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# China AND THE Cold War

By LORD LINDSAY  
Cambridge University Press  
\$3.75.

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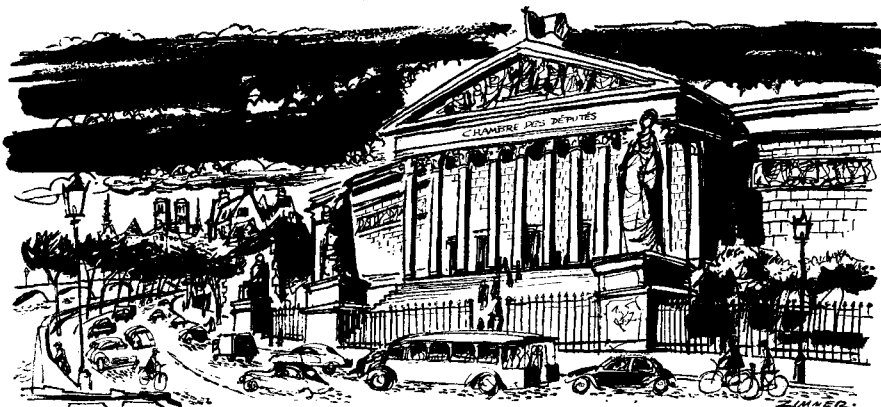
Be sure to read announcement on page 7.

tioned to American life and movie mores in spite of his British paternal origins and subsequent orientation to England. The fact is that Miss Dane cannot make him seem even remotely, even superficially, American, no matter how many "goshes" she drops into his speech, how many references she makes to his inner conflicts as the issue of two civilizations. She loads her case, for the American mother is a preposterous character and Jacy Florister (a mistake of nam-

ing, no matter how much she "explains" it) is British to the core: Miss Dane has not really discovered us yet.

Excepting this—and accepting it—*The Flower Girls* is not only quite a performance but quite an experience, if you can stay the course.

Warmth and gaiety, generosity and cultivation—these qualities warrant indulgence, as much in the reading as in the writing. Those who finish the book might fittingly say: "Thank you, Miss Dane."



## France's Revolt Against History

GOUVERNEUR PAULDING

FRANCE AGAINST HERSELF, by Herbert Luethy. Translated by Eric Mosbacher. Praeger. \$6.50.

The author of this bitter analysis of France is a Swiss, and it would be possible to surmise that some stupid, arrogant middle-class Frenchman stepped on the author's toes when he was a small boy, and it would not be surmise at all to say that at one time or another some stupid, arrogant French cop, or customs guard, or post-office clerk thumbing M. Luethy's identity card said something nasty about the Swiss; and so there could be the theory that this book is a work of disappointed love.

One trouble with playing around with such a theory is that sooner or later the French hurt the feelings of everyone not a Frenchman, and so no non-Frenchman could ever write a book about the French—or review one. Another trouble about the theory is that you say you are

not going to use it, but in saying so you do.

### L'Etat

This is the history of France since the Second World War, but it starts with the high Middle Ages and Philip I, the fourth king of the House of Capet to occupy the throne of the western Franks. It was this king "sitting in his court like a leper, abandoned by his lords and barons, living in open adultery, scorned and excommunicated, perjured towards his vassals . . ." who by his "unpretentious immobility" and lazy greed anchored a hitherto nomadic court and founded institutions and law for a state, with Paris fixed for all time as its capital.

No matter who subsequently went off to what crusade, no matter whether there came a time when a French king mistakenly thought he was the French state, no matter who

made the Revolution, the Empires, the Restorations, the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Republics, the victories, the riots, the guillotines, the firing squads, the defeats—those institutions started by the early Capetian king endured. They have served and preserved the state. They have hardly changed. Age simply strengthens them.

