conclude "that the '100% American' is 99% village idiot. Perhaps a mathematical inexactitude," added Gertz, "for, during the war years, most were 100% idiotic. . . . [T]he American people, like the rest of the world, made their choice—too willingly, too glibly, on insufficient knowledge, and heedless of consequences."

Among them were 323,018 U.S. casualties incurred during just 16 months of combat. But they were only a

fraction of the 17 million men of all nationalities killed and 20 million wounded in the war Viereck had condemned from its outset and for which he wrote its disquieting epitaph:

Stray not, my Love, 'mid the sarcophagi.

Tempt not the silence, for the fates are deep,
Lest all the dreamers, deeming doomsday nigh,
Leap forth in terror from their haunted sleep,
And, like the peal of an accursed bell,
Thy voice call ghosts of dead things back from Hell.<sup>8</sup>

Here again sounds that uncertain, prescient note echoing like an unsettling motif through much of his poetic output. It was to prove all too correct in the postwar decline of the West from which arose Soviet Communism, an alarming circumstance that sobered up at least some Americans from their chauvinist binge and compelled them to reconsider George Sylvester Viereck with clearer heads. Accordingly, *My First Two Thousand Years: The Autobiography of the Wandering Jew* was an instantaneous and international best-seller that restored his pre-eminence among authors. <sup>9</sup> "At the height of his acclaim," Gertz wrote, "no enemy could deny that he had reached some sort of height from which he could look down on other men of letters." <sup>10</sup>

#### STILL HAILED IN EUROPE

While a prophet without honor in his own country, Viereck's literary reputation had preceded him in ravaged Europe, where the most prominent figures of the time confided in him as they did for no other interviewer, foreign or domestic. He was personally, often repeatedly, hosted by such diverse celebrities as former Kaiser Wilhelm II, Sigmund Freud, Marshal Foch, Paul von Hindenburg, Georges Clemenceau, George Bernard Shaw, Oswald Spengler, Benito Mussolini, Henry Ford, Albert Einstein, Erich Ludendorff and Nikola Tesla, who dedicated his own poem, "Fragments of Olympian Gossip" a comical take-down of the scientific establishment—to Viereck, as the greatest contemporary American poet. Because they admired and trusted him, their revealing interviews guaranteed international success for his Glimpses of the Great. 11

Uncharacteristically, he sought out someone virtually unknown outside Bavaria in 1923, but meeting with the obscure politician disclosed Viereck's insightful instinct for potential world figures. Months before the so-called Munich Putsch that was to make Adolf Hitler a household name, he was interviewed by Viereck, who found that:

[H]is appearance contrasts strangely with the aggressiveness of his opinions. No milder mannered reformer ever scuttled ship of state or cut political throat. We discussed the fate of Germany over teacups. "Why," I asked Hitler, "do you call yourself a National Socialist, since your party program is the very antithesis of that commonly accredited to socialism?"

"Socialism," he retorted, putting down his cup of tea pugnaciously, "is the science of dealing with the common weal. The Marxists have stolen the term and confused its meaning. I shall take socialism away from the socialists. Socialism is an ancient Aryan, Germanic institution. Our German ancestors held certain lands in common. They cultivated the idea of the common weal. Socialism, unlike Marxism, does not repudiate private property. Unlike Marxism, it involves no negation of personality, and, unlike Marxism, it is patriotic. We chose to call ourselves *National* Socialists, because we are not internationalists. To us, state and race are one."

"What," I continued my cross-examination, "are the fundamental planks of your platform?"

"We believe in a healthy mind in a healthy body. The body politic must be sound if the soul is to be healthy. Moral and physical health are synonymous."

"Mussolini," I interjected, "said the same to me."

Hitler beamed. "No healthy man is a Marxist. Healthy men recognize the value of personality. We contend against the forces of disaster and degen-

eration. We are in the position of a man whose house has been burned down. He must have a roof over his head before he can indulge in more ambitious plans. Germany has been living in a veritable blizzard of national, moral and economic catastrophes. Our demoralized party system is a symptom of our disaster.

"In my scheme of the German state, there will be no room for the alien, no use for the wastrel, for the usurer or speculator, or anyone incapable of productive work. When I take charge of Germany, I shall end tribute abroad, and Bolshevism at home. The Peace Treaty and Bolshevism are two heads of one monster. We must decapitate both."

There was a noise at the door. His followers, who always remain within call, like a bodyguard, reminded the leader of his duty to address a meeting. Hitler gulped down his tea and rose. <sup>12</sup>

Few took any account of the little-known, local revolutionary in early 1923, but Hitler, like Viereck, saw clearly, unlike most men, beyond the horizon of his own times.

#### **ANTI-WAR ACTIVITIES**

Eleven years later, after Hitler made good his promise by becoming chancellor, Viereck addressed an audience of 25,000 listeners at a mass-meeting of the Friends of the New Germany—later known as the German American Bund—in New York City's Madison Square Garden:

"I am a friend of the New Germany," he began. "I was the friend of Germany under the Republic, and I am today a friend of Hitler's Germany."

