



## LITERARY HORIZONS

## Father Bruckberger's America

By Granville Hicks

**F**ATHER R. L. Bruckberger, a Dominican priest, a leader in the French Resistance movement, a distinguished man of letters, spent eight years in this country, and on his return to France naturally wrote a book, now translated as "Image of America" (Viking, \$4.50). It is not a book of impressions, although Father Bruckberger—who has, as he says, seen more of the United States than most Americans—could have made such a book lively reading for Americans as well as Frenchmen. It is an attempt to answer the question raised nearly two centuries ago by the author's fellow-countryman, Michel-Guillaume de Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?" It is an analytical study in the tradition established by another illustrious Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville. Bruckberger is even less descriptive than Tocqueville, and his approach is more rigorously historical.

As history the book is necessarily sketchy, and Bruckberger's simplifications are often highhanded, but he

is looking for essentials. Much of his book he devotes to four figures, and a strangely assorted lot they seem at first glance to be: Thomas Jefferson, Henry Charles Carey, Henry Ford, and Samuel Gompers. These men, however, help him to define his conception of the characteristic American attitude towards politics on the one hand and economics on the other. When he has finished talking about them, we know what America means to Bruckberger and why he can say that either it is "the hope of the world or it is nothing."

That Jefferson had his shortcomings Bruckberger is aware, but he honors the man and values his service to the United States. "His ideal, highly revolutionary indeed, was entirely to incline government, institutions, and laws toward a respect for man." To show what that means Bruckberger contrasts Jefferson with a leader of the French Revolution, Saint-Just. Saint-Just was a perfectionist and a fanatic. ("Fanatic love of virtue has done more to damage men and destroy societies than all the vices put together.") With him it was all or nothing,

and his utopianism led, as so often it does, to totalitarianism and terror. "It was inside a shapely French head, becurled and powdered, that the perfect totalitarian monster was conceived." Jefferson, on the other hand, was governed by a "stubborn preference for man, for concrete men of flesh and blood, as against any political system whatever, no matter how theoretically perfect." The glory of the Declaration of Independence, according to Bruckberger, is that it does not proclaim a political system but affirms the dignity of man.

**B**UT political systems were not the only danger, and in the second part of his book Bruckberger examines the struggle against economic systems. Here his first hero is the little-known Henry Charles Carey, whom Karl Marx called "the only American economist of importance." Once again Bruckberger admits that his hero had faults, and Carey's seem to have bulked rather large, but he was a resolute opponent of the capitalist economics of Adam Smith, Ricardo, *et al.* and an equally astute critic of Marxism, which rested, Bruckberger holds, on exactly the same fallacies. Bruckberger uses Carey's views as the base from which he launches his own highly effective attack on both the classical economists and Marx.

It was not enough, however, to affirm a faith in the superiority of human beings to systems; the faith had to be implemented, and Bruckberger turns to two men who, in their different ways, acted on the assumption that the well-being of man is the primary consideration—Ford and Gompers. It was Ford's greatness, in Bruckberger's view, that he refused to believe what capitalist economics taught, that the making of profits was the sole object of industry and that industry would collapse if any other goal were adopted. Ford's establishment in 1914 of the eight-hour, five-dollar day Bruckberger considers a great step in the emancipation of the working class.

As for Gompers, Bruckberger compares him point by point with Lenin, a comparison that would scarcely occur to an American but is most illuminating. Lenin reasoned from authority, and his aim was to use the working class to accomplish the revolution. Gompers's career was based on "respect for the facts, for nature, for the test of experience," and his purpose was to help the working class in any way he could. "Gompers," Bruckberger sums it up, "was to Lenin exactly what Jefferson was to Saint-Just: flesh-and-blood defending itself against Utopia."

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**THE UNREALITY** was complete. I had just rung the bell of a Paris apartment, and the door was quickly opened by a pleasant-faced Frenchman, just enough to let me in. He held out his hand and said, "My name is Victor Hugo, François Victor Hugo. Please come in and meet my Resistance friends. This is Madame Lauboeuf, and this is Father Bruckberger." Madame Lauboeuf, stunningly beautiful, smiled and held out her hand. Father Bruckberger was too busy to pay much attention to me. Leaning against the wall just beyond one of the tall French windows, he was cautiously peering at the roofs across the street, and every now and then he would jerk his right hand from the folds of his long white Dominican habit, point the pistol in his hand through the open window, and take a quick potshot at Pétain's "Miliciens," who were still holding out a few days after Liberation. One day well after the war he arrived in America to be with the Dominican fathers in their monastery in Minnesota. It soon became quite clear from our correspondence that he neither understood nor liked America. I did the best I could in the "light and leading" department, but I was obviously no match for a man who combined the elements of being a European, a Frenchman, a Catholic priest, a Dominican father, an intellectual, and a Gaullist. Then, so suddenly that it almost had the quality of a conversion, he not only discovered America, but liked it, and decided that he absolutely had to preach about America to the unenlightened in Europe, particularly in France. After many conversations on the subject, it was finally decided that Father Bruckberger should get leave from the monastery to devote two years to writing a book about the U. S. While "Image of America" is not "de Tocqueville Revisited," it is the kind of enthusiastic, offbeat, perceptive, sympathetic appreciation of this country that could only have been written by a European, a Frenchman, a Catholic priest, a Dominican father, an intellectual, a Gaullist. —C. D. JACKSON.

