

Social Ideal, Political Reality

The Society of Man, by Louis J. Halle (Harper & Row. 208 pp. \$4.95), explores the conflict between concept and reality in international politics and the role of statesmanship in mediating between them. Arthur N. Holcombe is professor of the science of government, emeritus, at Harvard University.

By ARTHUR N. HOLCOMBE

LIKE all knowledgeable and thoughtful Americans, Louis J. Halle is greatly disturbed by the manifest contradiction between the traditional American image of a kindly and peace-loving old gentleman in the family of nations and the current picture of Uncle Sam as a pistol-toting, trigger-happy vigilante. The traditional image is faithfully reflected on all suitable occasions in high official praise of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The current picture is solidly supported by recent operations in Santo Domingo and Vietnam.

Halle is concerned about a state of human society in which such a harsh contradiction can flourish, and about what this portends for the future. He writes at length of the inherent conflict between what he calls an orderly conceptual world and a chaotic existential world.

Man, regarded as a political animal, Halle contends, is the unhappy victim of this conflict between the ideal world he would like to think he lives in and the real world he is forced by circumstances to endure. Man strives to make the real world conform to his mental picture; he tries to reduce the strife by modifying the picture; an acceptable reconciliation between the two seems to be beyond his powers. Statesmanship, Halle argues, has to perform a mediating function between the two worlds. A superior formal education, he seems to fear, may disqualify a superior man for successful statesmanship by exalting too much the conceptual above the existential. Either our current systems of political education are fundamentally defective, he seems to conclude, or statesmanship is perversely restricted to so-called practical politicians.

Mr. Halle illustrates his argument by citing the plight of the dogmatic Marxist. Marx was inspired by the vision of

a peaceful and happy world, in which inveterate class warfare would have ended in the inevitable victory of the masses, devoted to the management of a cooperative commonwealth unfalteringly pursuing the public interest. But the record of the years since Marx discloses an increasing gap between the Marxist conceptual world and the existential world. The rise of the urban middle classes in the advanced industrial states has pushed back into the less developed areas the various dictatorships operating in the name of the proletariat. The confusion of the dogmatic Marxists is convincingly demonstrated in the conflicting claims of the rival Marxist prophets.

THE goal of Mr. Halle's intriguing study is an exploration of the direction that society is taking in consequence of the reciprocal action between the conceptual and the existential worlds. He would like to believe that the mediation of competent statesmen will eventually end the conflict by establishing a rational universal order. But he does not venture to assert that the realization of this happy vision is inevitable. He is clear in his own mind that the concept of the nation-state is becoming obsolete. This kind of state, he vigorously contends, is rapidly losing the capacity for self-sufficiency that has enabled it to be largely independent of the rest of the world.

Mr. Halle does not doubt that the management of chaos will continue to be the preoccupation of practical statesmanship. But for how long he does not say. He does assert that "all the time, barring total disaster, we shall be moving toward a permanent worldwide organization of man." This seems to be an ideological reversion from the materialism of Marx through the obscure idealism of Hegel to the seminal Kantian philosophy of history. Bolder than Kant, Halle believes also that we shall be approaching "some ultimate order beyond our present imagining." But, like Kant, he leaves the more perfect demonstration of his hypothesis to the future.

The value of Halle's book, standing by itself, cannot be definitively appraised. It needs to be considered together with his earlier book, *Men and Nations*, in which he explored more thoroughly his underlying philosophy of history. His case for a rational successor

to the moribund nation-state will not satisfy the methodical political scientist who will not follow a line of argument beyond the point where it is supported by observable and verifiable facts. It will appeal more strongly to the speculative thinker who craves an element of faith in his arsenal of ideas. From this point of view Halle's latest book is an outstanding contribution to the current battle between optimists and pessimists in the study of international politics.

If you like Ireland we'll send it to you six times a year. Six times a year "Ireland of the Welcomes" magazine brings you Ireland. Stories. Poems. Pictures. The things that make it different and the things that keep it the same. Bean Sidhes, Gruagaches and Pucas.* Dublin: St. Stephen's Green, the Phoenix Park. Soft afternoons on the lake near Westport House, County Mayo. Guinness. Tweed. Waterford crystal. Tipperary. Connemara. Cork.

Ireland.

All yours to keep. Or give. For two years. For three dollars.

Address your cheques to:
Irish Tourist Board, Dept. SR
33 East 50 Street
New York, N.Y. 10022.

*Three kinds of Little People described by Kevin Danaher in a recent number.



EUROPEAN CARS TAX FREE

VOLVO	TRIUMPH	JAGUAR
MERCEDES	SUNBEAM	PEUGEOT
VOLKSWAGEN	SIMCA	M.G. etc.

All European cars delivered abroad tax-free. All details arranged. Save 35% on purchases & rentals. TRADES accepted, FREE storage & chauffeur service to airport. All cars on display. Write for FREE MASTER CATALOG. SR-122

Cars _____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____

NETMET AUTO INTERNATIONAL
153-03 Hillside Avenue, Jamaica, New York
For information call 212 523-5858

ASPEN, COLORADO
leasehold and improvements
for sale
HOTEL JEROME
Box 219 J, Aspen, Colorado, 81611

**BUY U. S. SAVINGS
BONDS**

Whisper of Evil in a Roar of Drums

The Firebugs, by Peter Faecke, translated from the German by Arnold J. Pomerans (Knopf. 141 pp. \$3.95), and *The Sailor in the Bottle*, by Manfred Bieler, translated from the German by James Clark (Dutton. 221 pp. \$4.50), introduce two first novelists from West and East Germany respectively. Joseph P. Bauke is associate professor of Germanic languages at Columbia.

