

THE REPORTER'S NOTES

Who Masterminds Whom?

When, in the middle of last June, Syngman Rhee released the anti-Communist prisoners of war on exactly the same days that the workers of East Germany were beating up Communists and burning red flags, many of us were inclined to find deep meaning in this coincidence. Indeed, it was said, the events in Seoul and East Berlin marked a turning point in contemporary history. The era of the Great White Fathers is over, and the dependent nations will no longer let the stage of international politics be monopolized by the two main protagonists. The bit players, from now on, will insist on a larger role.

The summer thinking on international affairs has been largely influenced by this theory; but perhaps now, with the fall breezes at long last on the way, we may well revise the thoughts we established during the season of universal perspiration. We may, for instance, look at what happened to the two sets of simultaneous rebels: The workers of East Germany and the Government of Rhee.

A few weeks after the Soviet tanks crushed the workers' revolt, the discredited puppets who played at being leaders in East Germany dutifully traveled to the puppetmakers' headquarters. The men in the Kremlin must have done quite a job of fixing up and repainting on their badly battered puppets. Now Grotewohl & Co. are back in their old roles, while a number of German workers rest in fresh graves.

On our side, the traveling has been done entirely by the representatives of our government. During the negotiations with Syngman Rhee, Mr. Robertson first, and then Mr. Dulles, have exhibited such forbearance that if saintliness were a necessary

ingredient of statesmanship, both men should be counted among the great statesmen of our time.

Yet what happened later at the U.N. gives even more extraordinary evidence of what happens to us when we deal with governments that depend on us entirely—with those governments that, according to the summer theory, are somehow counterparts of the Soviet puppets. For either we are not good at puppetry or we have to deal with an extraordinary breed of puppets.

During the U.N. debate, the representatives of our government showed themselves to the whole world as hopelessly entangled in the wires they were supposed to pull. One did not know who was masterminding whom. But during the debate on India, it was pretty clear that our representatives were speaking for Syngman Rhee. To most of the U.N. delegations the whole thing must have appeared as senseless.

To many delegates familiar with our entertainment it must have looked like a sort of Charlie McCarthy-Edgar Bergen show to which a weird new gimmick had been added. Charlie, in these new programs, was comparatively quiet, while Bergen was acting and talking, not as a ventriloquist, but as a conventional actor on a conventional stage. Most of Charlie's work was to hold a script in front of Bergen's eyes. But Bergen was nervous and ill at ease, and frequently he bungled his lines, his zest entirely lost. Obviously, there is a difference between talking for Charlie and being Charlie's mouthpiece.

Such a revamped McCarthy-Bergen show would unquestionably get a dismal rating. Aside from its not being funny, people would say it isn't plausible in the slightest degree.

In fact, during the U.N. debate on

India there was nothing funny in the behavior of our delegation, and it was very hard for anyone to find it plausible.

THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION to be drawn from all this is that puppetry is not one of our national talents. And how could it be? We are a sentimental sort of people, always likely to fall into some emotional involvements. Even in this hard world of power politics, with so many poor little nations entirely dependent on us, we just cannot handle them as puppets. Rather, they become our adopted children and frequently we quarrel among ourselves about their comparative virtues.

