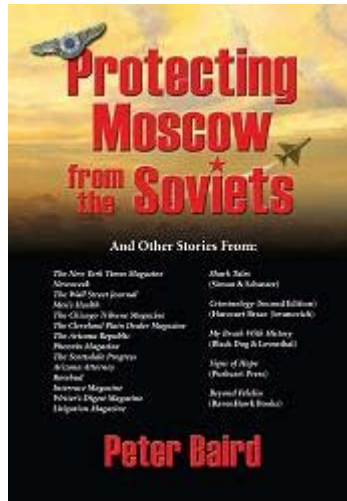


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Reviewed by Kenneth P. Nolan

## *Protecting Moscow from the Soviets*



*By Peter Baird. National Writers Press Inc  
Parker, Colo. 216 pages, \$24.99.*

We're such liars. And all the time too. We answer, "Fine," whenever asked how we're doing. "Good," when asked about family, work. We smile when sad and try to appear brave when scared witless. It's hard to admit fault. It's always the other guy. Just look at the cowards finger-pointing during the current economic disaster.

And truth is most difficult regarding family. I don't know if I was ever explicitly taught never to say a foul word about any family member, but somehow that was instilled in me since diapers. Years ago, Pete Hamill, former editor-in-chief of both the Post and the Daily News, was ostracized in the neighborhood where we grew up not because of his political beliefs, which were anathema to those like my parents but because he wrote that his father drank too much. "How could he say that about his own father," was the refrain.

In a series of essays, Peter Baird candidly writes of his life—his violent alcoholic father, his caring mother who cancer stole when he was a teenager, his success as a trial lawyer, including representing Ernesto Miranda in the U.S. Supreme Court landmark, *Miranda v Arizona*, and his struggles with depression and other disorders. He covers his life from childhood in rural Idaho through his tempestuous relationship with his bullying father to his marriage and children to his victories as an heralded attorney with Lewis and Roca in Phoenix. His stories are crisp and direct as he describes how he represented his wife before the Supreme Court, how his troubled daughter accused him of child abuse, how he achieved professional success in spite of personal misery.

It is rare that a prominent attorney, a partner at a big firm, admits not only to imperfection but individual defects as well. Yet these stories are told not only to

enter Jain but to teach, to reveal—especially to other lawyers—that demons exist and must be treated for a person to excel not only at law but at life. And Peter Baird does this with humor and zeal, honestly and clearly so we empathize with him and examine ourselves for similar traits and behavior.

Just recently a friend, always jolly and entertaining, committed suicide rather than confront terminal illness, shocking of course, but I realize how little I know of people—what secrets are masked in their minds and hearts. For all our legal victories and riches mean little if we're unhappy, tortured or despondent. And this is the triumph of Baird's book, admitting and overcoming personal problems while achieving success as a trial lawyer.

The stories, however, are not filled solely with remorse and anguish. Instead, they include hope and redemption, how Baird reconciled with his father, eventually realizing that his father, a physician, suffered from untreated post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) contracted during his treatment, of the many wounded in the Pacific during World War II. How he learned magic from his mother which he performs expertly to support cancer research in her memory. How he was so proud the day his son was admitted to the bar.

"First, do no harm!" he exhorts his son. "...[N]ever abuse our power or use it mindlessly or for purely destructive purposes no matter what the personal, financial or professional incentives might be."

He describes a sampling of his cases—representing Hare Krishna members arrested for "criminal trespass by loitering," his wife when she, after passing the Arizona bar, refused to answer whether she had been "a member of the Communist party or any organization that advocates overthrow of the United States Government by force or violence?" As a result of her refusal, she was denied a license to practice.

Not only did Baird, at age 28, argue this before the Supreme Court but did so a second time since the eight-member court was deadlocked. His first argument a disaster, Baird finally prevailed 5-4. Ironically, Justice Harry Blackmun, in his recently revealed notes, avers that Sara Baird's refusal to answer must have meant that she had something to hide. She didn't. Her refusal was based on principle.

Miranda's story is told in detail and with irony and tragedy, since Ernesto Miranda's Supreme Court victory never resulted in less prison time. Miranda served time for another crime and was murdered at age 35 after a fight broke out during a card game. Those arrested for Miranda's homicide were, of course, told, "You have the right to remain silent...."

Peter Baird's stories were culled from many written over the years. They were first published in The New York Times, Newsweek, The Wall Street Journal and other media. It is refreshing to read of a lawyer whose ego has bounds and who doesn't waste 100 pages trying to convince us of his brilliance and expertise.

As a Boy Scout, Peter Baird "fought" in the Cold War by scanning the skies over Moscow, Idaho, for inbound Soviet aircraft. Hence, the title for this well-written, concise and entertaining book: "Protecting Moscow from the Soviets." The vignettes should be read by lawyers young and old, for they reveal a real person with flaws and regrets who eventually triumphs not only at the bar but at life.

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