By JOSEPH P. BAUKE

EVER since Günter Grass burst upon the scene a few years ago, there has been a renewed interest in German literature. No new author of Grass's ability has been discovered, but the number of talented writers at work in present-day Germany is astonishing. Due to the impact of translations from practically every country in the world, the provincialism cultivated by the Nazis has been exorcised and the literary climate of West Germany today is not much different from that of other Western countries. The young authors, not bound by a tradition of their own, are a daring breed and bring to literature a passion for experimentation that threatens to turn the writer's studio into a laboratory for the creation of radically reformed prose.

Much of this new prose is self-conscious, faintly academic, and full of tricks that may work in the hands of master magicians but are rarely pulled off by apprentices. There are of course exceptions, and Peter Faecke's novel *The Firebugs* is one of them. Faecke, born in 1940, is a very young man for whom the country's Nazi past is a vague memory. He evokes the Hitler era in seemingly superficial fashion by alluding to the roar of the drums that filled the air then. Yet there is an awareness of evil, crime, and guilt in the pages of his novel that digs deeper than many more factual accounts.

The Firebugs is confusing reading at first sight. On the surface it is the story of a young man of high-school age at odds with his parents. A refugee from Silesia, he grows up in Western Germany, taken care of by a woman who is not his mother though she was married to the boy's father for a time. The father, it is gradually revealed, was determined to make up for his own insufficiencies by

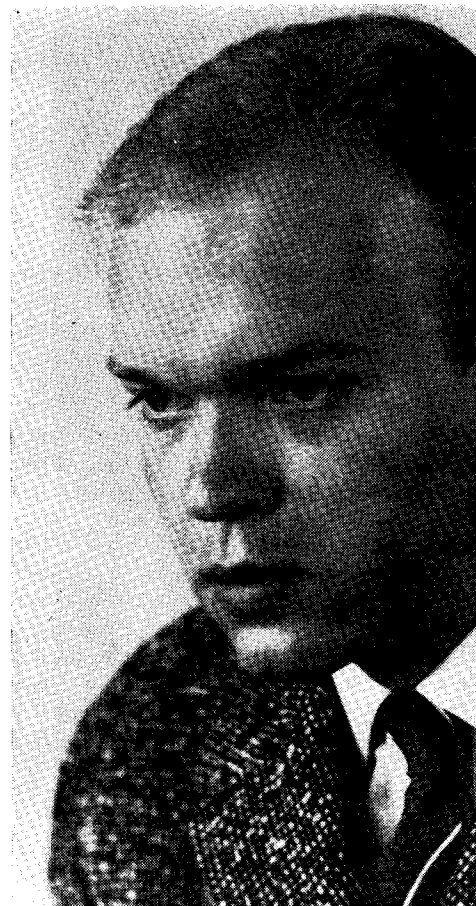
producing a race of men capable of living without ever having to show their credentials. But breeding supermen is not easily accomplished, since human nature is fickle and the times are as changeable as women.

Glonski, the father, leaves his first wife because she cannot bear him children, and he gladly gets rid of the second, a Frenchwoman, whose son is not pure-blooded at a time when blood alone matters. After the war Glonski starts all over in the new Germany as if nothing had happened. He builds a sawmill, just as he had done a decade or so ago in Silesia, and again produces a son who falls short of his expectations. Finally, as he is casting his eye on his son Pnip's girl friend, he dies in the flames of his sawmill, and there is every indication that his disinherited children are the arsonists. Darkly it is hinted that Glonski started out on his career by setting fire to the sawmills of his competitors. Is guilt, then, the only constant in life? And *The Firebugs* a parable about Germany in this century?

Faecke has broken up the story into so many aspects, both as to space and time, that a plot summary inevitably does violence to his theme. Guilt is not the only problem, for memory and its lapses, and the utter isolation of those closest to each other, add to the complexity of life's fabric. Perhaps the facts as such are of no interest at all to Faecke, who tries to capture what remains of them after memory has gone to work. There are few first novels, in German or any other language, that are as intellectually adventurous and hence as demanding as this. *The Firebugs* is a most difficult book, made more so by a translation that hits a new low in publishing. The number of distortions, inaccuracies, and outright mistakes is appalling. It is not easy to guess how a publisher who has done more for German authors than any other firm in this country can put his imprint on this slovenly translation by Arnold J. Pomerans.

Manfred Bieler, author of *The Sailor in the Bottle*, was luckier with his translator, James Clark; but his text is not nearly as original as Faecke's. Bieler, an East German, tells the story of the sailor Bonifaz who insists on remaining neutral during World War II. He is helped in his determination by a magic bottle that does for him what the tin drum did for Grass's puny drummer, only less of it.

Bieler's satire on contemporary life



Peter Faecke—"an awareness of guilt."

begins with a poetic flourish and details the adventures of Bonifaz with the Nazis, the invading Russians, and, above all, with women. There are scenes full of humor and imagination at first, but the latter part of the novel is a dreary satire on life in capitalist, revanchist and militarist West Germany, flagellated at the expense of the Germany beyond the Wall. One would have to hate the West Germans more than they deserve to be amused by this flat-footed diatribe. Whatever may be wrong in that country, politically or otherwise, Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll, and Hans Magnus Enzensberger are still its most effective critics, and better writers to boot.

Bieler's novel is the first by a young East German to appear in this country. One hesitates to judge it harshly, but it proves once again that East Germany is the one satellite country in which intellectual life has not yet entered the post-Stalinist phase.

Coming February 19

Special Educational Travel Feature in the Education Supplement of SR.