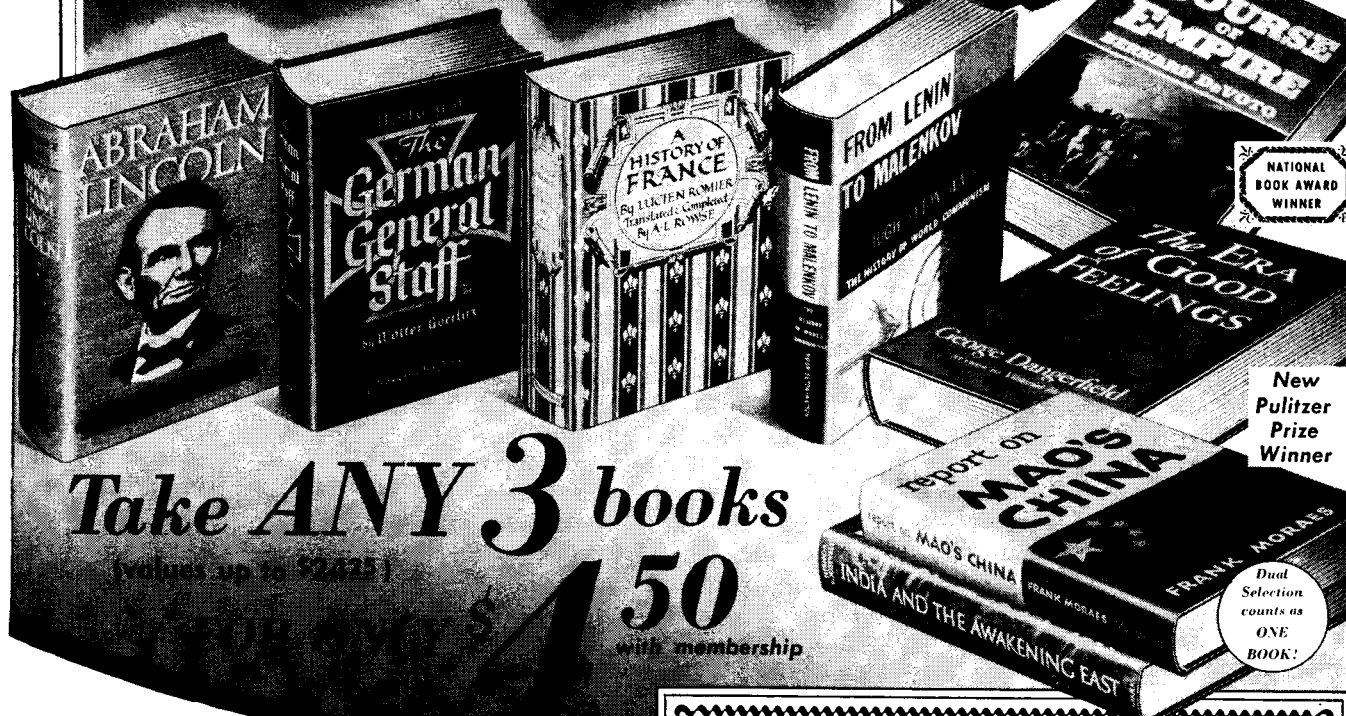
But the men in the Kremlin are not sentimentalists. There is nothing in common between the restlessness of the imprisoned nations they rule and the bumptiousness of the nations we adopt.

Don't Worry, Friends

It has been said by many homecoming patriotic Americans: People abroad have an exaggerated notion of that peculiar American distemper which, for lack of a better name, is called McCarthyism. This applies particularly to those countries that have known fascism: They have such ingrained horror of that plague that they cannot help being frightened when they see its early symptoms in the leading nation of the West. Many a visiting American has been asked by Italian or German friends whether he has a "safe address" or a "good place to hide."

The Germans and Italians are now our friends, and there is not much use in rehashing the old argument about what, in both countries, was not done to stop the fascist blight. But certainly it is a fact that the

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blight could run a disastrous course because, from the beginning, no counteraction was taken.

But here there are many of us who act and counteract as the gravity of the threat demands.

There is no other way, we believe, to stop the unjustified alarm among our friends abroad than to let them know what is being done here. They knew about McCarthyism because it made news, and they will be greatly reassured when better news is made by American citizens from the President down.

This country is saner than you think.

If A Word Could Do . . .

General Matthew Ridgway, at his first press conference since becoming Army Chief of Staff, deplored the low morale of the Army, and objected to the widespread use of the word "brass." With all the respect due to such an eminent field commander, we take the liberty of disagreeing with him. The top officers of the Army are hardened, war-tested men, who can take whatever envious irony there may be in the word "brass." There is a much more demoralizing word than "brass," and that is "boys." It is a mistake and a shame to call our soldiers by that pampering, patronizing name. The moment even the greenest adolescent enters the service, he offers the country the best years of his life—and perhaps his life. If, after this act of dedication, he is not entitled to be called "man," who is?

The Big Fire

Except for some classes of farmers, it's still Boomtime U.S.A. A record 63,408,000 people were employed last month, and unemployment at 1,240,000 was lower than it has been in any month since the Second World War.

This is full employment in a free society, the economic goal of political democracies in this century. It has already lasted longer than any comparable period in our peacetime history in spite of dire warnings from the people who always underrate America's capacity to consume what it produces.

Will it continue? If the nation does go into 1954 with an undiminished boom, a couple of careless

workmen in Livonia, Michigan, should have their share of thanks. For the automobile industry often seems to set the pace for American production and employment; there is evidence that the industry was beginning to produce more cars than it could sell; and the big fire in the General Motors plant at Livonia, near Detroit, on August 12 has cut back production by ten per cent or more.

