



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

NOTE ON THE INVINCIBILITY OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN MIND: Our own Manhattan telephone directory leads off with AAA NY hdqtrs Hotel Penna, but the Los Angeles telephone directory leads off with AAAAAAAAAAAAAA Alteration & Repair Co Main Ofc 3417 W 1st.

WORD finally reached us on how Headquarters, that mysterious entity which seems to exist apart from and above all human beings, took the invasion. It came to us in a letter from a weather officer stationed somewhere in England. He tells us that all during D Day his teletype machine was burning up with weather forecasts for missions, corrections of forecasts, repudiations of forecasts. At nightfall there was a brief lull, and then his machine suddenly spluttered out this message: "Is your typewriter issued to you on a shipping ticket or a memorandum receipt?" That was the moment our



weather officer knew that the invasion had succeeded. Headquarters was back in the groove.

POLITICAL party conventions are responsible, of course, for something more than a good show, but with radio playing the rôle it does these days, it might not be unwise for the politicians to regard the voters, to a certain extent, as *Billboard* does—as customers—and we hope the Democrats will prove more interesting than their predecessors, even though much of their task may be as clearly and as dryly cut out for them. "GOP Convention a Radio Bust,"

sums up *Billboard*, which does not fool. "Nets [Networks] Coulda Stayed in Bed. Webs [also Networks] spent 50G." It continues with its customary astringency, recording that some radio people called the affair "a flop show without a second-act curtain." *Billboard* then quotes a net exec to the effect that what the Republicans needed was a P. T. Barnum and a good radioman to write their talks and direct their broadcast sessions. The Lord deliver us from recommending any writings by radiomen, but there is probably realistic counsel in that. It certainly would be a mistake, though, to rely for everything on a showman, however able to perk up the works, or, in the diction of *Billboard*, to hypo them. What made the Republican convention a washeroo is obvious, and the moral should be plain to politicians of any persuasion: a party's got to do something more than throw eggs to keep from laying them.

AN early indication of Republican bungling is their choice of headquarters for the National Committee. With hundreds of decently named hotels to pick from, they managed to get themselves ensconced in a place called the Roosevelt. It sounded almost perverse to us until we received the formal notification. The announcement said that the new quarters were "on the tenth floor of the Hotel Theodore Roosevelt." You know, that little old inn on James Madison Avenue.

OUR first definite presentiment of the possible state of things under a new administration came when we read in the *Times* last week about the church Governor Dewey attends when he is in Pawling. The church is about the same size, apparently, as the one President Roosevelt attends when he is at Hyde Park, and after the service

the Deweys have usually stood outside awhile and chatted with their friends and neighbors, among them Watson McDowell, a vice-president of the Bowery Bank, Lowell Thomas, and Elliott V. Bell, State Superintendent of Banking. None of this struck us as particularly strange, but the *Times* started going into the history of the church itself, which, it seems, once stood a quarter of a mile from where it is now and was moved because Lowell Thomas didn't like the view. Here, we feel, is a bit of information that Mr. Dewey's campaign managers must play down. If there is one tradition that the American people



have indicated no desire to scrap, it is the stability of churches, and the news that a Presidential nominee regularly attends one which may be shifted a quarter of a mile this way or that, depending on where Lowell Thomas thinks the grass is greener, might be just the thing that sends the decisive minority of voters up another alley. It might even start them wondering what would happen if Dewey moved into the White House and his old neighbor Lowell Thomas called on him, glanced out the window, and didn't like Pennsylvania Avenue.

OUR favorite radical party, by a long shot, is the Socialist Labor Party, which recently held its twenty-first national convention at the Cornish Arms Hotel. Edward A. Teichert, a steelworker of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, was nominated for President of the United States, and in his acceptance speech called for "the unconditional surrender of capital and the inaugura-



"Isn't 'renegotiation' something we're indignant about?"

tion of an industrial republic of labor." Since its founding by Daniel de Leon, in 1890, the Socialist Labor Party has never altered its program or basic policies by so much as a tittle, and every once in a while it goes on record that it is renewing its demand that capitalism take a runout powder. During those fifty-four years, it has opposed trade unionism, unemployment insurance, wage-and-hour laws, and every other project of more collaborationist radicals as a treacherous Bismarckian device to distract the attention of the workers from the primary consideration, the immediate overthrow of capitalism. We feel a certain admiration for the Socialist Labor Party, its program, and its candidate. We don't suppose that he will be elected this fall, but if, someday, while the three thousand enrolled Socialist Laborites are marching around the citadel of Wall Street, blowing on their ram's-horns, the walls come tumbling down, we will take it in our stride. We

think we'd rather have them overthrow capitalism than anyone else we know.

