

WHO—

WHAT—

WHY—

HAIR CURLING is the fashion these days, a new look launched by Secretary Humphrey and ex-President Hoover—two gentlemen who, incidentally, are distinctly hairless. A first group of articles and **Max Ascoli's** editorial admit that we have major economic problems in our country but insist that they are a picnic compared to those which—bless their souls—harass the Russians. Russia's economic troubles are described by our regular contributor **Isaac Deutscher**, whose book *Russia in Transition and Other Essays* will soon be published by Coward-McCann. **Paul A. Samuelson**, professor at M.I.T., looks at our own economy and finds that while there is probably some inflation there is nothing to get overexcited about. Taking no chances with economic prophecy, we publish the somewhat more pessimistic view of another economist, **Ruby Turner Norris**, Chairman, Department of Economics, Connecticut College, New London, who is bold enough to suggest reasonable measures to combat the effects of the inflationary budget.

Lionel Birch, British free-lance writer, tells us about the present migratory wave from Britain. We stress the word "present": It is an undoubted fact that many Britishers are leaving home, mostly for the Commonwealth nations, but we are sure that as the end result of the present flurry the civilization of the English-speaking countries will not suffer. **George Bailey** gives us an accurate report on the heartbreaking Hungarian migration. **Senator Clifford P. Case** (R., New Jersey) discusses the President's proposals to make our immigration laws more elastic, while **Judith Laikin**, who served in our London consular office, cites chapter and verse to prove how inelastic and indeed nonsensical the present laws are. **Reinhold Niebuhr**, with his unique authority, gives his views on the U.N. and on the tonnage this precious ship anchored in the East River can carry. Our European Correspondent, **Edmond Taylor**, sends us notes for a story he felt he could skip writing. **Flora Lewis** tells what she recently saw in Prague.

Kildare Dobbs's article is taken from a series of talks he gave over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. **Nora Magid** is a member of our staff. **Ralph Russell** is a free-lance writer. **Hortense Calisher**, short-story writer, teaches at Barnard.

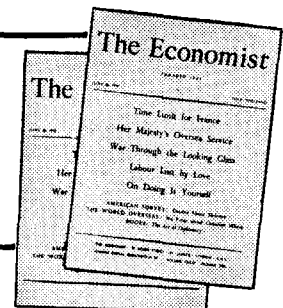
John Kenneth Galbraith is the Galbraith of Harvard. Our cover, a view of Budapest, is by **Robert Shore**.

March 7, 1957

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This Spell of Languor

No, it wasn't Dwight Eisenhower who at his debut on the national stage spoke of having asked "the Merciful Father, the Father of us all, to let this cup pass from me." Yet the cup-passing propensity has become an integral part of the President's style. It comes from personal humility and is now, in his fifth year of office, an ingrained attitude toward the affairs of state.

This attitude is particularly arresting because the President has been giving increasing evidence both of political astuteness and of fondness for the office he holds. He is infinitely more sure of himself now, and no one can call him a reluctant President. What reluctance is left shows itself when he has to use his authority. Unfortunately it happens that the occasions when this is demanded of him have become more and more frequent for two reasons: the broadening of his horizon and the prospect of stormy times ahead.

The President sees that the responsibilities of the Federal government toward the welfare, education, and security of the citizen are inescapable, and he also sees what harm the government can do when it either fails to act or acts extravagantly. But the President doesn't quite like what he sees. He dislikes it when the governmental obligations he has acknowledged are translated in terms of requests for increased Federal spending. He loathes huge military appropriations and the prospect that the power of destruction our nation is stockpiling might be set off by some malicious or accidental explosion somewhere in the world. In this the President could not be more representative of the popular mood.

Lately the Eisenhower Administration has been relying on the Gen-

eral Assembly of the United Nations for major foreign-policy decisions. When this reliance turned out to be just a name for abulia, the Administration went to Congress and asked to be recognized as the Executive Branch of the government. Now, in his speech on Israel, the President once again places the burden of decision on the U.N.

Loud outcries, mournful warnings of economic disaster of some kind or another, have lately filled the air. There is nothing unusual in these cycles of wailing. But certainly there is something unusual when a Secretary of the Treasury, supported or at least not reprimanded by the President, asks Congress to slash a budget the two men have just put together. The major task of curbing unquestionably inflationary trends is left to the Federal Reserve Board—the government agency for which the Administration is least responsible.

In the private sector of our economy, the President has solemnly warned business and labor to practice self-restraint and to go slow on a treacherous road that may lead to inflation. He has addressed himself, one could say, to the General Assembly of all inflation-making interests, and let it go at that.

There is a singular consistency in our government's action or inaction. There is the same reluctance to follow decisive policies, the same inclination to get along, as well as possible, with boisterously self-centered, touchy states like India or Saudi Arabia—or Texas.

ALL this meekness, this indecisiveness, this passing of the cup, is so weird as to seem almost unreal. And perhaps it is unreal. This extraordinary restraint in leadership that the President and the Adminis-

tration have imposed on themselves may come from a partly deliberate, partly instinctive wish to trim the sails of state before major, maybe cyclonic disturbances. It is not in our nation or in its economy that such storms can originate.

The storm center, of course, is forming in the Soviet empire. The people's unsatisfied yearning for needed goods, which here comes with inflation, is a permanent condition of the system over there. While Stalin lived, this planned, merciless scarcity of things that make life bearable did not affect the inextricably linked economic and political structure. Now something has changed, and the more those long-suffering peoples acquire, the more aware they become of their misery. This new state of things may be immensely profitable to us, and immensely troublesome.

The day is coming, and coming fast, when our state of partly spontaneous, partly government-induced tranquillity will come to an end. The President and the Administration will realize—when the time for decisive diplomatic and perhaps military action comes—that there is nobody, at home or in the international community, to whom the buck can be passed.

THE PRESENT morbid brooding about a depression that is and is not coming reflects perhaps a tender nostalgia for the good old times when the things we worried about were all domestic and somewhat cozy—even a Wall Street crash and apple selling. When the real test comes, the leaders of the Executive and Legislative Branches of our government will have to shake off their languor. They will have no choice then and no escape.