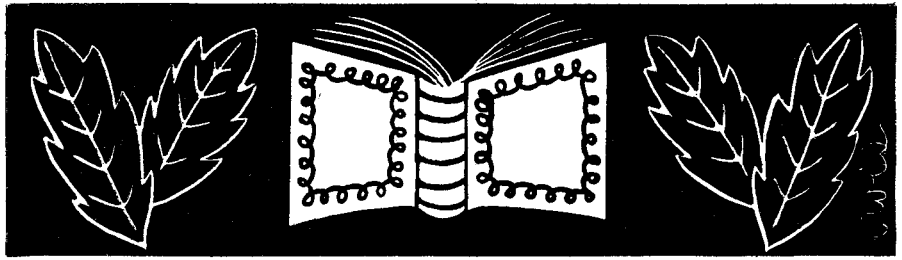


Review series express the old and familiar fear of mass culture and mass education which is always a little astonishing in the citizens of a country which one might say invented education for the entire population of a nation. As Americans they would surely not be willing to contemplate education and culture limited to a privileged class in a year in which a fifth of our population including twenty-six million children will attend our public and private elementary schools. In an earlier issue, Horace Gregory writes that "the shock that the European receives in viewing our mass culture is natural enough, though what he sees, as if it were in an enlarged mirror, is European culture backed by great material resources. It is Europe, with a few fragments of African and Asiatic culture floating here and there, shifted to the North American continent." It is no longer subservient; it is too powerful, and the stream of culture has reversed its currents, has reorganized itself, and is now flowing west across the Atlantic. His conclusion is that America is beginning to grow up but is not enjoying the experience.

CONSIDERING contemporary opinion on the subject, Joseph Frank displays a remarkable degree of enthusiasm for the opportunities of the creative writer in America. Artists and intellectuals have now, he says, a creative freedom equal to that of their European contemporaries. They no longer have to display the smiling side of life. Their sadism, violence, and brutality horrify and fascinate Europeans as Zola once horrified Americans. He believes that we are now at the end of the greatest flowering of American art and letters since the New England writers of a century ago.

It seems to be obvious that the intellectual and the creative writer are rapidly changing their minds about American institutions. The life of the artist will rarely be satisfactory to the individual who has to make a living by his creative work. But as he joins in the yearly pilgrimage to Europe of hundreds of thousands of fellow Americans he will be forced to admit that he has greater opportunities than his fellows abroad. He will also recognize that his freedom of opinion and expression lies in development of an untrammelled and diverse culture and that that in turn depends on the ability of the American people to maintain a free and democratic world. Those forty-two-and-a-half million Americans now in our schools and colleges will have something to do with the continuance of this future benefaction to humanity.

—H. S.



## Autumn Traffic-jam

COME next Monday, the large metropolitan newspapers will be printing on their book pages a list of books issued on that day alone which will run to more than eighty titles. During the preceding five business days a total of more than one hundred other new books will be published.

Beneath these seemingly innocuous statistics lies one of the basic reasons for the present ailing state of American book publishing. Each year, on Labor Day, following three months of virtual inactivity, new books start pouring out of publishers' warehouses like motor cars out of a city on the eve of a three-day holiday. The flow continues almost without let-up until about the first of November, when new titles again become as scarce as sun-bathers on a Maine beach. The high-point is being reached this year on September 22, but there will be many days during the six weeks following when the traffic will be nearly as heavy.

The thinking—if it can be called that—behind this strange and time-honored ritual of the publishing business is that a book must make its bow in the stores, be adequately reviewed in the magazines and newspapers, and enthusiastically bruited about through word of mouth during this crucial period if it is to find a place in enough Christmas stockings to keep its author and publisher eating. Actually, this is mostly superstition, for the books come so thick and fast that the average store does not have sufficient room to display them properly nor is the average clerk able to master the titles and subject matter of all his new wares. Nor can the reviewers cope with the torrent. We feel particularly strongly on this point, because we are trying conscientiously to report promptly and thoughtfully on all important publications.

Yet because of limitations of space, we are rarely able to review more than forty books in a single issue of *The Saturday Review*. This means that in this week alone there are at least 140 new books that we are obliged to postpone reviewing until later issues. And our backlog will

grow progressively larger each week until the publishers close the flood-gates early in November. We sympathize with other editors who have less space than we do and with those work-horses of journalism, the daily reviewers, who can cover only five to seven books a week even at their grueling book-a-day pace.