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE: Some crisp young felon has chalked up on a brick wall on the upper West Side, "My name is George D. I steal."

The Grandma Baking Company of Los Angeles puts out an eerie little pastry called Grandma's Iced Fingers.

There's an office building in San Francisco whose management has solved one vexatious problem of elevator behavior, and very suavely, too. A sign posted in each of the cars says, "TO EXPEDITE EGRESS. Passengers standing nearest the door are requested, irrespective of sex, to go out first."

On Approval

A LADY we know almost succeeded in renting an apartment last week—that is, she found an apartment

which was for rent, and it remained only to convince the agent that she was an acceptable tenant. During the interview, she admitted straightforwardly that she has a dog. "Hmm," the agent said. "And what kind of a dog is it?" Just a little dog, she explained—a cocker spaniel. The agent thought for a moment, then cautiously inquired, "What color?"

Our Own Baedeker

EAST PRUSSIA, which was cut off from the rest of Germany when the Treaty of Versailles established the Polish Corridor and the Free City of Danzig, is one of the most feudal parts of Germany, where many Junkers have their big estates and as late as the last century exercised the medieval *jus primae noctis*, or first date with the bride. One of the early kings of the region had an interest in surgery and studied the alimentary system by having his subjects cut up when they were in various stages of digestion. The forthcoming military events will be no novelty to East Prussia. It has seen many wars. The Encyclopædia Britannica says that no portion of the earth's surface has been more fought over. In their early days the Nazis used to

talk about breaking up the big Junker estates and distributing the land among the peasants, but they never did much about it, and the peasants still live in essential serfdom. Masurian Prussia, the southwest half of the territory, has many lakes and many forests in which wolves and lynx are still to be found. The Kaiser had a hunting preserve there. Lithuanian Prussia, the northeast half, is mainly cultivated land, yielding oats, rye, flax, and potatoes. There are herring fisheries off the coast, and the usual workingman's meal is herring and potatoes. Potato spirits, mixed with honey, is the local tittle. It is called Bärentrank, or bears' drink, and is pretty powerful.

The East Prussian peasants speak with a marked accent which other Germans consider funny; an East Prussian monologue is apt to bob up in any German variety show. The seacoast is fringed with lagoons formed by long, dune-covered peninsulas, and there are

several popular summer resorts there. The famous Vogelwarte, where migratory birds were banded for observation, was at Rossitten, on the coast; Thomas Mann used to have a summer place nearby. About the only city of consequence in East Prussia is Königsberg, the capital. It is a naval and military stronghold and has a university and an outdoor museum for the display of model farms, cottages, churches, and so on. Kant was born there. Königsberg is also an industrial centre of some importance, with mills, machine shops, and iron foundries, and it is the home of a famous marzipan and of *Königsberger Fleck*, or tripe Königsberg style.

Long before the first World War, East Prussian women smoked in public. They and their husbands, too, gambled at Zoppot, the German Monte Carlo. East Prussians do not do things by halves: their birthrate is higher than elsewhere in Germany, and so is the incidence of tuberculosis, influenza, and measles. The Russians will probably be especially thorough in going through East Prussia, because it was there, at Tannenberg, that the Germans gave them a disastrous licking in the first World War. In August, 1914, the Czar's troops crossed the border and penetrated some miles into East Prussia. Ludendorff arrived to take charge of the defense, and Hindenburg came along the next day. They succeeded in wiping out two Russian army corps and in reducing three others by fifty per cent. There was some question which leader deserved the credit for the victory, but this was decided by the appearance, after the war, of a good ten-pfennig cigar called *Masurenheld*, or the Hero of Masuria, which had on the box a picture of Hindenburg.

There is a story of the original Russian advance into East Prussia. As the German Army officers prepared a retreat, they instructed the peasants to poison an advancing Cossack force by encouraging them to drink gasoline drained from damaged vehicles the German soldiers were leaving behind. The East Prussians obeyed orders, telling the Cossacks that the gasoline was German vodka. They drank it down, but, instead of dying, they came back next morning asking for more.

