

ing that Louis Buchalter, at one time New York's leading industrial racketeer, wanted to buy his way out of the electric chair by telling the truth of all this. Buchalter was executed in 1944.

Josephson jeers at Pegler, a good man to jeer at, for having said such things. No confessions implicating Hillman, Josephson says in a footnote, "were ever obtained while he [Buchalter] waited for his death." What is wrong here, as Josephson could easily enough have learned, is that Buchalter talked and talked and talked about Hillman before he died but could not produce what is essential in the case of testimony from a man under sentence of death: corroboration. Buchalter may have been lying in his teeth. Condemned criminals have that habit. But Buchalter did talk. A number of close observers believe that Hillman was involved.

It is only one of the many matters to which Josephson pays no attention, in this book which all sorts of



Louis 'Lepke' Buchalter

good and well-intentioned people have welcomed as an inspiring monument to a great liberal leader. We live in a time when liberals are justifiably angry over the lies that are being told about them. But how long will the anger be justifiable when liberals show little concern for the truth about themselves?

BOOK NOTES

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, by Benjamin P. Thomas. Knopf. \$5.75.

WE TEND to put Lincoln with the Old Testament prophets, a tall man with a beard giving divinely cadenced utterance to ideals toward which we are still striving. But the man lived his life as a politician, not as a prophet, and this splendid new biography—which supplants Lord Charnwood's book as the best one-volume life of Lincoln—reminds us that Father Abraham was perhaps the shrewdest American politician of the nineteenth century: "To hold together in wartime a party made up of abolitionists and Negro-haters, high- and low-tariff men, hard- and soft-money men, former-Whigs and erstwhile Democrats, Maine law prohibitionists and German beer-drinkers, Know-Nothings and immigrants was a task almost beyond accom-

plishment." He did it with a patience that radicals mistook for conservatism and a toughness that idealists mistook for cynicism.

Caught between the arrogant temporizing of General McClellan and the abuse of those who called him spineless for keeping a disobedient general, Lincoln—less fortunate than another President who has been disobeyed by generals—had to reckon with the knowledge that there was no commander nearly as competent to put in McClellan's place. And so he held on (fighting what some people say the nation had never fought before Korea—a limited war), generated a little himself, and finally there were Grant and Sherman and Sheridan.

Confronted with a palace revolution by his own Secretary of the Treasury, Lincoln found himself again alone with the knowledge that indulging in the pleasure of meeting Salmon P. Chase's force with force would be the end of party unity, and possibly of the Union cause. And so he outmaneuvered Chase consummately and lived to win another election and the war.

He was pre-eminently a practical man. Pressed to get the Thirteenth (anti-slavery) Amendment through the House of Representatives, he was not above promising a Democratic Congressman a Federal appointment for his brother. Perhaps his wisdom lay in his humorous acceptance of politics in a democracy as the art of the possible, his greatness in the fact that by beating the politicians at their own game he saved both the nation and what the nation stands for.

NEW WORLD WRITING. *The New American Library*. \$0.50.

DISCOVERY, edited by John W. Aldridge and Vance Bourjaily. *Pocket Books*. \$0.35.

EXPERIMENTAL WRITING is now available between paper covers on the newsstands at a cost whose modesty may encourage experimentalism on the part of readers. *New World Writing*, of which two numbers are now available, offers more well-known names, but the sound of dusty trunks being opened is almost audible. *Discovery* has more of the naïveté—and the virtues—of a college literary magazine.



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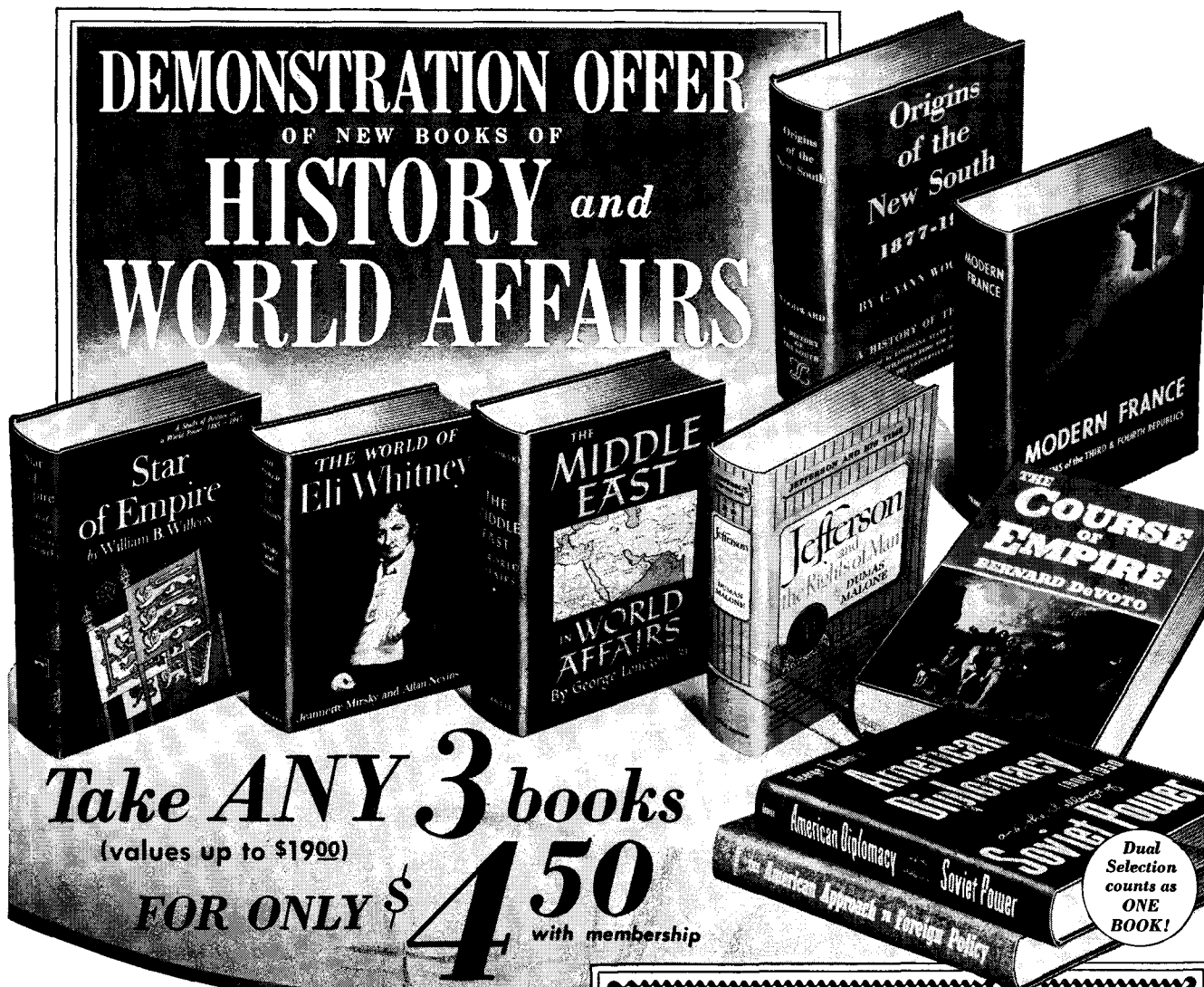
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