Livonia was more than the greatest industrial fire we have ever had. It may also have been the most important. It apparently started with a welding torch spark dropping into a pan of inflammable cleanser, which ignited an oil-soaked conveyor belt. A moment later an unidentified employee turned a water hose on the burning oil, causing the first explosion. One and a half million square feet of steel, brick, and glass burned to the ground.

Livonia was the only plant in the country making Hydra-Matic transmissions. Cadillac, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac drew all their automatic transmissions from this plant. Outside the G.M. line, Lincoln, Hudson, and Nash were also affected because they use Hydra-Matic too. Plant damage was said to be upward of \$40 million. But the loss in production of cars will be reckoned in the billions.

Industry post mortems on the fire ranged over several interesting subjects. What did it prove about concentrating production of components in a few plants—as G.M.'s Charles Wilson has been urging in Washington—rather than dispersing the A-bomb risk? How much unemployment would it create beyond the 60,000 workers immediately affected? Did it strengthen the argument for insuring businessmen against loss of earnings, since G.M. wasn't covered for that kind of risk? One delighted insurance company official was quoted as exclaiming: "This hands us the best sales argument we've had in years."

FROM 1948 to 1951, the automotive industry turned out an average of 5.2 million cars a year. Last year, metal shortages caught up with it, and only 4.4 million cars were produced. In its year-end review last January, the outgoing Council of

Economic Advisers predicted that production in 1953 would "approximate the 1948-51 average," but that beyond this year there would be "a difficult problem of salesmanship."

Actually, the industry was already on its way to breaking its own production records. Up to the middle of August, when the G.M. fire upset all calculations, the industry had already built 4,093,533 new cars—almost two-thirds again as many as the 2,416,455 it built in the same period last year. At this rate, it might well have pushed up close to the magic figure of six million units. (*Fortune's* pre-Livonia estimate was 5.6 million.) But the auto dealers would almost certainly have had a hard time selling this many cars, as the industry's long-term prospects for annual sales are probably five million cars or less per year. Now, with Hydra-Matic output totally blocked, any output figure over 5.5 million for 1953 would be a miracle.

How much of a slowdown in auto production can be traced back to the man with the wandering welding torch is pure guesswork at this stage. *Business Week* suggests that the industry may turn out 300,000 fewer cars in this model year than it would otherwise have done. The New York *Herald Tribune* guessed (as a "conservative estimate") that the entire industry's output would go down ten to fifteen per cent for the rest of this year, which would be in the same range.

So if demand for new cars is going to taper off after this year, and if production was showing signs of exceeding demand even this year, the Livonia disaster may have been some kind of well-disguised blessing.