Comparison

WE walk more slowly than we used to, possibly because of some molecular change, and this sometimes keeps overheard conversations within earshot

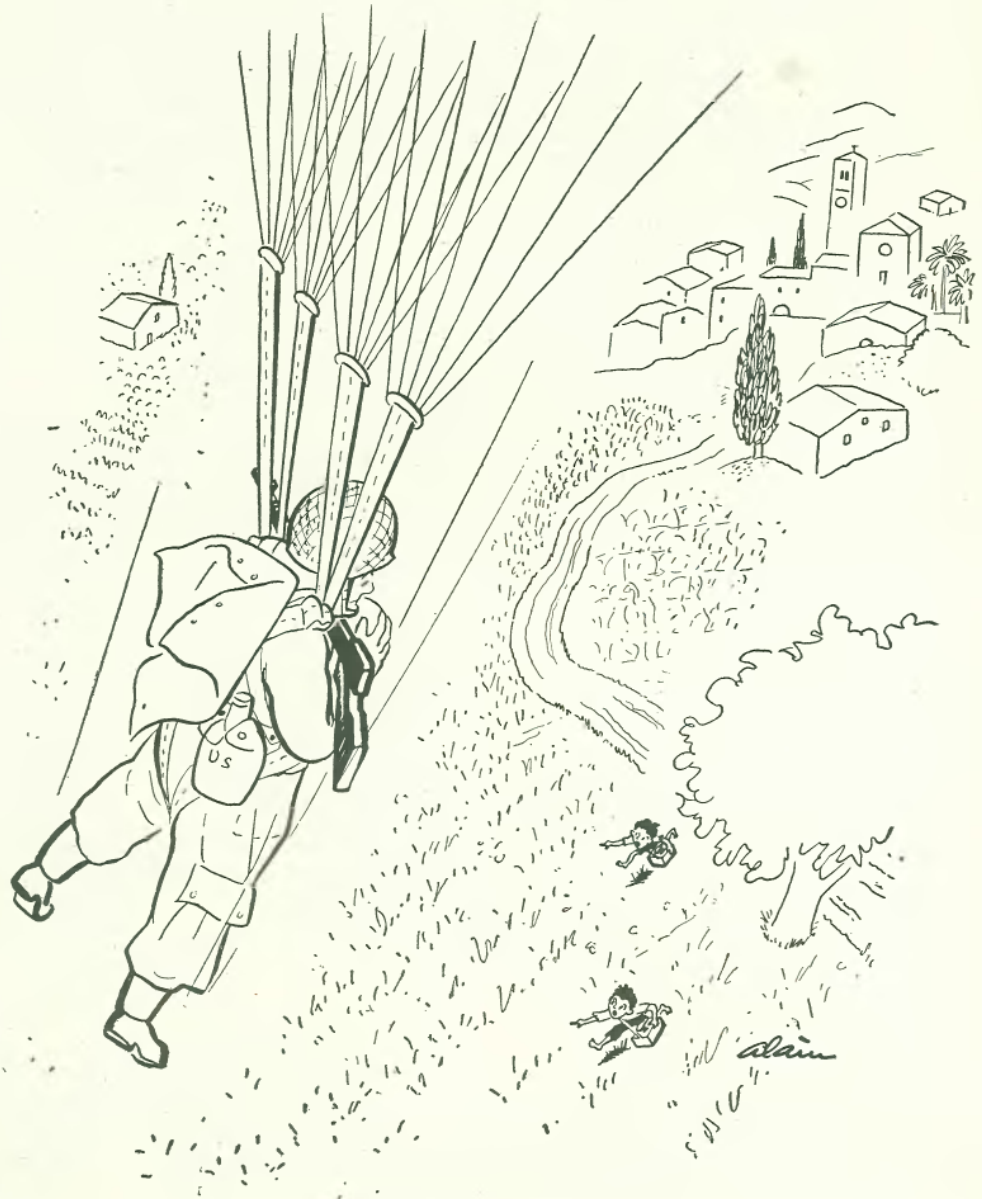
longer than before. The other day, on Park Avenue, we caught quite a sizable chunk of an argument between a young man and his woman companion as they strolled by us. He was defending the *New York Times* as a great institution, but the lady sniffed. "Well, what's greater than the *New York Times*?" he demanded. Her answer was the last word we caught. "Love," said the lady promptly and firmly.

