

Publisher's Gallery



II: Melville Minton

MELVILLE MINTON, president of G. P. Putnam's Sons, has the buoyancy of a man who loves life—and the good life for him is publishing. "I won't quit," he laughs, "until they carry me out!" From the looks of Mr. Minton, big and silver-haired—a handsome figure in a navy-blue double-breasted—that will be a long time.

Forty-eight years ago, aged fifteen, he entrained for Wall Street from Red Bank, N. J., to be a broker, paused at Scribner's to greet a family friend, and remained over two decades. He has an old grad's sentiment for "Scribner's university," where he got his book learning stockroom up (footsteps his son is retreading). Of all, the happiest years were those he traveled about selling books.

In 1921, during the festivities of a booksellers' conclave, he met his future partner, Putnam's Earle Balch (now retired). When George Haven Putnam died in 1930, six-year-old Minton, Balch & Co. merged with the firm that printed Ruskin, Carlyle, and Poe, to name a few. Founder George Palmer Putnam's sons John Bishop and Irving died, respectively, in 1917 and '31, last of the clan with a house that dates back to 1838.

"Publishing," says Mr. Minton, "is a manufacturing business in which you sell your product at a profit or you don't continue. We haven't begun to scratch the surface. There was more junk published in '47 than any year I can remember—and we had our share."

He's past president of the Book Publishers Bureau, now head of the American Book Publishers' Council, a fraternity dear to his heart,— "a good Republican," who works seventy-two hours a week but, "thank God!," doesn't write. His current reading: "Anything I feel like after I get through the newspapers and Bennett Cerf." —R. G.

Lenin (despite the incidental arrests) that he appointed Malinovsky his main deputy in Russia, and made him the Bolshevik whip in the *Duma* or Russian Parliament, and installed him as the publisher of the Party paper *Pravda*. The point to be kept in mind if one is to understand Lenin's leadership is that this treacherous fomenter of violence pleased him just as much as he in turn pleased his real employer, the *Okhrana*.

The explanation of this apparent paradox (which, by the way, is documented beyond disproof) is that Lenin and the Czarist policeman were aiming at the same mark. Both of them wanted to sabotage and if possible destroy the numerous "democratic socialists" or Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. And now we may push the identification a bit farther, for we have the evidence upon which to base a final judgment—a judgment that has been delayed up to the present time by the fact that practically all critical analysis of pre-Revolutionary faction fights in Russia has come from members of the defeated parties, Socialists themselves.

Lenin had a predecessor and copied an old policy. He may have stumbled upon it as a student of Russian history, but the chronology suggests that he adopted it because it fitted his tactics, which were fully matured when the revolutionary opportunity arrived. In any case the repetition is literal and exact; one can only wonder that it has so long escaped the attention of the thousands of minds which have studied these events. In a pamphlet written on the eve of the Communist putsch, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?," Lenin argued that if the ancient Czars could hold Russia down with 130,000 serf-owners acting as an effective auxiliary to their political police, then the Bolsheviks, who were 240,000 strong, could do the same. Now the man who first organized that political police to which Malinovsky and even more flamboyant operators such as Evno Azef belonged was Nicholas I, variously known in his time as "Nicholas Palkin" (Nicholas Nightstick), "the policeman of Europe," and "the iron despot." Nicholas I was the Russian planner, reformer, and industrializer of the early Age of Steam; he appointed paper commissions right and left. One of these boards was set to work on the serfdom question and brought in a recommendation that the only way to deal with it was to abolish it. "I am sorry, gentlemen," said Nicholas, "but I cannot dispense with the police services of the 130,000 serf-owners throughout the country; they func-

tion without being paid, and I have not the means with which to replace them."