He urged its critics not to "ignore Hitler's stupendous achievement in fashioning a new economic and social world out of the wreck of the old," adding, "we Americans of German descent want peace, not war. But we shall not remain silent in the face of sinister machinations. . . . The insolent demagogues who mislead some of our Jewish fellow citizens must realize that Germans and Americans of German descent have rights which even professional German-baiters are bound to respect." <sup>13</sup>

Chief of "the insolent demagogues" was America's chief of state. Viereck's ire was primarily aimed at President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the single most dangerous proponent of a war in which there could be no winners, save the haters of Western civilization. For the rest of the 1930s and into the following decade, FDR more than lived up to the outspoken author's characterization as an international arsonist of the first magnitude. But Viereck's career, despite its 1920s' revival, had been ef-

fectively terminated by his remarks at this "Nazi rally."

The following March, he was hauled before a special committee appointed by the House of Representatives to investigate "foreign agents," so long as they were not Communist, because New York Democrat Congressman Samuel Dickstein was himself a spy in the pay of the NKVD, the Soviet secret police.<sup>14</sup>

Viereck refused to be intimidated, and continued speaking out against Roosevelt's strident warmongering, until Viereck was arrested for violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act on the outrageous indictment of setting up his own publishing house. As recently as 2005, a reviewer of one of his books wrote, "His case was sensationalized, and it's questionable how fair his trial was." Convicted in 1942 on preposterous charges of failing to register with the U.S. Department of State as "a Nazi agent," he spent the next five years in prison.

#### VIERECK'S DARKEST HOUR

At the darkest nadir of his life, fate dealt him a crueler blow, when he read the name of his younger son—Cpl. George Sylvester Viereck Jr., recipient of the Purple Heart and other citations—on the official casualty list of Americans killed in action at Anzio, March 24, 1944. Three days later, in the depths of Washington, D.C.'s district jail, a mourning father gave vent to his sorrow in *Dirge*, bitterly dedicated to Franklin Roosevelt:

Malignant trickster, black is white In the hell's kitchen of your brain. Now on the altar of your spite My son lies slain.

A bonny, gentle lad was he, Clothed with a grace you never knew, He saw not the satanic glee, The guile of you.

He deemed it meet, he deemed it sweet, To die amid the cannon's roar, When with the trumpet of deceit You called to war.

Your hand unleashed the fiery flood. While hell guffawed with shouts and cheers, Smiling, you batten on men's blood And mothers' tears.

By your own pledge you stand accursed, When once war's mummeries have passed, As one who put his malice first, His country, last.

Your victims, rotting in the sod, And they whose bones bleach in the sea, Cry up for justice unto God— If God there were, you could not be!

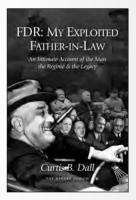


A photo taken the day Curtis Dall married Anna Roosevelt.

## FDR: MY EXPLOITED FATHER-IN-LAW

An Intimate Account of the Man, the Regime & the Legacy

f you ever want to learn how our government works, read this book. The author, Curtis B. Dall was FDR's son-in-law, and spent much time in the White House; he even had an office in the Yellow Room. Thus he had an insider's view of who came to see FDR and Eleanor and how often. Dall also was a Wall Street banker and knew the tricks and tactics the financial predators use



to deceive the public. Later in his career he became the chairman of Liberty Lobby's Board of Policy when Willis Carto's all-American lobbying group was at its apex. The book is loaded with personal anecdotes of the people Dall met during his life. This included such notables as Franklin Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Sara Delano, Bernard Baruch, Harry Hopkins, Henry Morgenthau Jr., Harry Dexter White, the Warburgs, Astors, Rothschilds, Lehmans and more. In this book, Dall views the stock market crash of October 1929 as "the calculated shearing of the public." He views the Federal Reserve as being against the interests of Americans. He says that the top bankers plan and execute the wars that ravage the world, kill millions and line the pockets of the global kleptocrats. In the end he portrays FDR as man who began his career as an optimistic ladder-climber and ended up as one of the most exploited presidents in U.S. history. Lots more inside information in the book written from an insider's point of view.

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Into the game of foreign kings Like chips our children's lives you put, While you and alien underlings Tread freedom's charter underfoot.

Our sons, trapped in your cunning's net, Make "Liberty!" their battle cry: You tilt your waggish cigarette, And kill the thing for which they die.

You tossed our world into this futile hell, Playing with words as children with a toy. Our youngsters' lives are not expendable. No colored ribbon can bring back my boy!

On thousand fronts our loved ones die in vain, Your wooden horse may doom another Troy, While liberty by your own hand is slain, And bits of ribbon bring not back my boy!

In alien lands our youngsters die in vain With their life blood you coyly write your name Into The Book of Infamy: You gain The crown of sham, the coronet of shame.

Though you may crush me, as you crushed my son, I shall recite the legend of your shame. Whatever gods you smugly call upon, Mine is a soul your turn-keys cannot tame.

Black out my light, obliterate my name, I shall resist till freedom's fight is won Nor stoop to play your sanctimonious game: Take back your ribbons, give me back my son!

