

# Individualism ad Absurdum

*The McLandress Dimension*, by Mark Epernay (Houghton Mifflin. 128 pp. \$3.75), carries some current political and economic arguments to their insane conclusions. William Winter is a West Coast news commentator for ABC TV-radio.

By WILLIAM WINTER

IS THERE really a Herschel McLandress, "former Professor of Psychiatric Measurement at the Harvard Medical School, and now chief consultant to the Noonan Psychiatric Clinic in Boston"? Of course there isn't, but Mark Epernay is congratulated for having invented him.

Is there really a Mark Epernay? Since there isn't (the publisher says it's a pseudonym for a distinguished American diplomat), it is likely that Professor John Kenneth Galbraith should be congratulated for having invented him.

This delightful, brilliant, and sometimes hilarious spoof takes some of our current political and economic arguments to their logical but ridiculous conclusion. The author reflects his comprehension of the Affluent Society and of the incomprehensibility of the State Department.

But first we are introduced to the McLandress Co-Efficient ("pronounced Mack-el-see"), which measures how long it takes for a person to start talking about himself. Elizabeth Taylor has a rating of three minutes; so has David Susskind—and Nikita Khrushchev. Martin Luther King has a rating of four hours, while Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and Reverend Billy Graham "turn up in the middle minute range." Dr. Robert Oppenheimer has a remarkable Co-Efficient of three hours, thirty minutes; Dr. Edward Teller gets a rating of three minutes, ten seconds. Chief Justice Earl Warren gets highest rating in the federal government: four hours, thirty minutes; while "The lowest was that of Professor J. K. Galbraith, American Ambassador to India, at one minute, fifteen seconds."

McLandress offers a service to rich businessmen who, because they have lots of money and position, are assumed to be authorities on world affairs. When about to make a speech they call on him. Dr. McLandress gives his stand-

ard advice on China as an example: "You can't be for recognizing China. That is politically impractical and still a little dangerous. But you can't advocate all-out support for Chiang. That marks you as a relic of the China lobby. So the average executive doesn't know what to say." McLandress advises the "responsible position," which goes something like this: "What self-interest and enlightened policy do require of the United States at this juncture is a candid recognition of what Communist China is and where it is going. For too many Americans the assumption has seemed to be that China's absence from the United Nations could mean its absence from their minds."

There is also a proposal for a fully automated foreign policy, with answers fed by electronic computers. Every contingency is anticipated. For instance:

"Geneva. Code UNRM 4.55. Speech by Soviet delegate calling for general and complete disarmament.

"The United States stands committed to the principle of complete and general disarmament. It will not com-

promise the safety of the free world.'"

We are told about a "confidence machine" to restore businessmen's confidence in the President of the U. S., which is "inversely related to the state of business. In laymen's language this means that confidence will always be high when business is poor and low when business is good." Epernay also describes the "Sonic Support Apparatus," which is a tiny device worn by business executives under their clothing. It plays back, on command, recorded speeches or statements by Presidents Hoover, Eisenhower, William McKinley, or Chester A. Arthur, to restore confidence.

But the most rib-tickling *reductio ad absurdum* is the CAI—"Crusade for Athletic Individualism." The menace of collectivism as advocated by the Communists threatens our American Way of Life, our rugged individualism. None of the sinister Red plots is more dangerous than the teaching of socialistic team play in sports to red-blooded American youth. This obviously makes baseball, football, and basketball dangerous and un-American. Hence, the CAI attacks all sports "where the individual submerges himself in the socialistic environment of the team and accepts authoritarian direction from a captain or some other control apparatus," but strongly endorses sports like swimming, diving, boxing, and wrestling, which "nurture individualism and the spirit of individual enterprise."

## Mr. Double You Is Watching You

*The School for Dictators*, by Ignazio Silone, translated from the Italian by William Weaver (Atheneum. 244 pp. \$5), makes available a modernized version of the novelist's 1938 "Socratic dialogue" on contemporary politics. Warrington Winters, a freelance critic, teaches a course on the contemporary novel at Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn.

By WARRINGTON WINTERS

IGNAZIO SILONE was, and is, one of the great humanitarian socialists of this century. Even his communist interlude in the Twenties—though he himself often probed for a dark, secret motivation—was rooted deeply in the urgent and immediate needs of his family, his people, his times.

But a great man is not of necessity a great novelist. *Fontamara* (1934) and *Bread and Wine* (1937) were good, rich tales of people under stress; they were great only in their splendid exposure of the evils of fascism. Consequently, they lose when the author attempts to modernize them.

This is also true of *The School for Dictators*, a Socratic dialogue written in 1938, which the author has revised so that it will, presumably, encompass the problems of right now. Here we meet the would-be American dictator, Mr. Double You, who is touring Europe in the company of his tutor, Professor Pickup. They pause in Zurich to engage in paid conversations with a modern sophist, Thomas the Cynic, who doubtless reflects the thoughts of the author.

Certainly there are good sayings here, such as this regarding *Das Kapital* (Continued on page 81)

## Of Lunch and Letters

By ALICE DALGLIESH

**J**UST before Christmas 1963 the members of the Children's Book Council invited reviewers to lunch. It was a pleasant and an unusual occasion. Many editors and publicity assistants were there—and eleven reviewers. The lunch was for reviewers in the New York vicinity; fortunately others from Boston and Chicago happened to be in the city and were also present.