There you have the master key to the Russian enigma. As for the secondary puzzle, which, incidentally, concerns Mr. Shub and bothers us so much more today—the problem of Communist expansion outside Russia—it now appears to be a baby enigma hiding behind the skirts of the big one. The truth is that all the political victories of Communism from Lenin's time down to the present were victories over Socialists, and have been marked either by a preliminary rise of Socialists to power or to a position which gave Socialists, in effect, the balance of power. Communism is definitely parasitic upon Socialism; and its sparkling record of success in devouring its host lies in the fact that "liberal" social democracy is a contradiction in terms, helpless in any serious crisis, because it is committed to a mode of action (liberalism: the non-coercion of minority or individual rights) which is inconsistent with its aim (nationalization) whenever workers make economic demands upon the government's corporations as if the State were no different from a private employer. Lenin had the wit to see that the State is power and that if you seek to nationalize you must control the nation; an insight which made his Bolsheviks the residuary legatees of Socialism.

Not that they ever really assimilated this idea until he steered them to it by main force and during the few years before his death showed them how it worked again and again. They thought they were Socialists until he returned to Russia in the year of the Revolution. He had to scold them, Stalin included, like a flock of sheep; and he even threatened to resign his leadership and agitate the masses alone! He was a very tough man. His story, which Mr. Shub has told better than ever before, is the secret history of the Russian ruling class of the present century, the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R.

Mr. Shub's biography is the book you must read if you want to know what Communism is. Lenin made it, and Stalin, one of the least brainy but certainly the most crude (this was the master's own estimate) of Lenin's disciples, carries it on. You will learn that Lenin's superiority as a politician lay in the fact that he alone realized that social democracy is not the ultimate stage of liberalism, but its antithesis; and you will learn by that token—though not directly from Mr. Shub, who sticks to his job as the biographer of a doctrine—how to deal with Communism effectively.

Lorimerism—Like It or Lump It

GEORGE HORACE LORIMER AND THE SATURDAY EVENING POST.

By John Tebbel. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1948. 351 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by DUNCAN AIKMAN

MR. TEBBEL, probably to most readers' satisfaction, is a Grade-A unobtrusive biographer. No one could possibly, after reading this well-researched job, think of speaking of *The Saturday Evening Post's* 1899-1937 editorial boss as "Mr. Tebbel's Lorimer" in the way that one speaks of Lytton Strachey's "Queen Victoria." Instead, the Lorimer who created the *Post* and its power for considerable weal and possibly a little woe in American life, grows on one factually, through lively and never dead-pan narrative and analysis, until he seems almost like a member of one's intimate circle. But no Mr. Tebbel is there, dancing up and down before a personality portrait and exclaiming: "Look at that Oedipus complex. I discovered it all myself!"

The net product has nothing subjective in it. But it probably is closer to Lorimer as experience, his times, *Saturday Evening Post* cronies, his wife, and God—and not a little, Lorimer himself—made him, than any portrait which a purposefully critical biographer could turn out.

What, then, was this Lorimer, creating *The Saturday Evening Post*, and running it up from a circulation of a few thousand past million after million mark, with a minimum of personal public relations fanfare? Mr. Tebbel's clear factuality leaves us in no doubt.

Lorimer was part and product of the U.S.A.'s gigantic success story, which, beginning in the Westward pioneering sweep of the early Republic, carried us onward and upward into prosperity, industrial mastery, and world power at a pace never equaled by any people on earth. It was a process which grew out of the enormous resource handouts from nature which the American people received in their abundant continent, and out of the know-how which they acquired for exploiting resources. In the end, the process went a long way toward making a "spoiled giant" of the American nation—a people convinced that all their good fortunes were earned by their peculiar merits. The success story, too, spun itself out relatively without change of direction, tempo, or motive power from the George Washington Administration to the collapse of bull markets in President Hoover's mournful 1929 October.

It is in no sense a necessarily finished chronicle today. But the direction has changed, and in New Deal times and since there have been symptoms of a need for a renovation, not to say change, of engines.

Mr. Lorimer, however, growing into manhood and success in the piping times of Mark Hanna and McKinley, passionately believed every word of the success saga and in every article in its ideology. He worshipped it as a kind of state religion, and almost equally worshipped success itself. Most people who failed to achieve it must be, he was convinced, weaklings. People who criticized the system by which it was obtained—except in a few open and obvious abuses—were definitely weaklings.

