

## The Time Is Now

ams of a black-market fortune. osca, the central figure in the story, s returned to Germany just because he can no longer stand the respectability of his former life. The asm between his high-school illusions and the realities of his war experience is too deep; and he has fallen love with a German girl who acts him for what he is. Filled with terness and horror which he cannot explain to himself, he is being wly drawn into the area of the theological.

This is a new type of "international" novel, in fact, where the dequent American hero outdoes the ost corrupt European. Henry James d William Dean Howells should iver in their graves; yet Mr. Puzo's rd-boiled character becomes credible and sympathetic as we learn ore about him—and about the narrow range of human values which is only possible source of salvation. illa, the German girl, can sustain osca's belief for a little while, but e, too, is at the call of chance and rtune in experience. What Mr. Puzo ems to be saying is that none of his ntral figures has any real comprehension of the nature of the world ey live in. Within a bitter and deying society, the "dark arena" of eir personal ambition can lead them ly to disaster.

There is a brilliant scene where olf and Mosca explore a Nazi fortress, destroyed by a bomb. They are oking for loot; they find only human flesh "out of which all the fat d blood had been squeezed by the ormous pressure of the falling ilding." Even the dead have been ished beyond the limits of human cognition; but at this point there no chance for the living. The German Jewish boy Leo, who has sur-

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**"Getting Later by the Minute: Two Minutes Till Midnight," by Elmer Davis (Bobbs-Merrill, 207 pp. \$2.75), is a distinguished political commentator's analysis and warning about the future that faces every man.**

By Gilbert Seldes

**E**LMER DAVIS'S 1954 book, "But We Were Born Free," was concerned with the survival in America of independent reasoning men; his new book, "Getting Later by the Minute: Two Minutes Till Midnight," is concerned with the survival of Americans of any kind. It is dedicated "to the first victim of the hydrogen bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer," and it is also dedicated to the proposition that we had better avoid an atomic war, but if we don't we'd better win than lose it.

Bertrand Russell, whom Davis treats in cavalier fashion, recently said that the year 1955 may see the extinction of the human race; Davis gives some statistics indicating that this is a pessimistic outlook—it won't be until 1957 that a full-scale raid on twenty-five big American cities will tot up nine million casualties. Until the cobalt bomb comes Davis thinks there is a difference between winning and losing a war—"if it comes we are all sunk," say the scientists; "but the losers would be sunk a good deal deeper than the winners," says Davis.

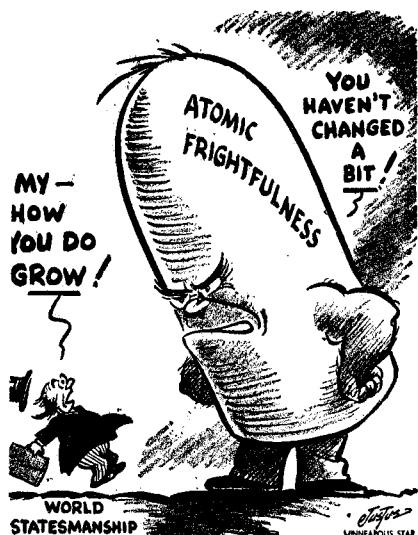
The avowed purpose of this book is to make people think about the hydrogen bomb—not about its power as a weapon so much as about the diplomacy and the propaganda which might eliminate the bomb from all our calculations, the alternatives offered, and the dangers we run. It surveys some aspects of Roosevelt's policies in the last war, discusses democratic control of foreign policy, analyzes at length the political career and private life of Alexander the Great, questions the usefulness of dragging the name of God into war propaganda, and hacks away at post-Acheson diplomacy with all the Davis vigor and wit.

The wit on other subjects varies from calling ex-Ambassador Bullitt "Willie" to describing India as "a nation which pays much more attention to what happened to it years ago than

to what might happen to it in the near future." It includes sneers at Professor F. S. C. Northrop for using the exact terms of epistemology which happen to be unfamiliar polysyllables. Professor Northrop looks to a meeting of East and West in which each would recognize the peculiar value of the other; Davis implies that Alexander arranged these matters better and adds "some of us think we are spiritually Asiafied enough already." He likes as little the proposal of the atomic scientists implied in the title of their book, "One World or None"—pointing out that in one world the Communists would sit on every commission and court—and could therefore reduce the rest of the world to impotence or subtly weave their propaganda spell.

**I** DO not challenge the propriety of Davis's attitudes and judgments, but I find them expressed in such a way—allusive or trifling or otherwise unconvincing—that for the first time in my acquaintance with him as a writer and as a commentator I am not sure what he is driving at. He dislikes the kind of diplomacy that utters massive phrases which are cut down to size a few days later; he dislikes Nixon and Knowland (with his "fidelity to his constituents on Formosa"); as always he dislikes cant. But what we are to do to avoid any atomic war and how we can be sure of winning one if we fail to avoid it is not clear in this book.

At the end Davis says "the people who are on the various ground zeros (when the bombs fall) will probably be the most fortunate . . ." That is, those who instantly die. I agree. Where I cannot follow Davis is in his feeling that it would be worth while to survive in a world so monstrously stupid as to let the bombings occur. He seems to think that the survivors will "in all truth nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth." The survivors will be as guilty as the dead—and the victors as guilty as the defeated—of the last great crime: the failure to prevent the war from which Davis thinks it is better to emerge as victor. When the H-bomb is dropped—and it doesn't matter by whom—the intelligence of mankind will be listed as a suicide. To continue to exist after that is to have a greed for living, not a respect for life.



—Justus in The Minneapolis Star.

"Greetings."