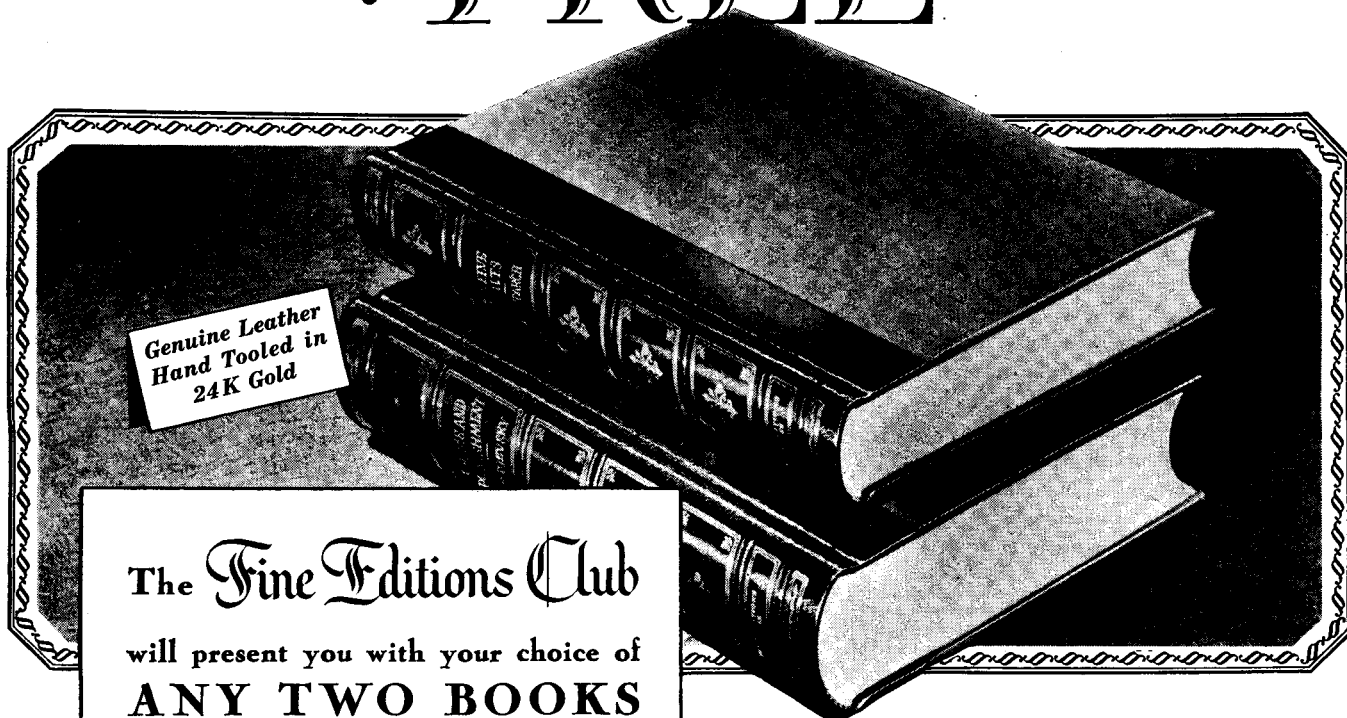
Mood Indigo

The coming buyers' market for automobiles has produced some advice from the National Automobile Dealers Association. That body, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, has warned dealers not to sing the blues when talking to reporters.

"If a newspaper reporter calls you, take care that you don't feed him a lot of depression-making fuel. It might even be your theory, but, if you advance it enough it might produce the 'recession' that can and will really hurt. Just remember, sad songs are contagious."

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WHO— WHAT— WHY—

THE SYMPTOMS this year are different, but France and Italy are suffering from the same disease. It is an oversimplification to call this trouble "stomach Communism"; it is weightier than the list of Communist voters, deeper than physical hunger. Too many Frenchmen and Italians are preoccupied with the idea that they aren't getting a fair share of what they produce. And so effective government in these two countries has suffered a stroke this year, brought on by growing anger at things as they are.

The nature of the French strikes made it particularly hard to get a story on them. When we asked our European correspondent, **Theodore H. White**, for a report, he interrupted his vacation in the south of France but was unable to get back to Paris and finally cabled the story from Toulouse. In addition to his article an excerpt from White's forthcoming book about Europe occupies our editorial pages in this issue.

Staff writer **Claire Sterling**, who writes about Socialist Pietro Nenni and his challenge to the Christian Democratic Government of Premier Giuseppe Pella, reports regularly on Italian affairs.

You may think that a port authority would have authority over a port. Not necessarily so, says **William S. Fairfield**, who has looked into the ramified concerns of the Port of New York Authority and raised some questions about the public responsibility of this mushrooming type of public enterprise. Mr. Fairfield will be remembered as co-author of our wire-tapping series and for his story on the gambling industry in Las Vegas. He is now traveling and reporting on national affairs for *The Reporter*.

EVER SINCE 1769, when patents were issued to James Watt for his steam engine and to Richard Ark-

wright for his spinning frame, men who work in factories have worried that the scientists and engineers would make them obsolete. The opposite has happened. As the Industrial Revolution gave each worker command over more power and machinery, his rising productivity eventually tended to bring him a better life, and created a need for more and more workers.

According to **Warner Bloomberg, Jr.**, some workers in twentieth-century Gary, Indiana, are still afraid. Mr. Bloomberg has recorded several times in these pages the impressions of his friends in the steel mills where he used to work. He will teach a social-science course at the University of Chicago this autumn.

Ray Alan is the pseudonym of an Englishman who usually writes from and about the Near East. In this issue he reports on an international incident with France and England as its locale.

TWO OF OUR regular contributors have been roaming around Europe this summer. **Marya Mannes** sent us her report on Hamburg after several weeks of traveling and reporting in Germany. Her article is illustrated by **Fred Zimmer**, a frequent art contributor, who also happened to be in Hamburg. **Bill Mauldin** spent a couple of months in Europe too, revisiting some places he had come to know well while he was under fire as a *Stars and Stripes* representative nine years ago.

Our review of "Salome" was done by **William Lee Miller**, who teaches Christian Ethics at Yale University and edits the religious journal *Social Action*. He wrote the article "Religion, Politics, and the Great Crusade" in the July 7 issue.

Eric Larrabee, associate editor of *Harper's Magazine*, was a member of a group sent to Africa last winter by the Carnegie Corporation.