THERE are two simple and inexpensive expedients which the publishers might adopt to make life more tolerable for booksellers and reviewers—and perhaps even enable themselves and their authors to eat more bountifully. One is to refrain from releasing at the height of the hectic pre-Christmas period volumes of scholarly and specialized interest whose life expectancy is long, and instead to schedule only the "fresh-vegetable" type of book whose primary utility is as a gift. An excellent book on the economic potentialities of Japan or a fine biography of William Wordsworth will certainly be far better displayed and reviewed if it is issued in August or February than at this time of the year—and in the long run it will probably also sell better. The advantages of publication in the autumn is probably greatly exaggerated even for books of wide popular appeal. Consider the record-making sales of "The Sea Around Us," published during a July, or "The Silver Chalice," published in another July, or "The Caine Mutiny," issued during a March.

Another needed corrective—to return to our traffic-jam metaphor—is the creation of some voluntary organization to patrol the publishing highways. Several years ago an arm of the Publishers' Adclub maintained and circulated a record of projected publication dates. This enabled participating publishers to reschedule their books when traffic threatened to become snarled on a particular day or week of the holiday season. The project was abandoned, as we understand it, because some publishers regarded the cost of maintaining it too great. If these gentlemen would but consider the loss in sales that must inevitably result from this autumn's chaos they would surely realize that in being penny wise they may very well be pound foolish.

—R. W., JR.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## "How Much Freedom?"

► LOUIS FISCHER'S ARTICLE "How Much Freedom in Yugoslavia?" [SR Aug. 16] is an excellent example of the crime of omission. For about three pages he paints a hopeful picture of things to come and summarizes by stating that Yugoslavia seems "to promise a growth of freedom." What was an excellent opportunity to present an accurate factual account of the Yugoslav's lack of freedom was turned into a sop for the readers of SR.

The only freedom Fischer attempts to discuss is literary freedom and I am not sure that it has much point. If I had not spent several weeks this spring traveling from one end of the country to the other observing and talking with the people and discovering that they do not possess the freedom of speech and press, the right to practise religion in their own way, the privilege to work where and what they choose, or even to go in and out of their "own" country, I would not have been able to legitimately disagree with Fischer. The Yugoslavs do not have the basic freedoms which give promise of "a growth of freedom." And they complain about their plight to an outsider when they think they are not being observed.

Now I am glad that Fischer did not write another scare story about a Communist state, but why in Heaven's name did he omit so much? I was prompted to remember as I read the article the remarks of a housewife with whom I spoke on a main street in Belgrade. She looked furtively around before she said, "When you go back to America tell your people that we Yugoslavs are living in a slave state; we want some day to be free."

STERLING SCOTT.

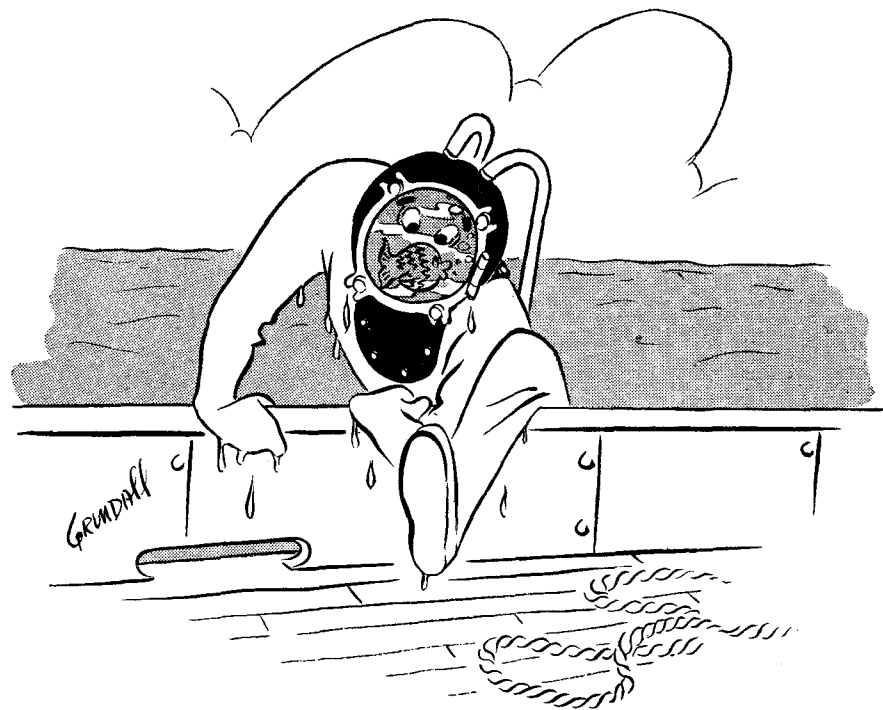
Hammond, Ind.