Furthermore, success was so much an American prerogative that we could afford to be exclusive about it. So Lorimer fought a lifelong battle in the *Post* for practically total immigration restrictions. He was an outstanding World War I isolationist. World economy and world relationships were sentimental poppycock to his "practical" mind. So he took essentially President Coolidge's "they hired the money, didn't they?" position on collecting the British and French war debts.

On the home front he was against labor unions, except as remedies for occasional intolerable abuses from virtually criminal employers. When the *Post* had a strike once, Lorimer hired "finks" and proudly and happily rode through the picket lines to work with them. He disliked introspective women like Sinclair Lewis's Carol Kennicott in "Main Street," and in-

deed distrusted introspection in fiction and life generally. The New Deal's economic and relief measures were anathema to his code of rugged individualism, and he fought all socialization projects except those connected with forest and a few other resources conservations.

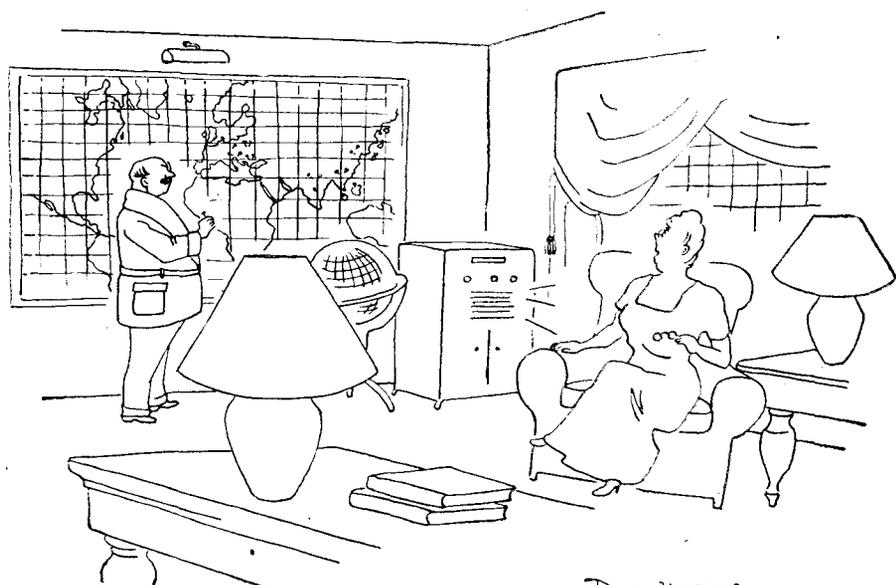
He personally loathed George Bernard Shaw as a smart-aleck, but perhaps equally so as an early mover toward world social and economic changes. The old American code of sex purity was maintained in *Post* fiction and articles on social conditions to the end of the Lorimer reign, and largely still is.

To be sure, Lorimer and the *Post* were on Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose bandwagon in the 1912 campaign. But the Bull Moose crusade raised plenty of hosannas for the "good old American morality," as well as for a relatively few progressive principles. There is plenty of evidence that Lorimer liked the nostalgic appeal best.

Nor did his fixation on his and an older time's values save him from relishing some suspiciously pre-Fascist company in his personal and editorial circle. The late Emerson Hough of "The Covered Wagon" fame lost no kudos with Lorimer or the *Post* by being able to write in his private letters, at the height of the post-World War I troubles with the I.W.W.:

What you say about the lack of Americanism is too sadly true. There is trouble ahead in this country. I look for old-time Americans to put it down. . . . I also keep a gun handy. . . . Just about as far as across a saloon, I think I am able to entertain any really bloodthirsty Bolsheviks.

All this Mr. Tebbel tells without blame or praise. You can like "Lor-



Dois Matthews

"Who's winning, dear—Winchell or Russia?"