

disappears, the human impulse in the house of rules becomes not an alternative approach to mission but a mask for sexual and social longing.

Confusion of purpose aside, the play and the production have some technical problems. The courtroom drama, skeleton of the play, is an excuse for the flashbacks, but it has no melodramatic tension in its own right; the mystery is solved in an off-hand way when the priest's lawyer remembers seeing lights up at the deserted rectory and hauls in the missing housekeeper for the obligatory witness-stand confession. The courtroom scenes, in their turn, break whatever emotional force the growing love between the principals might have been expected to produce as unacknowledged passion begins to fracture the characters' self-defined exteriors. Since the play is essentially conventional in form, it might bet-

ter have dispensed with the shifting focus, a device which many plays—James Baldwin's *The Blues for Mr. Charlie*, for instance—have shown to be more effective for didactic than for dramatic purposes. To make matters worse, Stephen Joyce's Father Rivard is no banked fire about to burst into flames. He seems as cold and distant as Sister Rita thinks he is, acting distress not anguish, and the final jet of tears that he manages is less a culmination than a technician's trick; I was reminded of the woman who spouts tears in Chaplin's *A Dog's Life* and was moved, not to weeping as Clive Barnes was, but to speculation about the performer's facility.

Serious, earnest, almost prim, *The Runner Stumbles* is an unusual play to find on Broadway these days, but it remains more an anomaly than an artistic or intellectual experience.

GERALD WEALES

MIRRORS ON THE DEMOCRATS

ROBERT K. LANDERS

Adlai Stevenson of Illinois

JOHN BARTLOW MARTIN
Doubleday, \$15

The Hard Years

EUGENE J. MCCARTHY
Viking, \$8.95

The Democrats: The Years After FDR

HERBERT S. PARMET
Macmillan, \$12.95

Edward Kennedy and the Camelot Legacy

JAMES MacGREGOR BURNS
Norton, \$11.95

The President Makers: From Mark Hanna to Joseph P. Kennedy

FRANCIS RUSSELL
Little, Brown, \$12.50

IT WAS in 1960, which now seems a time long ago, that Eugene McCarthy beseeched the Democrats assembled in convention in Los Angeles not to reject Adlai Stevenson, not to reject "this man who made us all proud to be called Democrats." They did reject him, of course, as it was by then, as even McCarthy knew, inevitable that they should. Whether, if they hadn't, it would have made any real difference, will never be known; but certainly it was not so long afterward that there came to be increasingly infrequent reason for anyone to be very proud to be called Democrat. But now, the future (if not, thanks to Jimmy Carter, the very immediate future) of the party seems to some in doubt; McCarthy himself wanders the byways as an independent, persuaded that "The discontent in the country could well manifest itself in a successful independent or third-party effort in the near future. The alternative is to surrender the United States indefinitely to the Democrats and Republicans—to let them just take turns running the country. On the record, they have not done very well by the country in recent years."

Despite that recent record, one rather doubts that the man whom McCarthy so eloquently nominated in 1960 would be joining him today in apostasy. There is at least no hint in the magnificently detailed first volume of John Bartlow

Martin's biography that Stevenson ever gave serious thought to abandoning the party which he seems to have come to originally as the result less of any sustained scrutiny of its record than of some force as little rationalistic as tradition or heredity (his grandfather had been vice president under Grover Cleveland).

Although he always seemed to many to be at some distance from ordinary politics, from its less-than-noble and never-ending machinations, in fact Stevenson was not devoid of political ambition; as Martin shows, he expressed such ambition as early as 1930, when he was 30 years old. Still, his apparent remoteness was an important part of his popular appeal (and so, of his utility to earth-bound party regulars), and it was more than just a pose: He was somewhat remote from ordinary politics, which he never experienced at its lower levels. He was remote, too, in the doubtless more significant sense that, while he apprehended the political realities, he did not simply yield to them, but instead, without thereby seeking to escape those realities, actually tried to submit them to moral judgment. It was a difficult and demanding undertaking, one which may very well have received, very privately, special force from a childhood accident in which Stevenson, age 12, shot and killed a playmate. It was also an undertaking not without its risks; for in the

fun-house mirror of politics, conscientiousness could easily assume the shape of indecision, and ambition checked, of weakness revealed.

And yet, withal, Stevenson was a political realist. Not the least fascinating part of Martin's book is that in which he scrutinizes the forces at work upon and within Stevenson when he was led, by President Truman's withdrawal and the liabilities of the other possible candidates, to consider accepting his party's presidential nomination in 1952. "He took many things into consideration, and it was a complex decision," Martin writes. "It was, however, essentially a political decision. If he could run against Taft, he would replay the old debate of the William Allen White Committee days and he could be comfortable and probably win. But if he must run against Eisenhower, he had lost the foreign policy issue, he faced a national hero, and he would probably lose. . . . His instinct told him to run against Taft but not against Eisenhower, and his instinct was right. But events controlled."