Sculptor

ONE of the best-adjusted sculptors we have ever met is a middle-aged, one-armed Midwesterner named Philo Truex. His medium is sand and his present atelier is a vacant lot on West Fiftieth Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, right next to a White Tower. His income, though purely a matter of cash contributions from bedazzled passers-by, is reasonably sub-

stantial and fairly predictable. The shower of small change from the public averages enough to fill three pint containers every four hours, and Truex has no difficulty in paying a rental of eight dollars a day for his twenty-by-twenty plot, as well as the salary of a night watchman, who takes over at 3 A.M. Late evening and early morning are, as you would expect, Truex's most profitable business hours.

We would say that Truex's show is well worth whatever small change you want to donate. There's a wounded horse, life-size, rolling over on its fallen rider, and a lion, a mother bear with three cubs, a sow with three sucklings, a rabbit crawling through a log, and an American Eagle. Truex apologized, when we talked to him last week, for the fact that heavy rains had taken the sharp edges off some of his creations. Others, which he had



coated with transparent liquid cement, had pulled through O.K. The use of liquid cement, we gathered, involves a nice ethical point. Truex was definitely scornful when he told us that some of the sand sculpture now on view at Atlantic City is eighteen years old and has been preserved with liquid cement. On the other hand, he does occasionally use cement himself, but he starts from scratch every time he sets up in a new location, which is frequently. He has exhibited all over the country, supporting a wife and raising three children on the proceeds. He admits that he is not by any means the best man in the business; his nomination is a Negro who makes his headquarters in Asbury Park. This fellow, who happens also to have only one arm, specializes in portraits of public personalities like Roosevelt and Churchill.

Truex became a professional sand sculptor in 1913, while he was still in his teens. He had been in a Miami hospital with a bad case of typhoid and spent his convalescence lying on the beach. (As a farm boy, he had always liked to dabble in modelling.) Then one afternoon, when he had nothing else to do, he executed an equestrian figure in the wet sand. While he was working absorbedly at this job, he was hit on the head by a silver dollar. "I looked up at the boardwalk and saw a smiling millionaire," he told us, "then I looked down and found the beach around me covered with silver dollars. I was in." He immediately went into the business. "No riffraff in Miami then," he says. "Folks didn't carry any coins smaller than silver dollars." When democracy and small change came to Miami, Truex began a series of nationwide tours. By and large, he says, it's a good investment to hire a vacant lot in a business district and have sand trucked in; on a beach the majority of the crowd is apt to be wearing bathing suits, and, as Truex pointed out, when you are in a bathing suit you usually haven't got much small change with you.

Sales Talk

IF the sale of bonds among Army personnel reached its quota in the drive, it was because of such efforts as that made by a captain we've heard of, a Southerner who wound up a bond-

selling talk to his company with these handsome words: "And remember, men, these bonds will be good just as long as No'the'n money is good."

The White Plume

AN old Republican expression was brought down from the attic and used at the recent Republican convention when a delegate said that Governor Bricker was "wearing the white plume of Henry of Navarre," and this set us to doing a small job of research into recent history. We are practically certain that this is the first use of the white plume since 1920, when Harry Daugherty tried to pin it on Warren G. Harding by calling him "the

plumed knight." In Harding's case the tag never became popular, possibly because of a misfit, but in the eighteenthies everybody could have told you who the plumed knight was—James G. Blaine. This famous Bricker predecessor was first called "the plumed knight" in the Republican convention of 1876, when Robert G. Ingersoll put his name up for nomination: "Like an armed warrior, like a plumed knight, James G. Blaine marched down the halls of the American Congress, and threw his shining lance full and fair against the brazen foreheads of the defamers of his country and the maligners of his honor." The opposition to Blaine was too much for eloquence that year and he didn't get the nomination, but thereafter he was known as "the plumed knight" and Ingersoll was known as one of the great American orators. Blaine was brushed off again in 1880, but, as you probably will recall, he was nominated in 1884. The turning point of that convention came when a group of Blaine delegates marched onto the floor carrying a huge American flag. Above it, on the end of the flagstaff, was a helmet of flowers surmounted by a white plume. Prolonged cheers. Blaine ran on a Hard-Shell conservative platform and was nudged out by Cleveland, who had the help of the liberal Republicans, or Mugwumps.

