

# Politics Is People

BEHIND THE BALLOTS: THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF A POLITICIAN.

By James A. Farley. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by HAROLD PHELPS STOKES

**W**RITTEN as a pot-boiler, by a man who has few claims to fame except as a politician and who is regarded by many worthy persons as more or less of a menace to our institutions because of his devotion to the spoils system, this book might easily be dismissed as a work of only ephemeral interest. On the contrary, it is likely to be read for many years to come, and for two simple reasons: it contains an authoritative account of the development of political support for the nomination, election, and reelection of President Franklin Roosevelt, and it describes in an engaging way the career and methods of the most successful political manager of his day.

The most memorable chapter in the book is the one dealing with the pre-election campaign of 1932. Here is the inside story of those fateful months, from the day when the author set out on his westward travels in a manner artfully compounded of Kim's lama looking for his sacred river and Charles F. Murphy going after the delegation from Kinderhook, down to the dramatic moment when F. D. R. stepped, *deus ex machina*, before the tumultuous convention which had nominated him for President. Historians will note that Farley rejects contemporary accounts of that convention which held Hearst largely responsible for breaking the deadlock and swinging the convention to Roosevelt on the fourth ballot, and gives the credit for that historic maneuver almost entirely to Garner.

There are chapters on the birth of the New Deal, the 1936 election, the Post Office Department, F. D. R. The one on the President will disappoint any reader naive enough to expect any very novel or disparaging revelations as to the character of Mr. Farley's boss. Our author does criticize him gently, however, for sometimes battling too hard for a pet measure when a more compromising attitude might accomplish more.

Who was the original Roosevelt-for-President man? Who is the most unselfish man in public life today? Who the most intensely serious? What is the trouble with the Brain Trusters? Is Mrs. Roosevelt an asset or a liability? These and other similar questions the reader will find answered in Mr. Farley's book. It is full of those "intimate glimpses of men in public life" which publishers relish. In and out flits the poignant figure of the late Louis McHenry Howe, Secretary to the President, the gnome-

like little man who hoarded votes for his beloved "Franklin" as a miser would hoard gold.

While he objects to political purges, Mr. Farley is apparently not averse to occasional literary ones. When his life story was published in the *American Magazine* last summer, he mentioned Governor Lehman's statement opposing the President's Supreme Court plan, and went on to say that he politely suggested to the Governor afterwards, that he mind his own business. This "intimate glimpse" is missing from the formal autobiography. So is the breath-taking estimate that Mr. Farley has between 400,000 and 500,000 correspondents, fully half of whom he knows personally. But he does describe his habit of striking out "Dear Mr. Jones" in letters that have been typewritten for his signature and submitting "Dear Bill," in his favorite green ink, to give the missive the right personal touch. (The editor emeritus of the *New York Times* has what must be a priceless item of Farleyana: a letter in which "Dear John" is struck out and "Dear Dr. Finley" substituted.)

There is much about other and more subtle methods of gaining and holding



Eric Schaal

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men's allegiance, all of it lending support to the theory that political genius consists chiefly of an infinite capacity for making friends. Or, as Mr. Farley himself puts it, "Politics is people."

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## Mann on Munich

THIS PEACE. By Thomas Mann. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1938. 75 cents.

Reviewed by DAVID H. POPPER

**I**N this brief essay on the Munich accord and its consequences Thomas Mann has eloquently voiced his disgust and despair over Europe's degeneration into fascism. In doing so he has adopted, lock, stock, and barrel, the view that Czechoslovakia was betrayed by a "politically powerful clique of international interests" who offered up "an allied and loyal state upon the altar of fascism, that fascism might be preserved and strengthened for its role as hired bravo against Russia and socialism." Foremost among the guilty are the pro-fascist English statesmen, who, in his view, deliberately staged the whole heart-rending war scare of September last to justify a sell-out agreed upon in advance.

European culture and liberalism, according to "This Peace," have thus been struck a shattering blow. It may be that reason and truth are vanishing in Europe, retreating to the small sanctuary offered them in the hearts of those who still proclaim the primacy of the spirit and the integrity of the absolute ideal. As for the European political scene, there are a few rays of hope. In the first place, the sin of the Versailles peace treaty—if indeed it was a sin—has now been fully expiated.

Germany is victor; there is no more penance to be done. Second, the crisis revealed that despite all their indoctrination, the Germans did not want war and did not approve of the dynamic foreign policy of the Nazis with its belligerent implications. Third, a European continent completely and triumphantly fascist might pass through the fire of self-destruction and give way to a United States of Europe, in which humane and rational ideals might again obtain a hearing.

These are slight hopes, mere overtones of despair. Most of Thomas Mann's readers will agree with him that the outlook is bleak. It is unfortunate, however, that Mann has chosen to base his diagnosis of Europe's ills upon a new historical postulate not yet susceptible of proof. The Munich capitulation appears to many scholars as the fruit not of the Machiavellian plotting of hypocritical statesmen, but of the vacillation of weak and perplexed leaders. Human drift and stupidity may attain heights beyond imagination, which observers are constantly tempted to ascribe to some planned motivation. If this is true, it may not yet be too late to revivify and educate leadership in the democracies, and to turn it against the new barbarism.

