

an honest offer for her hand but Nicola thinks his girl can do better in America. Maddened by frustration, Ramorra takes part with two village loafers in an attempt to rape the girl; his better nature asserts itself in time and he protects her against others. But the damage has been done, the girl is driven close to madness by shock, and Ramorra takes to the mountains with the hue and cry after him, and in the last pages of the book the exacerbated ferocity of the community catches up with him. He is in truth the victim of his own good intentions.

A tale then of bitter irony and recurrent violence, and a tale well told. Rimanelli has written a fine story and,

for all its melodramatic elements, a true one. —THOMAS G. BERGIN.

**SHIP IN A STORM:** In "Gale Force" (Macmillan, \$3.50), Elleston Trevor turns his sharp talent for making the sense of mortal danger concrete to the problem of what happens when the weather gets the best of a modern cargo-passenger ship. Neither veteran captain, Matthew Harkne, nor the dozen passengers of the *Atlantic Whipper* could believe she was vulnerable to the gale when she was almost within smelling distance of the Channel. But as the wind was freshening, the thousands of tons of grain surged back and forth, throwing a fifteen-degree

list on the ship. Like a tragic hero when fate gets at him through the flaw in his character, the *Atlantic Whipper* succumbs to the sea.

As Captain Harkness juggles the speed necessary to keep her headed into the sea against the need to conserve fuel until help can reach him, the personalities that appeared colorless at first take on a more lurid look. The personal conflicts are not profoundly done, yet they are at least believable and do not detract from the central drama of ship versus sea. Here is a writer who knows how to present all the impressions on which the imagination feeds. Here is the sea sailors know. —THOMAS E. COONEY.

## "LOLITA": LITERATURE OR PORNOGRAPHY?

ONCE upon a time there was an old publishing adage which went something like this: "If you want to produce a bestseller, publish a novel that will be banned in Boston." But this spring it looks as if the old adage needs some refurbishment. Now, instead of Boston, some bookmen are substituting the name of the city which bears the reputation of being the most lenient in all the world in matters of literary license. The city: Paris. This spring, in fact, after a series of paradoxes which have become internationally known as *L'Affaire Lolita*, American bookshops are selling as often as they can obtain shipments a novel which has actually been banned in Paris—and rapidly selling out of it, too, at \$12.50 a copy.

The name of this paradox-bound novel is "Lolita, or the Confession of a White Widowed Male," a novel in two pale green paperback volumes by a Russian-born Cornell professor named Vladimir Nabokov which, oddly enough, was first published in Paris in English rather than French. Its salable subject matter in any language: a middleaged man's sexual lust for a girl in her early adolescence. Of "Lolita" soon after its publication novelist Graham Greene declared: "[It is] a distinguished novel." Professor Harry Levin of Harvard proclaimed "[It is] not primarily sexual at all. [It is] a symbol of the aging European intellectual coming to America, falling in love with it but finding it, sadly, a little immature." Professor F. W. Dupee of Columbia, an authority on Henry James, denied that "Lolita" is obscene, adding: "It is [the story of] a real wolf howling for a real Red Riding Hood."

Apparently such acclaim did not



Vladimir Nabokov.

impress the Parisian censors. Last December the French government, spurred on by the British government (which feared, logically enough, that copies of "Lolita" would find their way to England), invoked its obscenity laws against the novel. Then, to the surprise of almost everybody, the U. S. Customs Office pronounced the book unobjectionable. The paradoxical result: "Lolita" cannot be legally exported from France but after being smuggled out of France it can be legally imported into the U. S., thereby bringing about for the first time in history a situation in which, as one outraged French publication has said, "France has shown herself to be more intolerant and more puritanical than an English-speaking country." The obvious result of all this: the American public, intrigued by the French ban (and unable to buy any American editions of the novel because no American publisher, again paradoxically, has thus far thought it worthy of publication), is

willing to pay exorbitant prices for "Lolita."

Readers looking for obscenity in "Lolita" are due for disappointment. Filled with comic horror rather than with erotica, the 140,000-word novel traces its protagonist's unnatural obsession to his final commitment to a sanitarium. Thus far American publishers have been reluctant to bring out an edition in this country, fearing that the case of Edmund Wilson's "Memoirs of Hecate County," whose banning was upheld by the federal courts, might be repeated. But there are persistent rumors that one or another house will dare such a threat before long.

In the meantime American readers anxious to find what *L'Affaire Lolita* is all about but unwilling to part with \$12.50 for a bootleg copy can find a measure of satisfaction in the latest number of the "Anchor Review 2," a paperbound book-magazine published from time to time by Doubleday and now on sale at 95¢ a copy. Approximately one-third of the issue is devoted to "Lolita": 28,000 words of representative passages from the book itself, flanked with a defense of the novel as a work of art by Professor Dupee and an explanation by Mr. Nabokov himself of how he came to write it.

Even in France things are looking up for would-be readers of "Lolita." The Parisian house of Gallimard, fighting the government's ban, has announced that it will soon publish a full and unexpurgated edition of the novel in French. Gallimard is confident that in such matters the French Fourth Republic will have to capitulate and display the traditional French leniency towards literary expression. —GEORGE BAKER.

