

consider accomplishments. The federal urban renewal laws have goaded hundreds of cities into enacting housing code ordinances, which provide some protection for slum-dwellers exploited by slumlords. And by Anderson's own statistics, urban renewal has helped stimulate the rebuilding of the central cities, thus limiting the reckless consumption of natural open space as metropolises spread over the countryside.

Moreover, Anderson has totally ignored a likelier target in this attack on the federal bulldozer. The federally financed interstate-highway program has forced the relocation of nearly as many

persons as urban renewal, without replacing any demolished housing and, unlike urban renewal, without requiring relocation payments to the displaced. Urban freeways mutilate neighborhoods, permanently remove thousands of acres from city tax rolls, undermine mass transit patronage, and thereby help to create the spreading, monumental traffic jams that pollute the air with poisonous exhausts. Into this urban-freeway program the federal government has poured upwards of \$20 billion, at least five times the total federal funds committed for urban renewal. To me the deficiencies of urban renewal appear comparatively slight.

The Rich, Respectable Racketeers

Gamblers' Money: The New Force in American Life, by Wallace Turner (Houghton Mifflin. 306 pp. \$5.95), warns of the corruptive effect of legalized gambling on the entire U.S. economy. Fred J. Cook is author of "A Two-Dollar Bet Means Murder" and "The FBI Nobody Knows."

By FRED J. COOK

THE LATIN AMERICAN diplomat was flying home, his hand clutching the handle of a fat briefcase. During the entire flight he never relaxed his grip. When he landed, a cab sped him directly to a bank owned by his family, and there, in an inner office, the briefcase was opened and a cascade of greenbacks poured out. The money was sorted, counted, placed in a numbered account to conceal its owner's identity, and the diplomatic courier was given a receipt which, when he returned to the United States, he would send by registered mail to a man living in Las Vegas.

This, says Wallace Turner, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter of *The New York Times*, is just one device by which "black money" from the gambling tables of Las Vegas is cleaned up and made respectable. "Black money" is the booty that is skimmed off the top of casino winnings and never appears in the listed revenues—so that no tax is ever paid on it. Just how much of it there is, no one knows; but the best-informed sources agree that it probably amounts to millions of dollars, which go into the pockets of the underworld crooks who dominate much of Nevada's legal gambling. It represents an enormous, corruptive force exerting an insidious leverage on the entire American economy.

Wallace Turner's preoccupation in this book is with the deals, the purchased influence, the intricate swindles that such tainted money makes possible. He explains that the money spirited out of the country under the cloak of a courier's diplomatic immunity would not remain long in the Latin American bank. It would return in a "blizzard of paper" that would make it all look legitimate. Perhaps the man in Las Vegas had plans for a fancy new motel. Mortgage papers would be drawn up, a "loan" arranged, a meticulously constructed trail laid, so that the swindled money could come back looking as clean as an honest businessman's hard-earned dollars.

TURNER knows intimately the gambling rackets about which he writes. In the past few years he has investigated for *The Times* the rackets of Las Vegas and Hot Springs, Arkansas. He has interviewed the emperors of the Cleveland mob controlling Las Vegas's Desert Inn; he has talked to their hired help, their lawyers, Internal Revenue agents, state and federal officials. His research is solid, his conclusions fully warranted.

"To use an old-time phrase that has gone out of style," he writes, "these men who cheat on their gambling profits are crooks. Anything they touch will be soiled by their unethical business attitudes and infected with the virus of their antisocial behavior. These are the men for whom the great wealth generated by the gambling tables has supplied a new force in the American economy."

What Nevada has done in its legalized gambling experiment is to give some of the worst thugs and crooks of our time status as law-abiding, distinguished citizens. Turner shows various uses to which they have put their immunity. He probes deeply into the colossal Wall Street

swindles engineered by Alexander L. Guterman in collaboration with members of the Desert Inn crowd, and he explodes the comfortable and widely accepted assumption that no one except the gamblers got badly hurt. After all, Guterman and his Desert Inn cohorts peddled perhaps as much as \$8 million of worthless stock to the American public—and then cleared out with their winnings. As Turner says, the story constituted "as clear a warning to the American people as any that could be given of the great danger inherent in open, casino gambling on the Las Vegas pattern."

Turner concludes that when gamblers are sheltered by the law, as they are in Nevada, "the morals and ethics of the gamblers become a part of the accepted pattern of life . . . Nevada may be able to live with the situation that it has created . . . But the rest of the nation is not able to endure it . . ."

This is a solid, significant book. New Yorkers who are now being propagandized to vote for greater legalization of gambling might read it with profit. Almost inevitably, *Gamblers' Money* will be compared by many to last year's best-seller, Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris's *The Green Felt Jungle*, and it will suffer to some extent from the comparison. Turner is concerned less with the vivid personalities, the sexual aberrations, and the gaudy murders that fascinated Reid and Demaris, and more with the mob's use of tax dodges, its unorthodox forays into Wall Street, its wangling of public funds to finance its own pet projects. In other words, Turner's subject matter is duller, more intricate, and more important.



Wallace Turner—"black money" is cleaned up.

Minds Like Machine Guns

What Became of Gunner Asch, by Hans Hellmut Kirst, translated from the German by J. Maxwell Brownjohn (Harper & Row. 275 pp. \$4.95), continues the author's saga of the German military mind. Claude Hill is professor and graduate director of German at Rutgers University.