An efficient civil service? Cops who serve any and every régime? Not at all. These autonomous and self-perpetuating bodies do not primarily carry out the changing purposes of the kings, Assemblies, and Ministers who in theory are their masters; they serve their own traditions, nourish and never relinquish their own power. The laws are sent them for execution and enforcement; the ones they do not like they lose in labyrinthine procedure. They can also act in a political void: That is what we saw in Vichy.

### Dismal Parade

When the Resistance people came with their dreams of renewal, it was against these institutions that their effort broke. While politicians succeeded each other in the dismal parade of the futile years that followed, it was these unchanging institutions that gave France the semblance of still being a nation. But they made that nation incapable of action. They held it bound tightly to the past in which they lived. Among the politicians were courageous men. They could not govern because they could not move the dead weight of the state apparatus.

There was another dead weight, for the state apparatus was reproduced in thousands of nonofficial bodies that represented, and represent, the inertia, the selfish interests of commerce, industry, and special groups. During the German occupation each section of the country, each class of the population, had been forced—not entirely against its will—to depend more than ever on itself, on its own effort, for its own survival. Never as under enemy occupation is there a period in which self-interest so resembles virtue or contributes so greatly to preserve a nation's faith in itself. There was the resistance movement that fought the Germans; there was a resistance movement of a totally different kind

that fought obdurately, meanly, selfishly for self-preservation. When Liberation came, the first of these movements, which was inclined to look beyond the boundaries of the nation and seek a renewal of liberty for all Europe, ran headlong into the second, which was inclined only toward resuming its own interrupted pursuit of happiness—and smashed.

### Looking Backward

Neither the apparatus that served the state nor its manifold likenesses serving the private interests of citizens was capable of looking in any other direction than that of the past. The desire to recover what is lost is not enough to foster any united purpose. But the French did not even have such a desire; they had no nostalgia for the Capetians, for the Bourbons, for Napoleon—not even for the Third Republic. They were not aware that anything had gone, or that indeed there was a past. It was as if there had been no war and France were still a great power. They did not even watch the present as it turned day by day into the irrecoverable past: The empire crumbled—in Madagascar, in India, in Indo-China; it was threatened in North Africa—and they argued about subsidies to Catholic schools. Two immense powers faced each other in a new world that offered no resemblance whatever to one in which a Franco-German quarrel had any importance. The French, concerned only with their own pride, did not even argue seriously about Germany.

Queuille, Laniel, Bidault, Schuman, Pinay, in whatever order they come to mind, were among the men who tried to govern and who could not do so against a conservatism that was anarchy. Luethy makes it clear that no one could have governed under the circumstances. He also makes it clear that the Assembly, on which the blame is generally laid, was itself the prisoner of the electorate. As far back as one can remember, a romantic and silly distinction has been made by Frenchmen—French royalists were always at it—and by foreign observers as well between the “real” France and its institutions. The institutions—meaning whatever France did that was distasteful to the observer—did not

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represent in the slightest degree the desires or thought or doctrine of the "real" country. Luethy abolishes this distinction. When de Gaulle formed his political party he based its claim and its power on the idea that the "real" France was as disgusted as he was himself with political parties that had proved incapable of giving France a government. Since the illusions of those parties were wholly shared by the French people, the only disgust he could arouse in the French was self-disgust.

### No Possible Return

It is a terrible thing to follow Luethy's brilliant, coherent, yet strangely inhuman indictment of the French people, the "real" French people, for the paralysis they have not succeeded in fighting off. At first there seems no loophole of escape either for the French or for the reader. This is because Luethy's book is proclaimed to be, and seems to be, about France. Actually it is not. It is about Europe. It is not even just about Europe. It is about Africa and about all the peoples to whom Europe—and the French—have brought the notion of the individual's right to freedom. That is why this sardonic and cruel book is also hopeful and stimulating.

