



the local level. A century later, Saul Alinsky appeared the living embodiment of Tocqueville's observation. In his native Chicago, he organized and prodded

into action thousands of immigrants, minorities, slum-dwellers, and juvenile delinquents. A cross between Machiavelli and P. T. Barnum, he perfected the tactics of confrontation: When one Chicago alderman proved indifferent to adequate garbage pickup, Alinsky had mounds of trash dumped in front of his tavern.

Born in 1909, the child of Russian-Jewish immigrants, Alinsky received his earliest education in the streets of the Windy City. Later, as a student in the University of Chicago's sociology department, he imbibed the new social-environmental understanding of urban problems. Doing field work with Italian street gangs, Alinsky respected their behavior as plausible responses to social *disorganization*.

In 1939, Alinsky organized the first "neighborhood council" in the Back of the Yards, as the largely Polish slaughterhouse area was called. The council helped bring John L. Lewis's Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) into the packing houses, and eventually it opened day-care and recreational centers. The New York *Herald Tribune* declared that democracy had arrived in Upton Sinclair's "jungle."

Alinsky modeled his tactics on those of union organizers and especially of Lewis, who disdained ideology and fought ruthlessly for power. Alinsky's "method" involved three stages: first, employing professional organizers to lay the groundwork; second, organizing a community around an immediate, winnable issue; and, third, turning power over to local people. "Don't do for people what they can do for themselves" was his ironclad rule.

By 1945 Alinsky was a national celebrity. When his *Reveille for Radicals* became a best seller that year, he hardly suspected that his finest days were behind him. During the McCarthyite 1950s, he lost many of his supporters and much of his funding. He again made headlines in 1963, when his Temporary Woodlawn Organization (TWO) blocked the University of Chicago from buying up adjacent black neighborhoods. TWO was an early civil-

rights organization, but Alinsky found himself being edged out of the movement by black leaders. Even though he remained as feisty as ever, lecturing and staging rallies, he died in 1972 a largely forgotten man.

Horwitt, a policy adviser for public interest organizations, provides a superb account of Alinsky's colorful life. But he struggles vainly to persuade his readers that Alinsky is not forgotten, that his legacy is alive and well. To be sure, the Catholic clergy of Chicago's slum neighborhoods always supported Alinsky, the Jewish agitator, and certainly Alinsky influenced the Catholic Church in its populist social activism. Later, when he organized Hispanic migrant workers in California, he put on the payroll a promising young man—Cesar Chavez. Nevertheless, the limitations of Alinsky's confrontational approach decrease the likelihood of his having a lasting influence.

Successful mass movements seem to require not only strategies and tactics but also ideological underpinnings. Alinsky, however, shunned ideology. His successes, the Back of the Yards Council and TWO, had piggybacked on two of the great ideological movements of the 20th century: the labor-unionism of the 1930s and the civil-rights struggle of the 1950s and '60s. Without an ideological stance, Alinsky was left organizing communities and fighting City Hall when real power—in commerce, in industry, in the media, and in politics—was shifting away from localities to a limited number of urban centers. Alinsky may have been Tocqueville's American genius, but Alinsky's America was no longer the one Tocqueville had visited.

**COSMOPOLIS: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity.** By Stephen Toulmin. Free Press. 228 pp. \$22.95

After two world wars, dramatic economic fluctuations, and environmental catastrophes—or, for that matter, just after the morning traffic commute—"modernity" may no longer seem the unquestionable wonder earlier generations thought it to be. In *Cosmopolis*, physicist and philosopher Toulmin attempts to understand how a world men set out confidently to control got so out of hand. His explanation—which focuses on the passion for the scientific, rational

ordering of society ("the hidden agenda of modernity")—is hardly new. Toulmin is more original in locating that rationalist philosophy in its time and in demonstrating, through the limitations of his own book, how difficult it is to free oneself of its hold.

Modernity, in Toulmin's view, began when 17th-century thinkers began to substitute for heavenly truths secular certainty: To overcome the ideological warring in a perpetually crisis-ridden Europe, philosophers such as Descartes, Newton, and Hobbes renounced all human ambiguities and envisioned a human society that would be rationally ordered. Descartes and Hobbes are usually discussed without reference to the preceding Renaissance philosophy, but Toulmin shows just whom they were writing *against*. Descartes's epistemology, with its clear, uniform distinctions between subject and object, was written specifically to refute the revival of classical skepticism in such writers as Montaigne.

If *Cosmopolis* has a hero, it is clearly Montaigne. Montaigne (1533–92) talks about himself, recounts his moods and his sexual experiences, admits his ignorance, and abjures all systems. Descartes (1596–1650), by contrast, demands absolute certainty, assumes the model for all knowledge is mathematics, and separates the controlling mind from controllable nature. The Cartesian quest for certainty has, over three centuries, invariably favored the written over the oral, the universal over the particular, the general over the local, and the timeless over the time-bound. In trying to realize the Cartesian agenda, modernity got on the wrong track by not taking into account the infinite variety of human experience. Toulmin's prescription for our overreaching rational control, and the one-sided modernity it has created, is a return to that humane, cautious, tolerant skepticism that he finds in Montaigne and generalizes to all the Renaissance humanists.

Toulmin's essay reflects so much of the recent critique of Western culture that it is a bit of a surprise to realize at the end how completely he remains within the intellectual framework he condemns. His argument lacks humility, omits all thinkers (e.g., Spinoza, Hume) who would force him to qualify; Toulmin is himself systematic and generalizing, too often dispensing with the taste for particu-

lars he admires in the earlier humanists. He thus discusses modernity without a single reference to race, class, gender, and he is as free as Descartes was of any allusion to a world beyond the West. Physician, one is tempted to say to Toulmin, heal thyself.

**RACE AND HISTORY:** Selected Essays, 1938–1988. By John Hope Franklin. LSU. 450 pp. \$29.95

John Hope Franklin, born in 1915 in an all-black town in Oklahoma, is now completing his remarkable academic career as James B. Duke Professor of History Emeritus at Duke University. Along the way, he not only wrote such works as *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947), *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (1962), and *Racial Equality in America* (1976) but also served as president of America's four most prestigious historical associations. In 1915, it would have



*An integrated jury during Reconstruction. By 1880, juries in the South were all white again.*

been impossible to imagine such a career for a black teacher or scholar. But if what we have here is proof of the American Dream, it is a dream sullied by many slights and rebuffs, several of which are angrily recalled in this tough-minded collection.

All together, these 27 essays—which range from the racial perceptions of the Founding Fathers to 20th-century efforts to achieve racial equality—embody Franklin's lifetime program to revise American history "in order to place the Negro in his proper relationship and perspective." Consider, for example, the two essays on Reconstruction written by Franklin 30 years apart. In 1948, when Franklin surveyed