Events did not entirely control Stevenson's political appearance, yet he did come to seem to many rather more liberal in his political views than in fact he was. After encountering Stevenson's private opinions of Truman's "Fair Deal" at a meeting in March, 1952, one member of the Americans for Democratic Action came away wondering if he should counsel his colleagues to labor to prevent, not promote, Stevenson's candidacy. In fact, Stevenson made his basic political stand in the middle ground of his party, and that was a place which, especially to a moral absolutist, was not without serious faults; but then, as Martin, with a loving candor, makes clear, neither was Stevenson. "In later years," Martin writes, "talking about him after his death, some of Stevenson's liberal friends wondered why they forgave him what they considered his shortcomings—his old remarks about Jews, his clear intellectual rather than passionately emotional commitment to civil rights, his loyal defense of policies of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson in which

they thought he did not believe. George Ball, asked why, replied, 'Because of his gaiety, his wit, his style, and his guts. And because he had integrity. And he was a friend—that was his great quality. He would do almost anything for a friend.'" Several of Stevenson's defects seem rather more serious than his friends are readily inclined to admit; still, it would be an exceptionally severe judge who did not come, in the end, to feel about him almost as they do.

Doubtless Stevenson's failure to gain the White House left his admirers a little too free simply to celebrate his virtues and to imagine that, had he won, those virtues would have sufficed in any truly important matter; yet that is a benefit bequeathed to the admirers of every losing candidate, and seldom so far indulged as to create a market



for a two-volume biography, the first volume of which runs to nearly 800 pages. So Stevenson is manifestly someone special.

Martin labored for a decade on this work and his dedication has paid off: the first volume is a triumph of the Old Journalism, telling us more about Stevenson, from birth through his defeat in 1952, than any previous work has or than any subsequent one soon is likely to, and doing so in such a way as to gain our confidence that we are actually encountering the real Stevenson.

Martin worked as a speechwriter for Stevenson in the 1952 campaign, but now he thinks Stevenson was of a type that simply does not get elected President: "He was, indeed, an off-trail candidate, a sport, a man who behaved and talked unlike almost any other candidate in recent memory. There was about him a certain superficial resemblance to the Senator Eugene McCarthy of 1968 whose campaign against the Vietnam War that year produced

success in the New Hampshire primary. (But McCarthy later behaved in a careless, offhand, eccentric, erratic way, as when he relinquished his seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Stevenson was more responsible. . . .) Such men attract followers who become idolators; but it is an appeal to a narrow segment of the population; such men do not get elected President." This may well be true; still, Martin seems insufficiently appreciative of McCarthy's accomplishments in 1968 and, perhaps as a result, avoids wondering if Stevenson, in circumstances similar to McCarthy's, would have been so "irresponsible" as to challenge a President from his own party who persisted in waging a senseless war. One's doubts that Stevenson would have been do not so much diminish one's respect for him as simply increase it for McCarthy.

A man presented for the Presidency, McCarthy said in 1968, "should understand that this country does not so much need leadership, because the potential for leadership in a free country must exist in every man an every woman. He must be prepared to be a kind of channel for those desires and those aspirations, perhaps giving some direction to the movement of the country largely by the way of setting free." McCarthy seems in this collection of essays and appreciations, as well as in his previous works, to proceed from an analogous conception of the proper way to exercise the Office of Writer. Indeed, so quiet, so uninflected is his voice; so muffled, so tentative, his conclusions; that not even the somewhat too familiar flash of his wit is enough to rouse one entirely from distraction; and yet still somehow one is drawn fitfully into his (as he deemed it in 1968) "constituency of conscience," there to glimpse such sensible notions as the appointing of non-lawyers to the Supreme Court, and to experience the strange and curiously liberating effect produced by a politician so like a free man.

McCarthy is doubtless correct in supposing that the two-party system is not beyond challenge. "The two-party

system can be defended," he writes, "only if the parties themselves are responsive to the needs of the country and if they give the people a choice on major issues affecting the country." By this high standard, the recent record is certainly not encouraging. "In fact," McCarthy continues, "a coalition might result in better government. For example, had the choice of a President been thrown into the House of Representatives in 1968, the House might have made as good a choice as that made by the minority of voters who elected Richard Nixon. A formal and identifiable coalition in the House and Senate might work better than the floating coalitions which now mark the Congress." True, a coalition might result in better government; but also true, it might not. Richard Nixon is perhaps not the only menace to be avoided; Adolph Hitler, it will be recalled, was appointed chancellor with a coalition cabinet in which the Nazis were in a minority. One is a little reminded of Ambrose Bierce's distinction between a conservative and a liberal, the former being "A statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal, who wishes to replace them with others."