Oh, self-depleted arsenal No lyric offering can beguile Time to reverse its tragic pace, Nor conjure back the winsome smile That played like sunshine on his face. And part of me, the heart of me, Will ever dwell in Anzio, Where on the beachhead by the sea Stand wooden crosses row on row.

The waves that on the ocean ride Whisper forever to the air Praise for the lads who bravely died, Curses for him who sent them there.<sup>16</sup>

After Viereck's release in 1947, his prison memoir appeared five years later as a paperback original with a low-life publisher. But the moderate, fleeting success of *Men Into Beasts*—from Marc Antony's famous funeral oration in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*—could not revive his career, even when he wrote elsewhere under a pseudonym. <sup>17</sup> Deprived of the only livelihood he had ever known, Viereck found himself impoverished. "In order to ruin me," he had light-heartedly exaggerated in the youthful days of his early success, "the government would have to be bankrupt." Now, late in life, *he* was bankrupt.

Financially, emotionally and physically exhausted, he coasted out the bitter years left to him, cared for by his elder son, passing away in Holyoke, Massachusetts, on March 18, 1962, at 77 years of age. By the diminishing glow of his failing energy, Viereck got off a parting shot in the medium that best suited his spirit. Unapologetically, the poet, like the heroic bards of old, arose once more to his full stature:

I walked upon life's highway with the great. Fame gave me sprigs for her unwithering crown. Love kissed my mouth. Adventure was my mate. I spurned disaster, and defied man's frown.

Now, half amused, half curious, I await

### Fearless & Godly: Pioneers for the Truth

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The final knell that rings the curtain down. Never on the winning side, Always on the right—
Vanquished, this shall be our pride
In the world's despite.

Bravely drain, then fling away, Break the cup of sorrow! Courage! He who lost the day May have won the morrow. <sup>19</sup>

Rest in peace, George Viereck.

#### **ENDNOTES:**

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- 4 Tom Reiss. The Orientalist. Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life. New York: Random House, 2005.
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  - 6 Ibid.
  - 7 Ibid.
- 8 George Sylvester Viereck. *The Buried City*, in *The Little Book of Modern Verse*. Jessie Belle Rittenhouse, editor. New York: Liveright Publishing, 1919.
- 9. George Sylvester Viereck. My First Two Thousand Years: The Autobiography of the Wandering Jew. New York: The Macaulay Company, 1928.
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- 11 George Sylvester Viereck.  ${\it Glimpses}$  of the Great. New York: The Macaulay Company, 1930.
  - 12. www.theguardian.com. Key words: "great interviews."
  - 13 Gertz, op. cit.
- 14 According to *The Boston Globe* (Lynnley Browning, "Spy vs. Spy vs. Spy: The Story of Stalin's Spies in America." Feb, 14, 1999), "Dickstein ran a lucrative trade in illegal visas for Soviet operatives before brashly offering to spy for the NKVD, the KGB's precursor, in return for cash." A Lithuanian-born Jew, Dickstein "was, for many years, a 'devoted and reliable' Soviet agent, whom his handlers nicknamed 'Crook,'" for his attempts at squeezing more money out of the Soviets. Stone, Kurt F. *The Jews of Capitol Hill: A Compendium of Jewish Congressional Members*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2010.
- 15 Kelly Koechel. "Not really as advertised, but for me that was a good thing." www.amazon.com. Key words: "George Sylvester Viereck Product Reviews."
  - 16 See the November/December 1999 issue of The Barnes Review.—Ed.
- 17 George Sylvester Viereck. Men Into Beasts. Minnesota: Fawcett Publications, 1952.
  - 18 Gertz, op. cit.
  - 19 *Ibid*.

Marc Roland is a self-educated expert on World War II and ancient European cultures but is equally at home writing on American history and prehistory. He is also a prolific book and music reviewer for the PzG, Inc. website (www.pzg.biz) and other politically incorrect publishers and CD producers in the U.S. and overseas. He lives near Madison, Wisconsin. Roland has seen many of his articles published in the pages of The Barnes Review over the last several years.

## These Books Expose the Dark Side of FDR

#### The Strange Death of FDR

Subtitle: A History of the Roosevelt-Delano Dynasty—America's Royal Family. By Dr. Emanuel Josephson. In this fascinating book, the author explains that the Roosevelt-Delano dynasty has had an immense impact on U.S. history. Washington, John Adams, John Q. Adams, Madison, van Buren, Andrew Johnson, William Harrison, Taft, Teddy and Franklin were all related to the Delano-Roosevelt family. The book also discusses the merging of the Delano-Roosevelt dynasty with the Rockefellers. But perhaps of most interest is the analysis by Dr. Josephson of the surgery that removed a cancerous mole from FDR's forehead and the possibility that the president's brain had been addled by cancer, thus explaining his behavior in his later years and his strange death. Lots more about the Duponts, the New Deal, U.S. oil cartels, Pearl Harbor, plus Josephson's predictions for the future. Softcover, 288 pages, illustrated, indexed, #591, \$28 minus 10% for TBR subscribers.

## The Roosevelt Red Record & Its Background

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