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# "The Mightiest Machine"

BY RALPH ROEDER

THESE two books,\* appearing within a few weeks of each other, are closely complementary and can best be appreciated by the light which each throws on the other. "The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci" provides us at last with the full text of those interminable scientific researches on which rests his reputation of universality. In translating and classifying them for the benefit of the English-speaking world, Mr. MacCurdy has performed a monumental service, and it is perhaps ungrateful to add that his accomplishment only emphasizes the need of yet another exertion to complete it. To the untrained reader, however, this mass of miscellaneous and fragmentary material is apt to remain as mystifying, and to retain its secret as closely as it did before publication, without the aid of expert commentary and interpretation; and it is as a contribution to such service that the volume by Madame Vallentin makes its appearance at so timely a moment.

Of recent years critics have tended more and more to explore and exalt the scientist, who was so long eclipsed by the artist, in Leonardo; and with good reason. The former always underlay and eventually outgrew and displaced the latter; and it is as a scientist, so far in advance of his age, that he most closely approaches our own, of which he undoubtedly anticipated the spirit if he did not actually foreshadow many of its fundamental discoveries. No one offers so fertile and legitimate a subject for our modern interest in revising the accepted reputations of the past, and it may seem surprising that we have had to wait so long for his reappearance.

Surprising, that is, until one examines the Notebooks. There the materials confront us in all their bleak abundance. Little over a hundred years have passed since scholars first undertook the preliminary work of assembling the scattered MSS. and deciphering the myriad notes written in that abbreviated, inverted, left-handed script which Leonardo employed both for convenience and se-

crecy; the work still continues under the official auspices of the Italian government; and now that the extant text has been established, the real difficulties begin to emerge. These are many and various. In the first place, this accumulation of thousands of detached notes represents, as everyone knows, the fugitive observations of a mind which invaded every field of inquiry only to desert it for another, and as a record of progress this unsifted drift of memoranda remains puzzling because the notes were made by Leonardo for his own use in view of an eventual development to which his restless intelligence never returned. Encyclopedic in scope, kaleidoscopic in effect, they have nothing in common but their incompleteness.

Important as the publication of the Notebooks is, for the purpose of the general reader who wishes to assess the reputation of Leonardo at its source, their contents are apt to prove indigestible without the aid of a technical commentary. To this task specialists have already addressed themselves; articles have appeared in professional journals on various phases of Leonardo's activities; but their findings have yet to be assembled and sifted. For, as usual, the experts disagree and fall into two factions. There are those who enthusiastically read into the notes more than they will bear and attribute to Leonardo the historic discoveries associated with Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Vesalius, Harvey, Watt, Pascal, and so many more; and there are those who candidly hesitate between recognition and conjecture and, in the end, join the general reader and edify him with the authority of their doubts. What then do we know, or think that we know?

The studies in anatomy, which cover a period of at least twenty-one years, form the most extended and complete but also the least revolutionary section of the Notebooks. It cannot be claimed that Leonardo anticipated the discovery of the circulation of the blood or even that he missed it by as narrow a margin as Servetus, Columbus, and others of the next generation who struck the scent before Harvey. The most startling statement in



Leonardo da Vinci: "He was reserved and impersonal, solitary and aloof" . . .

the Notebooks, on the other hand, will be found in the isolated observation that "the sun does not move"; but as it is nowhere developed, and hangs like a brilliant luminary in the void, it is only a guess, and the very absence of development argues against the assumption that Leonardo shattered the geocentric system of cosmography and revolutionized astronomical speculation a decade or two before Copernicus and a century before Galileo.

In the notes on geology, amid a mixture of obsolete hypothesis and sound but obvious and elementary observation, we find much of his best work. He was the first to appreciate the significance of fossil remains, and the arguments which he advanced to refute the theory of the Deluge show a masterly grasp of scientific method and clearly forecast the modern theory of the gradual submergence of the continents. In the field of physics he has left provocative leads in the analysis of heat, light, magnetism, and sound. In chemistry he seems to have been an amateur, if we are to judge by the results of his rash experiments with pigments and sizes. He botanized by way of recreation, and briefly. An accomplished geometer, his command of that subject imparts to his style an unwonted ease and finality which make one feel that here, in a world of abstractions, he is in his own element at last. But then one turns to the section on mechanics, and in that field, which he called the paradise of mathematics, because there the law is applied and the harvest gathered, one is swept away in the inexhaustible play of an essentially practical mind, teeming with inventions of every description; and before the prolific outpouring of projects

\* *THE NOTEBOOKS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI*. Arranged, rendered into English, and introduced by Edward MacCurdy. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock. 1938. 2 vols. \$15.  
*LEONARDO DA VINCI*. By Antonina Vallentin. New York: The Viking Press. 1938. \$3.75.