## The Ego & the Kopek

► AN AMBIGUITY EXISTS in Joyce Cary's analysis of "The Sources of Tension in America" [SR Aug. 23] which involves the semantics of "power." I hasten to add that Mr. Cary's is a profound essay, revealing an acute observation of the American—indeed, the world—scene. But the basic ambiguity, I feel leads the reader astray and detracts from the significance of the article as a whole.

Mr. Cary's pitfall is in evaluating economic attainment wholly with monetary reward. It is unfortunately true that "the struggle for pay" is the determining factor in the motivation of a large segment of the American population. But I am inclined to believe that this segment is not the tail that wags the dog.

Three factors determine individual action: power, ego, and security . . . As a teacher, I am painfully aware that the struggle for pay is a continuing battle. At the same time, I can assure Mr. Cary, the basic motivations of men of good will surmount this struggle. The history of the Soviet ideal, I submit, is the prime example. Both the Soviet worker and the



Soviet soldier have had to be recompensed with the trappings of egotistical satisfaction in recent years: the medal has surmounted the kopek as a motivating force.

Again, I applaud Mr. Cary's effort to pin-point the advantages of the American experiment, but the force of his argument is certainly lessened by his failure to comprehend the true motivation of the democratic spirit: the repugnance toward any totalitarian concept of the liberal mind and the impetus of individual ambition as long as that ambition is not circumscribed by governmental decree.

Detroit, Mich.

RAY SCHULTZ.

## Credit to Munkácsy

► IN "AN OPEN LETTER TO MILTON," by Antonio Iglesias [SR Aug. 23], there was inserted an illustration showing Milton, surrounded by his wife and children, dictating his "Paradise Lost." The picture was credited to "Culver Service," obviously a painter of extraordinary talent and sense of drama, of whom I am utterly ashamed never to have heard. On the other hand, I have heard of the outstanding Hungarian painter, Mihaly Munkácsy (1844-1900). Is it possible that Munkácsy's masterly canvas, "Milton," has been plagiarized by a new Van Mee-gren named Culver Service?

ANDOR KLAY.

Washington, D. C.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If fault is to be found it should be with SR and not with Culver Service, which is an agency that supplies copies of historical pictures to magazines, book publishers, etc. It is customary to

indicate the source from which a published picture is obtained, in this case Culver Service. But certainly credit should also have been given to the painter—for which omission apologies are herewith tendered.

## Inexcusable

► IT WAS SCARCELY necessary to read the newspapers to know that both Texas and New York were gripped by heat wave during July. Only an extraordinary phenomenon like that could explain why Carl Victor Little would write and you would publish a review in such execrable taste as the one of J. D. Scott's "The Way to Glory" [SR Aug. 2]. I dimly recall having enjoyed some of Mr. Little's lively and amusing reviews in the past; I say dimly because, alas! memory of them has been almost completely obliterated by this inexcusably offensive performance.

JOHN SOMMERS.

Good Hope, Me.

## Austria Is Missing

► THE SR's "WORLD CALENDAR" is an excellent idea and we certainly hope you keep on doing it, but why the complete neglect of Austria? The *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* of Vienna alone indicates that Vienna is still on the map.

Austria is making such a courageous stand during these trying days of the Occupation that it seems to me we should all do everything we can to demonstrate our interest and friendship for her. To completely neglect her on your calendar of world events cannot help but be offensive to her, and to her many friends in America.

HENRY C. JAMES.

Banning, Calif.