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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1956

Editorial Book Review

Secrecy: The Prologue To A Tragedy

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. —JAMES MADISON

FREEDOM OR SECRECY. By James Russell Wiggins. Oxford. 242 pp. \$4.

NO U. S. journalist has battled so valiantly for the people's right to know as James Russell Wiggins, executive editor of the WASHINGTON POST & TIMES-HERALD. As a working newspaperman and as chairman of the Freedom of Information Committee of both the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, he has struggled mightily and resourcefully against governmental secrecy.

Both the compelling force and the moral legitimacy of that indignation are found in FREEDOM OR SECRECY. It is the most convincing book yet written on the danger of governmental secrecy.

The perils are illuminated with admirable clarity. Mr. Wiggins surveys both the past and the present of the continuing battle for freedom of information.

The effect of his book should prick the conscience of every American. We began the century with a free government—as free as any ever devised and operated by man, he writes. "The more that government becomes secret, the less it remains free."

The reason is obvious. For to diminish the people's information about government is to diminish the people's participation in government.

The people's right to know, writes Mr. Wiggins, is actually the composite of many rights:

- 1—The right to get information.
2—The right to print without prior restraint.
3—The right to print without fear of reprisal not under due process.
4—The right of access to facilities and material essential.
5—The right to distribute information without interference by government acting under law or by citizens acting in defiance of law.

Mr. Wiggins applies these component rights to situations as it exists today, and has existed in the past, in the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, to the military establishment, to private transactions and to every other appropriate aspect of the problem. His findings are not comforting.

"If we proceed with more and more secrecy we shall one day reach a place where we have made the choice between freedom and secrecy," he writes. "We shall pass a point beyond which we cannot go without abandoning free institutions and accepting secret institutions. No man can say with assurance where this point is, but we move toward it."

The choice is for the people to make.

Only The Oak Can Make A Winter

THERE is a time when leaves will not fall fast enough. This is it. Those of the oak offend particularly. They are the stubbornest, and they are the "most" that do not fall.

The oak seems forever set upon proving itself worthy of every simile ever fashioned from its toughness.

Late falling, its leaves are laggard coming out in spring. Always, it contrasts with other trees, as if to draw the attention of anyone looking for a tree of real character; well, it cannot go "I am the best for beams and sills of houses, tongues of wagons, for any test of strength. I keep my leaves the longest."

So all right, an impatient man might say, standing half-half-out of his coat, his back warm in the sun, his face chilled in the shadow of the woodlands. So you're the tallest, staliest, toughest

From The St. Louis Post-Dispatch

A RABBIT AND FIVE DOGS

THIS is a tragic item. A friend of ours, deeply depressed by the century's gadget culture, has been counseling himself with the thought that sooner or later Nature would re-assert herself, that if man would not return to a less complex life the animal kingdom would prevail and carry the world back to the simple and the natural. And now we give him a piece of bad news.

It happened at the Poolstock Grayhound Stadium in Wigan, England, where fast dogs chase a mechanical rabbit. The hounds are victims of man's artifice, but their natural instinct is supposed to assert itself if given half a chance. Alas, that notion now is as dead as pre-Copernican astronomy. A live rabbit scooted onto the Wigan track. And what did the hounds do? Kept right on



"It's A Great Performance Going On—Take My Word For It!"

North Carolina's own aging experience with legislative secrecy has not escaped Mr. Wiggins' notice. In 1925, the state adopted one of the most advanced access statutes in the nation. It provided that appropriations committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate and their subcommittees, were to sit jointly in open sessions while considering the state budget. But in 1953 when citizens attempted to gain access to sessions of these bodies they were barred, a secrecy amendment was passed, and press and public were stripped of their rights to observe their government in action—except by "consent."

Two years later the rule was applied to all committees of the House and Senate. It was a discouraging defeat for freedom of information. And it is small consolation indeed that the new and undemocratic rule is seldom invoked.

Why is freedom of information so important? Mr. Wiggins offers one of the most convincing explanations we have yet encountered:

"The information of the people is the foundation of our whole political system. Secrecy threatens that foundation, on whatever pretext or for whatever good reason it is invoked. . . . The political acts and judgments of citizens who are fully informed are their own political acts and judgments; the political acts and judgments of citizens who are only partly informed are the political acts and judgments of those who partly inform them."