# Our Competitive System: Its Foundations and Future

*The people and the premises that have activated our prosperity are scrutinized in three current studies: "The Economics of Freedom," by Massimo Salvadori (Doubleday, 242 pp. \$4), "The Economic Mind in American Civilization 1918-1933," by Joseph Dorfman (Viking, Vol. IV, 398 pp. Vol. V, 776 pp. \$12.50), and "The Roosevelt Revolution," by Mario Einaudi (Harcourt, Brace, 372 pp. \$5.95). The works are evaluated respectively by Clarence B. Randall, who has been special assistant to the President on matters of foreign economic policy since 1956; by David M. Potter, professor of American history at Yale University, and by D. W. Brogan, author of "The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt."*

## I. Free Enterprise

By CLARENCE B. RANDALL

**T**HE THOUGHTFUL American is hard put to it these days to keep up with his homework. Seldom before has there been so much that we should know if we are to remain even reasonably well informed about the surging events of this fast-moving modern world. The nuclear scientists surely had their day, driving us of the lay public to frantic study of nuclear fission and astral physics. Now come the economists and the political scientists. I see ominous signs that we are about to be engulfed in an equally frantic re-examination of the social and material implications of our system of production. This is good for it is high time that we who pay the bills should turn our minds seriously to economics.

First of the new heretics was Dr. John Kenneth Galbraith, who proclaimed that we should establish government controls over all phases of production and distribution. Back to the Blue Eagle? Never! That professor's nightmare we tried.

Next was Dr. Sumner Slichter, who testified before a committee of the Congress that we should not be disturbed over creeping inflation because it serves a useful purpose in that it promotes the expansion of our economy. Creeping disaster, I call it!

And now comes Dr. Massimo Salvadori, with his highly stimulating, and somewhat controversial, book, "The Economics of Freedom." Here is a new voice that is pleasing to my ear, and doctrine that I find refreshing, in spite of the fact that at times he makes my sudden anger rise. Let me clear away those unhappy passages quickly, so that I may get on to what I consider the

excellence in this author's contribution to our thought.

He first declares that large enterprise is here to stay. He accepts the fact that the big corporation is indispensable for mass production, for greater efficiency, for reduction in costs, and for activities such as research, which have an important bearing on our progress. Yet, almost in the same breath, he castigates rather savagely those who conduct big business, as though mere association with such projects renders a man ignoble. Though committed to the classless society, and democratic procedures, he would nevertheless bar members of what he terms the "big business community" from participation in the affairs of state.

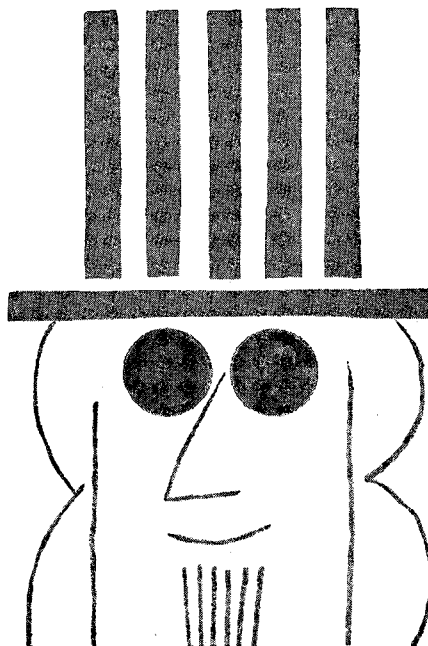
Categorically he states: "The qualities which make for success in the

world of big business are the negation of the qualities required for statesmanship." Those are fighting words for a reviewer who, after completing his career in so-called big business, is endeavoring in retirement to serve his country. There are, of course, small men in big business, just as there are big men in small business.

I wonder how the author would explain the genius of Paul Hoffman, whose creative imagination and superb drive in the administration of the Marshall Plan contributed so enormously to the present prosperity of those western European countries which he knows so well. How would he account for Lew Douglas, who is universally recognized as one of the finest Ambassadors our country ever sent to the Court of St. James? Has he overlooked George Humphrey, who guided the financial aspects of our international relationships so brilliantly for so many years?

**B**UT I forgive these derelictions in a scholar so recently come to us from his native Europe, who perhaps does not yet know American businessmen well. This very bluntness, coupled with the author's foreign birth and background, makes all the more convincing his penetrating analysis and friendly interpretation of the dynamic forces that underly our economy.

When the author's lecture called "American Capitalism," upon which this book is obviously based, first appeared, even the President of the United States was moved to pause during a press conference to comment upon it with great enthusiasm. And it is little wonder, for here the reader will find a singularly shrewd appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of American free enterprise. I prescribe the final chapter of the book as a "must" in reading for all



—From "The Economics of Freedom."  
The basic feature: freedom under law.