The original white plume, of course, was worn by Henry of Navarre, way back before James G. Blaine. It was a long, waving feather which he wore in his helmet during battle and on his best hat in peacetime. A sixteenth-century



account book of the House of Navarre is extant, and contains a notation of the purchase of the first white plume. Anybody who ever read Dumas has some notion of the violent life Henry of Navarre led. Being the leader of the Protestant faction at the Court of Henry III, he was put on the spot by the massacre of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day and made a phony profession of the Catholic faith in a hurry in order to save his own skin. He became king when Henry III died, but it took him five years to reach the throne, fighting pitched battles with his old enemies, the Catholic Leaguers. Shortly before his final victory, he embraced Catholicism in earnest. It was in the battle of Ivry, which was part of this campaign, that the white plume acquired its modern Republican significance. Henry called his leaders together before the battle and said, "Companions, God is with us. You are to meet His enemies and ours. If, in the turmoil of the battle, you lose sight of your banner, follow the white plume upon my casque. You will find it on the road to victory and honor." It *does* sound rather like Bricker, at that.

Undelivered

APALLID little minion of one of the Washington bureaus was horrified the other day when there arrived at his desk an envelope, containing a form letter, that had been mailed from his department a couple of months earlier to a government official in Manila. Apparently nobody had revised the mailing list since Pearl Harbor. He felt even more frustrated when he saw the Post Office Department's rubber-stamped reason for non-delivery of the letter: "Not Known at This Address."

The Real de Gaulle

WE didn't get to see General Charles de Gaulle when he was in town, but we did have a talk with Mlle. Laura Roth, who saw him in a behind-the-scenes sort of way, and we have her word for several things, including the fact that he is "more soft-looking" than the photographers make him out. Mlle. Roth is an American who was brought up in France, and she speaks English with a pretty, French accent. She is secretary to M. Guérin de Beaumont, Agent General in New York for what used to be called the French Committee of National Liberation but now is known forthrightly as

the Provisional Government of the French Republic, and she served de Gaulle briefly and enthusiastically in a similar capacity while he was here. While de Gaulle was attending the reception at the Waldorf-Astoria, she was in his suite, on the forty-second floor, transcribing from his longhand the speech he was to deliver in Ottawa. The General writes a large, flowing hand, we learned; under close questioning, Mlle. Roth admitted that it is very, *very* hard to read.

Mlle. Roth was just sitting in her office in Rockefeller Center one day last week when she looked up and there was General de Gaulle. It seems that he had dropped into his New York headquarters to see de Beaumont after making the customary visitor's tour of the Center. Mlle. Roth told us that when she saw him striding past, she never dreamed that she would dine in his suite that evening. "Oh, I got a marvellous impression of him," she said. "I think I am still delirious with joy. He looked so sweet, so gentle, so soft—not severe, the way he does in the pictures." She added, naturally, that he was tall, too.

De Beaumont recommended her for the typing job, which began at four-thirty that afternoon and ended at one-thirty the next morning. Her dinner came up on a tray. She was well chaperoned in de Gaulle's apartment by three city detectives, who warned her even against themselves. "Never believe a man is a police officer unless he shows his badge," one of them told her. She was introduced to de Gaulle when he returned to his suite, just as she was finishing up the speech, but what with one thing and another she doesn't remember what he said to her. "I know we shook hands, though," she told us. She was saying goodbye to the detectives when the French captain who had superintended her work came up with General de Gaulle's compliments and gave her an autographed photograph of the General and a small Cross of Lorraine. The medallion was much smaller than the one Mayor LaGuar-

dia got. "The Cross of Lorraine! What a surprise!" she said. "But now I'm afraid to wear it for fear I might lose it." She showed us the photograph. We thought de Gaulle looked rather severe and decided that he is a victim of the limitations of photography.

Complaint

ON American fighting fronts the Army prints little one-sheet newspapers, in the enemy's language, giving

full, accurate, and late war news on one side and on the reverse setting forth the advantages of immediate surrender. The sheets are dropped in back of the enemy lines by plane or shell. Well, the other day in Normandy a Nazi surrendered and, in the course of his interrogation by our intelligence officers, pettishly asked what had happened to the little newspapers. His platoon hadn't had any news for several days, he said, and was getting bitter about the service.



"Watch out for that Rogers girl. She has lint."