Mr. Wiggins points out that generally asserts the right to which of its acts may be divulged and which must be concealed exercises a power that tends to tyranny whatever its outward form. It has the power to enforce acceptance of its policies by exaggerating their merits and diminishing their disadvantages. It has the means of concealing the crimes and derelictions and exaggerating its virtues and its triumphs. It possesses a device for accomplishing that greatest of all corruptions—the corruption of the mind of the public itself. A people, so corrupted, is a people no longer free, whatever the form and structure of its governmental agencies. It is in this sense that we are confronted with a choice between secrecy and freedom."

As the old story goes: Can a river rise any higher than its shores? If dignity be the shore, why not let the social outward rise to the occasion? Why not call him a scoundrel if you care to sling a stone? Why not let the man sentenced all men to die, with a promise to pardon them in the great beyond. —J. S. CONYERS

Physicians Saluted By 'Team-Mates'
Charlotte
The eyes of countless people turn to Seattle where the doctors of America gather for their annual clinical sessions during the last four days of November. To many people, the events taking place at Seattle promise

um that any promise was given to fix the case.
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T-men also are checking Powell's stock-market speculating. He has made a handsome profit recently on lithium, a lightweight ore used for defense purposes.

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Fabulous Irony Surrounds Sudden Courtship of Nasser

WASHINGTON
THE RECENT change in official Washington's judgment of Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser amounts to the most fabulous irony of the postwar period.

To day, the American government is bending every effort to restore Nasser to a position of commanding leadership in the Arab world. But only four short months ago, the secretary of state of the United States was publicly insulting this same Nasser, on the ground that he was an irredeemable Soviet stooge.

The choppings and changings of American policy in the Middle East, the wild tergiversations and sudden expeditions, have been many and curious indeed. The Nasser in the Arab world contains more of these quick, inexplicable turns of policy than any other.

CENTRAL POINT
There is no need to relate the whole strange story, however in order to make the central point. This point is simple. After pressuring, after all but begging President Nasser to let America build the Aswan Dam in Egypt, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles withdrew the offer as abruptly as possible and in the most publicly humiliating manner that could be devised.

Publicly, Secretary Dulles merely told Nasser that he was a "bankrupt." But as every reporter will remember who rushed into the astonishing episode, the State Department's official given official reason for its sudden change of mind was quite different.

People's Platform

Letters should be brief. The writer's name and address must be given, but may be withheld from publication in the discretion of the editors. The News reserves the right to condense.

Why Not Abolish All Penitentiaries?
Monroe
SPEAKING of prisons, why not eliminate all prisons?

Call them "universities of routine," "colleges of supervision," or some other dignified name.

You send a man or woman to the penitentiary to be rehabilitated to membership in society. Prison is synonymous with all the slime of the earth, a house of skunks. Then you expect him to come out a gentleman, that? That simply doesn't make sense.

When he gets out, you call him an ex-con, a social outcast, forgetting the fact that every offender is an ex-convict to a big or lesser degree. Any man who has never convicted himself is extremely dangerous. Some convict themselves with the penalty of death, and look for the high jump to carry out their executions.

Why give a prisoner a year or less? Give him one to 99 years. If it's a 30-day sentence, parole him, leaving him under the impression he has 99 years more to do. Save his penitentiary for the doomed man to await his execution. That, too, will be eliminated by posterity, or by succeeding generations.

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BY JOSEPH & STEWART ALSOP
ferent. It was the assertion that Nasser and Egypt had now "passed the point of no return" in their relations with the Soviet Union; that both man and nation must therefore be considered as complete captives of the Kremlin.

Nasser's answer to his public humiliating by Dulles was the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Again, it was necessary to follow the Suez crisis through all its tortuous stages. The end result—the astonishing rehabilitation of Nasser's reputation at the State Department—is what is so interesting.

Clearly that rehabilitation must have occurred. Otherwise, the American policy-makers would hardly be exerting maximum pressure to force the British, the French and the Israelis to give up every possible advantage that might have been gained in their action against Egypt. Otherwise we might have deplored the aggression, but we would still have accorded the urgent need for commitments from Nasser about the future status of the canal, about the passing of Israeli ships and about some of peaceful Middle Eastern settlement, and so on almost interminably.