By CLAUDE HILL

HANS HELLMUT KIRST has proved to be one of the most entertaining German authors to appear since 1945. Of his dozen or so novels, several have been translated into many languages, while his chilling *Night of the Generals* made the best-seller list in this country last year. This latest yarn is a sequel to his greatest success with the German public: a trilogy about German soldiers before, during, and after World War II, which sold thousands of copies and was the basis for a couple of popular movies. Today the number one chronicler of the German military mind, Kirst makes up for his limited topical range by considerable narrative skill. Even this reviewer, who must confess to a total lack of interest in barracks life, found himself intrigued by the author's gift for swift, detached, sardonic, and satirical storytelling.

The setting for *What Became of Gunner Asch* is a small West German town that houses an Air Force base and a Grenadier Regiment. The plot concerns

rivalries between the two service branches that finally lead to a court-martial which results in the dismissal of Captain Ahlers, the most decent man in the novel. The book's real hero is Corporal Kamnitzer, a German version of Sergeant Bilko, who constantly outsmarts his adversary, Sergeant Major Rammler, a disgusting Nazi bully if ever there was one.

At this point I should like to register my regret for the English title, even though it identifies the novel with the trilogy released here as *The Revolt of Gunner Asch*, *Forward, Gunner Asch*, and *The Return of Gunner Asch*. Neither Kirst nor the reader of the new novel is particularly interested in what happened to Gunner Asch, who now owns the only hotel in town and appears as a merely peripheral figure. The original title of the trilogy was *08/15*, the model number of a German machine

gun, which roughly corresponds to the American "G.I." The current novel is called in German *08/15 Today*, and is exclusively concerned with life in the new *Bundeswehr* and not with *hotelier* Asch. Linking the book's title to him is a pity, because it tends to veil the serious intentions of the author, who clearly states in the preface that the present novel "merely tells of men in uniform and of their private lives, which they tried to lead in as uncomplicated a fashion as possible. If their story is not without its more humorous aspects, the final outcome yet remains a catastrophe."

MAY it be a warning before it is too late, before the Rammlers have their bestial and sadistic way again. And let us hope—though probably in vain—that the Kamnitzers and the Ahlerses prevail in the end. Meanwhile, authors like Kirst deserve our gratitude for alerting the world to the regenerative powers of the German military mentality. Kirst is not a great writer; often too slick, he relies on clichés, lacks depth, and is rather old-fashioned in narrative style. However, he has once more come up with a highly readable novel, often hilarious, at times bitter and even malicious, but always vastly entertaining.

High Society, Lower East Side

First Papers, by Laura Z. Hobson (Random House. 502 pp. \$6.95), recaptures the spunk and high-mindedness, along with the back-stabbing, that characterized the vivid ferment of the lower East Side during the first two decades of this century. The New York scene is one of David Boroff's special interests as a literary critic.

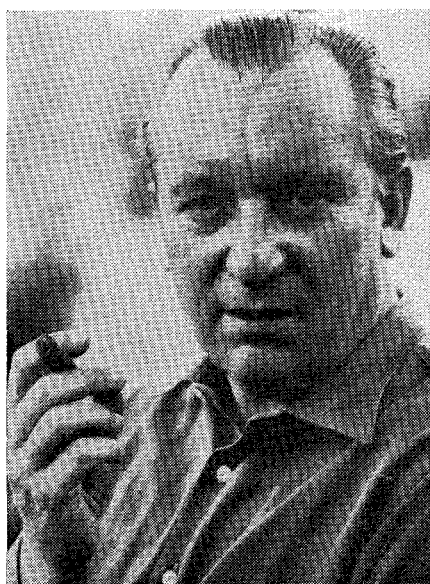
By DAVID BOROFF

EVERYONE who is old enough will recall the enormous excitement generated by Laura Z. Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement* in 1947. That novel, which rode the wave of postwar social idealism into extraordinary bestsellerdom, was part of a spate of liberal novels—Arthur Miller's *Focus* and Jo Sinclair's *Wasteland* were others—that addressed themselves to society's unfinished business which had been interrupted by the war. As such, the "liberal" novel, though its artistic merit is arguable, rendered a real service to society.

Mrs. Hobson, who has written two books since *Gentleman's Agreement*, brings much the same sensibility to her

new novel. *First Papers* is the chronicle of the Ivarin family during the first two decades of this century. Stefan Ivarin, an editor of a Yiddish daily in New York, had been a revolutionary in Czarist Russia. Imprisoned for his convictions, he finally made his way to this country, where he was part of that marvelously vivid ferment on the lower East Side. His wife, Alexandra, is at once a "Yiddishe Mama" and an Ibsenesque free soul, given on occasion to dancing Isadora Duncan style in the nude. They have a son who doesn't amount to much (he Anglicizes his name, to his father's disgust) and two daughters, the younger of whom is strongly reminiscent of Francie in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Intense, imaginative, dreamy, she is susceptible to noble causes and fierce attachments. Their lives intersect with those of a fine old New England family, the Paiges, who devote themselves to civil rights at a time when defending dissidents was a good deal less than fashionable.

The novel follows two threads—the infighting in the Yiddish newspaper that ultimately forces Ivarin from his editorship (the paper becomes progressively sleazier despite his opposition) and the



Hans Hellmut Kirst—"hilarious."