# Triple Threat to Foreign Aid

**"Billions, Blunders, and Baloney,"** by Eugene W. Castle (*Devin-Adair*. 278 pp. \$3.50), is a castigation of our foreign-aid and overseas information programs. Here it is reviewed by Hal Lehrman, who reports frequently for American newspapers and magazines on the Balkans and the Middle East. His books include *"Russia's Europe"* and *"Israel: The Beginning and Tomorrow."*

By Hal Lehrman

EUGENE W. CASTLE'S "Billions, Blunders, and Baloney" is again our foreign-aid overseas information programs. So are a certain number of earnest citizens in our land. If the author had examined the frailties in these operations calmly and fairly he might have done us a public service, even deserved to sell a proper quantity of copies.

But Mr. Castle tunes pianos with a sledge-hammer and writes with the charming objectivity of the *Daily Worker*, though at the other pole. The title of the book is a ripe sample of the man's style and restraint. Consequently, it is this reviewer's guess that Mr. Castle will persuade nobody except those already persuaded—that choice company which regards all furriners as heathen, and considers nearly all Government employees to be misfits and morons.

True, there are waste and inefficiency in the Foreign Operations Administration and the United States Information Agency. Both bureaus make mistakes, frequently. (So does private business: that's what produces bankruptcies.) Mr. Castle has studied up on the boners, and reports them mercilessly.

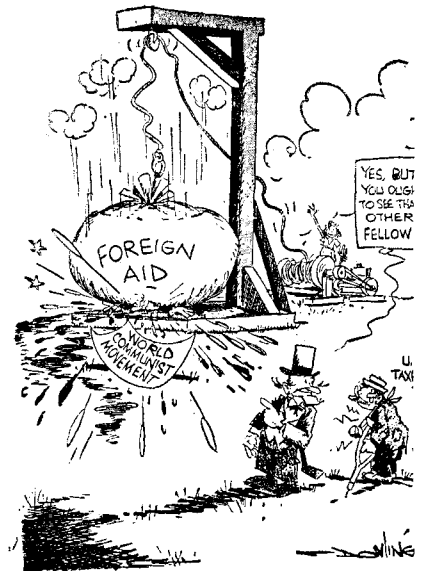
He tells how an atoms-for-peace show in Rome scared hell out of the Italians, how leaflets dropped on North Korean troops advised them to go home and depicted "home" as

a swank little Westchester hideaway complete with motorcar, how economic grants are fed to Franco Spain without controls or good reasons. He denounces oversized staffs, overzealous amateur diplomats, overblown radio, news, and film programs. The latter make him especially mad, he being the Castle of Castle Films. His cure is simply to scrape FOA and USIA, and hand the shrunken remnants to State and Defense.

But he doesn't stop there. According to him, just about nothing committed by either agency has been worth a nickel, though it costs "fantastic billions." Ted Streibert, the current Information chief, and Harold Stassen, the Aid chief, come out a dripping pulp. The Castle language is an arsenal of epithets: rathole, giveaway, slush fund, drainpipe, extravaganza, shakedown, do-gooders, One-Worlders. The argument is a crescendo of hysteria. And the sum-total result, inevitably, is nonsense—and boredom.

FOR instance: Mr. Castle assures us at least a half-dozen times that our information libraries are located in the ultra-fashionable districts of most foreign capitals, thus "out of bounds" to the masses. Yet the merit of these libraries as potent winners of good will has been universally attested. (In Cairo a few years back when the mob ran berserk against foreign property part of the mob went off to protect the American Library.) He rants at the "magnificence" of one-time palaces occupied by USIA in some countries. Has he been inside any of those drafty barns? He sneers at the Fulbright exchange fellowships. This makes as much sense as sneering at the value of an education. Incidentally, for one as fussy about accurate reporting as Mr. Castle professes to be, he fouls himself up at a higher rate than permissible even to a cub. (The publishing brothers Ali and Mustapha Amin, of the Egyptian *Akhbar El Youm*, become Ali and "Maisropa Amid" of *Akh Bak El Youm*.) And nowhere is there the smallest hint that Technical Assistance may be helping the common people of Asia or that the Marshall Plan had anything to do with slowing Communism in western Europe.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Castle doesn't even care much about hold-



—Dowling, in New York Herald Tribune

"Feel Better?"

ing on to our allies. He keeps shifting his ground. First he damns information and foreign aid because other countries still don't like us. Then he don't do what we want them to do. No suggestion that maybe, without our aid, they might dislike us even more. Then he wants to burn down the agencies since, despite them, the Soviets have won so many victories. He recounts the tragic errors of American high policy in places like China, Indo-China, and Germany. His tale is substantially true, but often told before, and entirely irrelevant to his main point. Because the diplomats were wrong, it appears fire the propagandists who had the job of explaining that diplomacy. This is like arguing that a general who has lost one contest should then blow up part of his ammunition before proceeding to the next battlefield.

Then Mr. Castle moves on to demand why we should "pay enforce tribute" to allies who "would not hesitatingly join the other side if we stopped subsidizing them." He goes into a rage over recent visits to Washington by Chancellor Adenauer, Queen Mother Elizabeth, the Prime Ministers of Ceylon and Pakistan, the Presidents of Haiti and Liberia and others. Presumably, it would be better to have them visit Moscow instead.

Later on he admits that an overseas information service might be useful if "synchronized with a dynamic and imagination-stirring foreign policy," though his prescription for same is prudently vague, if not isolationist. Appropriately, he ends with a paean to the Fourth of July, literally, and to America's "true destiny."

## LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Arnold Bennett.
2. George Meredith.
3. Owen Davis.
4. Aldous Huxley.
5. Stephen Crane.
6. Fyodor Dostoevsky.
7. Jules Verne.
8. Henri Barbusse.
9. Henry James.
10. Ben Hecht.
11. John Crowe Ransom.
12. Robert Louis Stevenson.