France has been attempting a return to its own affairs. But "such a return would be possible only in the form of a chauvinistic and chaotic revolt against history itself, similar to the dreadfully pointless revolts in the late history of Greece against the consequences of centuries of self-destruction—that late Greece which, in its decline into the provincial, in its colonial administration, and in its pathetic arrogance over a departed greatness in the midst of a Hellenised world whose brilliant motherland it once had been, is so alarmingly reminiscent of the age in which we live." There is no possible return to a position of isolated and self-sufficing greatness. There is not even the possibility of doing nothing and thus enduring. Luethy quotes Edouard Herriot: "France had the right to withdraw into her own grief." A nation like France has never the right to resign. It is only by moving again into Europe that France with Europe will be saved—and, at that, only if Europe

and all the other continents move ahead into a new world.

WHILE we are waiting for that, we would do well to remember French people who are not in this book at all: the young man and woman who are riding a tandem bicycle out of Paris for the weekend with the picnic basket clamped to the handle bars; the young archaeologist studying at the Farnese Palace in Rome; the young intern in the hospital. They are not political figures; they have not lost hope.

## Book Notes

THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS, by Louis Kronenberger. *Knopf*. \$4.

Does anybody write letters just for the fun of it any more? The best of Mr. Kronenberger's essays concern a more leisurely and in many ways a more civilized age, the eighteenth century, when literate men and women thought it important to write both well and at length to their friends. Here is the irascible and unwashed Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose relations with her own husband were almost entirely epistolary. And here is Alexander Pope, whose magnificent literary quarrel with Lady Mary began either when she returned some borrowed sheets to Pope's mother without having them laundered or when she burst out laughing at the ugly little man's attempts to woo her. Pope himself secretly arranged to have some of his letters pirated so that he would be compelled, in all modesty, to come forward with a complete authorized edition.

Mr. Kronenberger writes of a witty, reasonable age in witty, reasonable prose.

ELINOR GLYN: A BIOGRAPHY, by Anthony Glyn. *Doubleday*. \$4.50.

Just about fifty years ago a great number of people in the United Kingdom and in the United States read about a man who was asleep at the wrong time: "Then a madness of tender caressing seized her. She purred as a tiger might have done, while she undulated like a snake. She touched him with her fingertips, she kissed his throat, his wrists, the palms of his hands, his eyelids, his

hair. Strange, subtle kisses, unlike the kisses of women. And often, between her purrings she murmured love-words in some fierce language of her own, brushing his ears and his eyes with her lips the while. And through it all Paul slept on. . . ." When Paul awoke, the lady expressed her desire to be rid of the "rotting carrion spoiling God's world . . ." that was her husband, and somehow Paul seems off pitch at that moment too: "'Oh, my Queen!' said Paul distressed. 'Don't say such things—'"

*Three Weeks* was considered not just bad writing but immoral. Even Professor Thomas Lindsay, the Principal of Glasgow College, scolded Mrs. Elinor, but he had not read the book. When he had, "She found him in tears, sobbing that he had grossly misjudged it." This biography turns out to be the life of a romantic and rather engaging snob who worked very hard indeed.

DAVY CROCKETT'S OWN STORY: As Written by Himself. *Citadel Press*. \$3.50.

THE LIFE OF DAVY CROCKETT, by Himself. *A Signet Book. The New American Library*. 35 cents.

In 1834, Congressman Crockett traveled from Washington to Boston making speeches along the way, telling his interminable jokes—it would be interesting to find out at just what period "tall" stories first became a bore—and observing the new city taverns and theaters, which now we can see only in the faded lithographs of the time. He was exploiting his reputation for bear hunting and Indian fighting; he was the frontiersman. But when he visited the new cotton mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, he seems to have stepped out of his role entirely. Forgotten were the great open spaces; he loved the congested mills. In Lowell he dined on a "fine salmon"; he talked to girls making from "one dollar seventy-five cents to three dollars per week, after paying their board." "Here were thousands," he wrote, or had somebody write for him, "useful to others, and enjoying the blessings of freedom . . . Not one expressed herself as tired of her employment, or oppressed with work . . ." When the girls came out of the factories they "looked as if they were coming from a quilting frolic."