

# An Affirming Flame

*author: Roger Cohen*

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## Synopsis

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author	Roger Cohen
readBy	Roger Cohen, Mark Deakins
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For more than forty years Roger Cohen has ventured to every corner of the earth to chronicle the great upheavals of our age, but he's never lost sight of what really matters: love, hope, and all the mysteries of the human heart. Here, in this collection of columns that will take you from the streets of Kyiv to an execution chamber in Alabama, you can read him at his best. • Dexter Filkins, best-selling author of *The Forever War*

A collection of the finest *New York Times* columns written by Roger Cohen over more than a decade, accompanied by an original, twenty-thousand-word essay on the state of the world

The countless readers who followed Roger Cohen's column and mourned its end responded above all to what they saw as the marriage in his writing of head and heart. That tenor permeates *An Affirming Flame*.

During his twelve years as a columnist, Cohen aimed to hold power to account at home and abroad, in the name of freedom, decency, pluralism, and the importance of truth and dissent in open societies. He watched with alarm as the outside threat of 9/11 morphed into the internal threat of January 6. This time, the assailants were not jihadi terrorists; they were American white supremacists and secessionists convinced of American decadence but unable to see that they personified it. The threat to American democracy is clear.

Cohen dissects this ominous American fracture. He explores themes of displacement, belonging, and his own imperiled craft of journalism. His examination of the rising tide of authoritarian rule takes him to China, and in Kyiv he sees the devastating impact of Vladimir Putin's Russian nationalism. With its trenchant consideration of the plight of refugees, COVID-19, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the war in Afghanistan, Cohen's writing reflects his belief in the unquenchable human quest for dignity.

He captures the fight to defend America's openness, democratic institutions, and ideals against the rising tide of retrogression, division, and assault on truth. This struggle, as Cohen writes, is also the world's. It is inseparable from the battle to save

humanity from the creeping autocracy of the twenty-first century. As he writes, "On lies is tyranny built."

## Reader's comments

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