Nevertheless, McCarthy may be onto something. Can it be true that the compromising, moderating and unifying effects long regarded as among the principal virtues of our two-party system are becoming less necessary than they used to be? McCarthy evidently suspects so, for he writes: "A two-party system may be a device that makes immature democracy work, but it is less necessary in a mature democracy; that is, one with more democratic procedures and a better-informed electorate." If that is so, and if, even as the influence of old-fashioned political machines wanes, the "consuming purpose of American parties" remains, in the late Clinton Rossiter's words, "to create an electoral majority rather than doctrinal unity, to win power rather than to use it," then, as McCarthy says, discontent could well manifest itself in a successful independent or third-party effort, if not

in the near future, then just beyond.

Still, there continue to be those, among them scholars like Herbert S. Parmet and James MacGregor Burns, who hope to see the Democratic party made more responsible, more disciplined, more fit to govern. Ironically, were this to happen, a result might be to provoke one or more additional parties into existence; but if the transformation were truly a success, that is, if the Democratic party did become, and demonstrate that it was, more fit to govern, then, presumably, the strength of any newborn parties would be negligible.

Parmet, despite his diligence and good intentions, is, I am afraid, of little use in contemplating these matters. Part of the difficulty is that he has attempted to cast his history of the Democratic party since 1945 in the form of a chronological narrative, a form to which it seems little suited. The rest of the difficulty is that he writes poorly. The result is mind-numbing. Still, perhaps it is worth noting that he concludes, "The Democrats were showing every indication of maturing from the pragmatic progressivism of the New Deal that had inspired their modern foundations and were becoming, instead, intellectually devoted to giving substance to the rhetoric that Democrats are the party that 'care about people.' Instead of debilitating programs designed for the sake of keeping everybody within the 'big tent,' they would have to substitute demonstrated leadership capable of coping with the domestic and international conditions in a manner consistent with the best interest of their constituents. The formulation of such policies would have to become a prime party responsibility. No other agency could be expected to do the job for the nation."

The much more articulate Burns is much less sanguine about Democratic maturity: "... (T)he cardinal question about the two major parties today is not whether they can help govern but whether they can even survive." Burns tries, at one point, to decide if a "President" Edward Kennedy would seek to realign and modernize the

Democratic party, and finally concludes, none too persuasively, that Kennedy would (but, Burns adds, the odds would be against his succeeding). "In another decade," Burns notes, "the Democratic party may have deteriorated to a point beyond resuscitation."

Speculation about what Kennedy as President might attempt or accomplish seems now, of course, if not entirely irrelevant, then nearly so. And this condition is not improved by Burns' effort to locate Kennedy in terms of "the flawed legacy of Camelot," a conception which upon elaboration proves so wanting in judgment and even taste, as to make it difficult to regard Burns' study, for all its impressive thoughtfulness, as truly a serious one. Still, he does perform a service by reminding us of how useful a senator Kennedy apparently has become and of how little the tragedy of Chappaquiddick really tells us about him. Indeed, for all the labors of Burns and of how many others, for all of the innumerable words which have poured forth to tell us about this Kennedy, it is remarkable how indistinct a figure he remains, only seeming to come somewhat into focus when he is awfully suffering or bearing witness against violence; it is almost as if somehow he does not fully exist, except as a creation of others.

Kennedy and his brothers were uncertain, back in late 1960, if he should run in 1962 for the Senate, but one man, as Burns notes, was sure: their father, Joseph. The elder Kennedy's portrait, well and justly done, hangs in Francis Russell's gallery of "President makers," eight men without whom eight other men would not have become President. That this indispensability should entitle Russell's subjects to be thought of as "makers" of Presidents is a conceit not to be taken, in every case, entirely seriously; yet it is fully adequate to serve as frame for this incisive and entertaining exercise in History-as-Journalism.