## Chiang Kai-shek's Call to Arms

**"Soviet Russia in China,"** by **Chiang Kai-shek** (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. 392 pp. \$5), offers the Generalissimo's views on Asia and the world from the vantage point of three-score years and ten. Theodore H. White, who reviews it, edited *"The Stilwell Papers"* and is co-author of *"Thunder Out of China."*

By Theodore H. White

**N**OW, at last, Chiang Kai-shek has written his story.

And if this story ("Soviet Russia in China") is not history, it is nonetheless an event in history—for it is a last polemic, inscribed by a man upon whom history has turned for thirty years, addressed to the court of American public opinion, forthrightly inviting us to join him in an immediate new war.

The first half of this book is narrative, thicketed with memoranda and old negotiating papers here first revealed in full, telling Chiang's tale of the conquest of China by Communism from the founding of the Communist party there in 1920, as a branch office of Russian diplomacy, to the eve of its final victory in 1947. As narrative, it is one of the more detailed records of Stalinist treachery and betrayal, and its highlights are a cluster of choice new morsels of duplicity of the Russian despot.

What mars the narrative are, simply, the frame and construction of the facts. For this is not a Churchillian summation of great events that have thundered by, nor the tale of the awesome swelling and eruption of the Chinese revolution. It is an act of politics, a plea by a man so desperately pressed that the facts must serve obediently or be dismissed entirely as soldiers in a struggle for survival.

Read simply, it is the story of destruction of freedom by conspiracy: except that to support this thesis, Chiang must offer his wartime palace command as a democratic system based on a functioning peoples parliament (none such existed) and insist that what was destroyed in his government was the fiber of freedom rather than a system controlled and manipulated by a police as malevo-

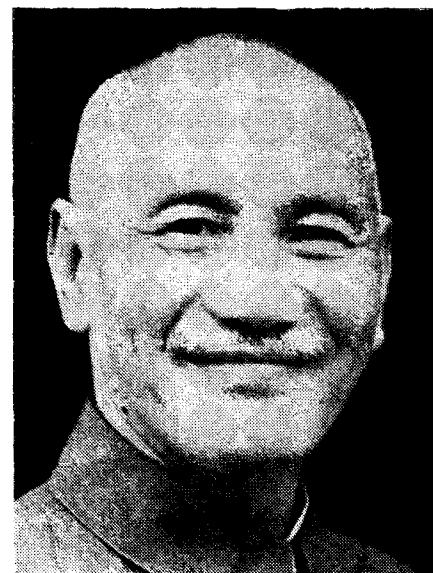
lent, if not as brutal or efficient, as his Communist enemy's. In limiting itself to the simple documentation of the conspiracy, the book ignores, as it must, both the tear-soaked background of misery in which the conspiracy took root, then flourished, then burst to triumph, and the struggle in his own camp to create the base of healthy resistance.

The Stilwell affair, for example, the climax of America's first effort to save Chiang's regime for the West, is quickly dismissed as a misunderstanding over Communism ("To this day my heart still aches over this unfortunate affair," says Chiang), although the official American Army history of the Stilwell mission records that Chiang had thrice in two years demanded Stilwell's relief from command in a continuing dispute over the use of American supplies to make a truly effective army that might one day defend his sovereignty.

**A**N EQUALLY startling silence drops over the horror-laden campaigns of 1947-1949 when Chiang's armies and people deserted en masse to the Communists. The narrative ends abruptly after 180 pages of detail just as Chiang's troops have occupied Manchuria and Kalgan, stand flushed with victory and fleshed with American arms, facing a guerrilla army of Communists numerically far inferior to them.

In little more than two years after that, Chiang was an exile on Formosa; but no explanation is offered for the final collapse but conspiracy, the inflation of Chinese currency, and the fact (overwhelming in Chiang's mind) that American public opinion, 9,000 miles away, was turned against him by a handful of liberal or duped publicists.

A far more effective case might have been made for Chiang Kai-shek than has been made by the handful of men who helped him on this manuscript. His raw courage, his unyielding will, his brief success—until the Japanese smashed it—to create a new, effective coastal governing group in the mid-Thirties, his payment for America's blunder at Yalta—for all of these, chroniclers must yield him credit or sympathy. What is proven in *"Soviet Russia in China"* is only that Chiang saw and mistrusted Communism from



—Chinese News Service.

Chiang—"choice new morsels."

the first. What is omitted is that he saw and mistrusted every man—his own generals, his provincial warlords, his allies, their generals, his people. Trapped tragically between the faceless Japanese army and the never-ending pressure of the Communists, he met them both on their own terms—conspiracy with counter-conspiracy, police with counter-police, terror with counter-terror, and failed.

It is the second half of the book—a long political-philosophical analysis of the politics of our age—which explains best why Chiang failed. Roving the writings of Western political theorists, from Clausewitz to Lenin, he mobilizes fragments of their writings like bits of magic, as earlier Chinese warlords deployed guns and planes of Western confection with similarly meager understanding. They reveal a groping mind—of a man orphaned as a child in an antique Chinese village, briefly educated in Japan, a leaderless soldier coming to manhood in the immorality of Shanghai, sucked to greatness by the tremendous upheaval of Asia which he rode—the mind of a man straining mechanically to understand what was happening about him.

**O**CCASIONALLY, this mechanical learning slips a cog, as when he dates the beginning of Communism at the French Revolution, fifty years before the birth of Marx, writing, "Although the international Communists demonstrated their reactionary strength in their repeated attempts to stir up class struggle during the French Revolution, they accomplished nothing."

More often, it results, after his long experience, in such profound and

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