I felt slightly schizophrenic, for, while I am now a reviewer, a few editors at my table had been, with me, among the group who had laid the foundations brick by brick for this burgeoning industry, through the Depression and World War II. We tried to remember how many of us there were when we first organized—thirteen? Fifteen? No one recalled exactly. Some are retiring this year; Eunice Blake of Lippincott is going to India to help with their children's book publishing program, and she seems very happy about it. What a wonderful opportunity she has!

After lunch I went over to the table where Ruth Viguers, editor and one of the reviewers of *The Horn Book*, was sitting, to congratulate her on the fine article she wrote for the December 1963 issue of *Harper's*, in which she says:

Exploitation of children did not end with child labor laws. It is their exploi-

tation, not as a labor force but as a market that has had the deadening effect on the reading habits of this country. No doubt children are being exploited as consumers in many ways, but since only in childhood do books make any deep impression on the human personality, exploitation in this area is a major destructive force.

With this article I agree in general, though not in all the specific points. Children are exploited by other markets, especially those that can pay for intensive TV advertising. Toys, with which children have always dramatized the world they live in and tried it on for size, may have an even closer and more general effect on child personality. Most toys are valuable; but, as Norman Cousins wrote in *SR*, Dec. 7, 1963, "We can ask why our favorite gifts to children are toy murder weapons."

That is a question in itself, one that has often been discussed without much effect. Let us talk about it later in relation to violence in children's books. The need is to distinguish between violence in the disguise of a "cautionary" tale, used simply to provide excitement and action, or that which is a necessary part of the narrative, employed with restraint and intelligence. It was so used in *The Faraway Lurs*, by Harry Behn (World, \$3), a book that lingers with pleasant sadness in the mind.

One hopeful sign is that parents are again beginning to read to children, in-



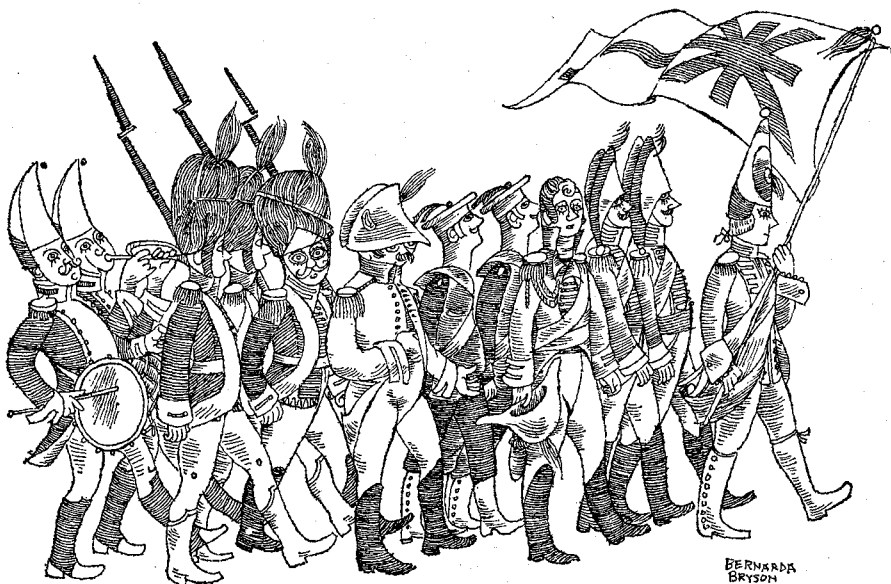
—From "Ukrainian Folk Tales."

stead of leaving it entirely to school or library. This shows up in letters I have received. Two of them I am answering here, because they may be of interest to others.

Mrs. Joan Worley writes from Dallas, Texas, that she wants one hard-cover book with all the first stories and folk tales for young children, and it must have color pictures. She remembers her "old story books with the delightful 1930 illustrations," and one in particular. I believe she is thinking of *Chimney Corner Stories*, by Veronica Hutchinson, illustrated by Lois Lenski (Putnam, \$3.95). It did—in 1928—have color pictures inserted among the black-and-whites; now, I believe, it has only a color frontispiece. But here are the old stories she wants (except for "The Gingerbread Man" and "Three Little Kittens"), and young children are listeners as well as lookers. Many of these much-loved tales are available with color pictures in separate books that are light and easy to handle. Pay a visit to your librarian; bookstores will order, but you need to know what you want first, as few shops keep backlist books.

Mrs. Delbert Fisher of Little Rock, Arkansas, wants a Bible story book "appropriately and intelligently presented." This is a bit more difficult; many Bible stories are retold in flat language and illustrated with sentimental pictures. There are two I would recommend, both very close to the King James Version, both time-tested. One is *A First Bible* (Walck, \$4), selected and arranged by Jean West Maury, illustrated by Helen Sewell with handsome pictures in black-and-white. The other is *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, by Nancy Barnhart (Scribners, \$4.95), which also has fine pictures, some in black and red, and a text based on the King James Version. One thing should be mentioned: there are no pictures of Jesus in the New Testament section. This is the way the artist wanted it to be. Jesus's presence is reflected in the faces of the people listening to him.

For the many others who will take up



—From "The Return of the Twelves."