One brisk day in October, 1902, as Russell tells us, George Harvey, conservative Democrat and editor of *Harper's Weekly*, sat at the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson as president of

Princeton University, and listened for the first time to the man, likewise then a conservative Democrat, whom he later would "make" President of the United States. "Harvey listened with the rapt attentiveness of a convert at a revival meeting, and, like any convert, his moment of enlightenment was the culmination of a long series of psychological effects. Through the years

he had grown convinced that the Democratic party had become 'an odds and ends patchwork of theories and expediciencies, tainted with Populism, haunted by Bryanesque wildness, unfit to govern since the Civil War.' Cleveland had been elected in spite of the party. What the Democrats needed was a candidate to be elected *with* the party. Only a southerner, one acceptable to the North,

could lead such a renewal party, restore it to its old preeminence, return it to its great heritage of before the war." As it turned out, of course, Harvey ended up hating Wilson. There must be similarly conservative men today, listening to the former governor of Georgia. Much, including not least the future of the Democratic party, may depend on how it turns out.

BOOKS

REBUTTING THE ANTI-TECHNOLOGISTS

JOHN P. SISK

The Existential Pleasures of Engineering

SAMUEL C. FLORMAN

St. Martin's Press, \$7.95

Samuel C. Florman's book, like so many others written during the past ten or fifteen years, is a reassessment after a traumatic event prior to which it was inconceivable and after which it, or something like it, seemed inevitable. In the church the event was Vatican II: nationally, it was the Vietnam war; culturally, it was the psychedelic revolution and the assertion of the counter-culture; economically, it was the discovery, or rediscovery, of scarcity lurking behind the mask of affluence. Such watershed points in time do not necessarily result in books as good as Mr. Florman's; indeed, to judge from the recent past, they are all too likely to produce books that quickly embarrass many of their early enthusiasts. Witness the fate of Charles A. Reich's *The Greening of America* and Richard Neville's *Play Power*.

For Mr. Florman, the present Dark Age, in which the engineer has become a favorite whipping boy for many of the discontents of civilization, dates from President Truman's announcement early in 1950 that work was about to begin on the hydrogen

bomb. Prior to this moment engineers had for more than a century enjoyed a Golden Age of technical accomplishment and unquestioned prestige. Mr. Florman has taken on the near-Herculean task of explaining not simply how Golden Age became Dark Age but of persuading his readers that the engineer's current bad reputation "is based on a misapprehension of the engineer's experience."

All about us the sense of disenchantment with technology appears to be growing. No one who is interested in the engineering profession—least of all those of us who are engineers—can ignore the fall of the engineer from the dizzying heights he once occupied. Sometimes it is easy to forget what has happened, since we engineers are all busy, our successes are many, and the majority of the people still seem to treat us as pretty respectable citizens. But there can be no denying that, with the coming of the environmental crisis, our relationship to society has changed. We cannot—should not—pretend that it has not happened, or that a hundred space spectacles can restore things to what they were.

—The Existential Pleasures of Engineering

To do this he must take on a familiar group of antitechnologists: Jacques Ellul, Lewis Mumford, Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Roszak, René Dubos, Charles A. Reich and John McDermott—to say nothing of a legion of recalcitrant counter-culturists, disillusioned Marxists and impassioned ecologists, for whom to be against technology is to be on the side of the best of all angels. Considered *en masse*, this opposition, as has become clear enough in the past decade, is formidable indeed. Mr. Florman must pick up where C. P. Snow left off and do battle once again with an adversary convinced—as Noel Aman has recently remarked of the Oxford wits and the Bloomsbury group, but which with a few modifications might be said of American literary intellectuals as well—"that the career of moneymaking, industry, business, profits, or efficiency is a despicable life in which no sane and enlightened person should be engaged."

Mr. Florman's rebuttal of the anti-technologists is the strongest part of his book. His own two-culture background (he is a Dartmouth engineer with a master's degree in English literature from Columbia) gives him an almost unfair advantage over adversaries who belong in a class that remains in great part just as one-cultured as Alfred North Whitehead said it was fifty

Commonweal

PERSECUTION IN LITHUANIA

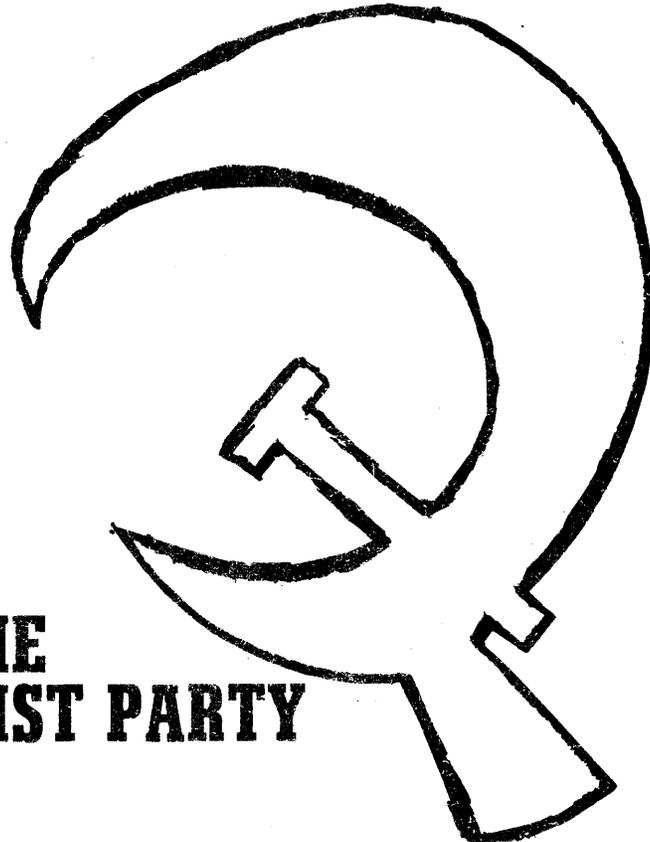
RICHARD J. KRICKUS

THE TRIAL OF SERGEI KOVALEV

HARVEY FIRESIDE

FACE-LIFT FOR THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY

PETER HEBBLETHWAITE



FRANK GETLEIN BARKING DOG AND PRIVATE AGONY
PETER STEINFELS JIMMY CARTER AND A PURITAN FATHER
GERALD WEALES DOING SISTER IN
COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR. SPACESHIP EARTH

ROBERT K. LANDERS MIRRORS ON THE DEMOCRATS
JOHN P. SISK REBUTTING THE ANTI-TECHNOLOGISTS
JOHN GARVEY GROWING UP CATHOLIC
ALSO: DOROTHY DOHEN, ISIDORE SILVER, RALPH
McINERNEY, MARK TAYLOR, JEFFREY MEYERS

CORRESPONDENCE



Special Delivery

Saxton's River, Vt.

To the Editors: Early summer heat waves do get to all of us, readers, writers, publishers. This reader found the editorial on the postal system [June 18] a bit crypto-rambling for an important message. If it means what I think, that our government should get going to restore a federal post office department as public service, which was provided in the Constitution; and stop tinkering with a non-profit, federally funded, insanely expensive business operation, the message is important and informative. It makes a nice fact sheet for people who won't pressure Congress on an issue they "don't understand enough about."

But dear *Commonweal*, please never, ever again let that noxious old bromide about Topsy's growth get by your editorial blue pencil. MARJORIE MURPHY

Stopping the Torture

Conshohocken, Pa.

To the Editors: Abigail McCarthy brings up an issue which very much needs to be discussed in her article on "Complicity in Torture" [Mar. 26]. As she suggests, each of us bears a responsibility for permitting this to happen, particularly in countries to which we give a great deal of money and have many investments. I believe we should all put pressure on our senators, representatives and the State Dept. to stop giving aid to countries which engage in these practices. Surely we have been remiss in not learning more about these situations and working harder to stop them.

I do not wish to avoid the personal responsibility, but I think we learned in the Vietnam war that the "people" have a very hard time convincing our leaders to change their method of operation. Mrs. McCarthy suggests no way in which change can be achieved.

I believe the heavier burden of

(Continued on page 477)

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THE DOMESTIC STAKES

Voters stayed away from the polls in droves during the just-concluded primaries, as they have in all recent elections. The reason, many of them say, is that they see no real difference between the parties. It is our hope that Jimmy Carter will spell out his positions with more specificity in the months ahead, thus making plain the differences between the parties, and that he and the Republican candidate will win the attention of the American voters with a serious discussion of the issues that confront the nation. Nevertheless, even as matters now stand, the domestic differences between the two major parties are real enough; the voter is not in fact confronted with a choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

Consider, as one good example of these differences between the parties, the recent domestic proposals made by the Democratic majority in the House. What was called for by the Democrats was nothing less than a dramatic realignment of legislative priorities for the next five years, with the aim of restoring national economic prosperity by creating 12 million new jobs and cutting taxes by \$10 billion. The program put forward by the majority in the House is based on the idea of a Democratic President and a Democratic Congress working together beginning next year. The reason is obvious: this year saw a record-breaking number of vetoes by the Republican President of all sorts of social measures passed by Congress; in fact, in the last eight years two GOP Presidents have vetoed 86 pieces of legislation developed by Democratic Congresses. The goal of the proposed Democratic program: a revitalized economy that would produce federal budget surpluses by 1980, surpluses that would in turn be invested in health, educational, energy and environmental programs. Included would be the Hawkins-Humphrey full employment bill to reduce unemployment to 3 percent by 1981; enactment of a \$10 billion tax cut effective July 1978 that