ASK NO QUESTIONS
Otherwise, in sum, the American government would not now be working so hard to transform Nasser's public defeat into a political victory, and working with such success that Nasser has now gained a still greater influence and power in the rest of the Arab world than he ever had before.

It is thought to be very tactless, if not sheer stupidity, to insist in official circles about the reasons for abandoning the former State Department finding that Nasser had "passed the point of no return" in his dealings with

the Kremlin want him to do, and count on him to do, in order to break the Western alliance for good and all. There is more to the story, too, than this happy coincidence of Egyptian desires and Soviet desires, which we can hardly share.

There is the further fact that the Egyptian cease-fire was ordered after the Bulgarian ultimatum to France and Britain. There is the still further fact that Nasser and all other Arab leaders are convinced that the Bulgarian ultimatum rather than American

diplomacy was the decisive factor in securing the cease-fire without further delay. There is the final fact that this country did nothing positive to call the gigantic bluff of the Soviet threat to send Russian volunteers to Egypt.

Add these weighty facts to the former official judgment of Nasser. The addition makes it interesting to speculate on the uses which the brilliant Egyptian leader will find, for the influence and power we are laboring so manfully to restore and enlarge for him.



Divided West In Peril

New Cold War Is Deadlier

BY MARQUIS CHILDS

WITH the use of naked force, Soviet Russia is consolidating its hold on its satellite empire as East and West resume what has every aspect of the cold war of the '40s, with all its virulence.

The fine words of the summit conference at Geneva of little more than a year ago are today hardly more than a dim memory, fading by recollections of the extent of Soviet intrusion in the Middle East, the struggle was never really suspended and the hopeful words of Geneva were meant merely for Western consumption.

It is taken for granted at the highest level of government here that the newest Russian peace note, with its hint of acceptance of limited open sides inspection, is barely more than a propagandist exercise.

MAJOR DIFFERENCE
There is a major difference, however, between the cold war of the Stalin era and the cold war of the present. In the earlier period the Western allies were closely united. Today, as a result of the British-French go-alone action, which was in large part the consequence of the long drift without any Western leadership in the Middle East, the West is deeply divided.

How deep the divide is neither the public in America nor in Britain has begun to understand. If one takes the word of the highest and most responsible officials in the government here, the difference in the Washington and London views of the crisis in the Middle East is such that a common policy is all but impossible.

GLOBAL CANCER
"You believe the cancer can be treated with poisons. We believe it is a threat to our very existence — to the survival of the

'Sic 'Em!'



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nearly two months before the British-French attack on Egypt, stating that the peril to the position of the West had become so great that the choice was between using force or "sitting by and waiting to perish."

KEE'S PIQUE
To this message with its extraordinary urgency, President Eisenhower is said to have replied with something like surprise and pique, asking in effect why Britain was getting so excited. So finally came the act of desperation, long after Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' original plan to bring Nasser's pressures on Egypt to bring Nasser to reason on the Suez Canal had evaporated into thin air.

While this may seem in America a rationalization to help keep the Eden government in power, it is being accepted as truth by a growing body of opinion here. And however past events may be interpreted, the fact is that Russia is enjoying a cold war era as entrenched in the Middle East with a degree of strength on which there may be differences but with a power beyond which we cannot go. So finally came the act of desperation, long after Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' original plan to bring Nasser's pressures on Egypt to bring Nasser to reason on the Suez Canal had evaporated into thin air.

West — that requires the most searching and drastic treatment." These are the words of a senior officer of wide knowledge and experience speaking of the proposed American approach through a program of economic aid to the Egyptian government in power, it is being accepted as truth by a growing body of opinion here. And however past events may be interpreted, the fact is that Russia is enjoying a cold war era as entrenched in the Middle East with a degree of strength on which there may be differences but with a power beyond which we cannot go. So finally came the act of desperation, long after Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' original plan to bring Nasser's pressures on Egypt to bring Nasser to reason on the Suez Canal had evaporated into thin air.

URGENT APPEAL
According to this same senior officer, President C. C. A. Miller Chamoun of Lebanon was sent an urgent appeal to both Washington and London, warning that he will be unable to maintain his pro-Western role without substantial American assistance in view of the military buildup in neighboring Syria with ever-growing help from Russia.

This reporter has been shown the text of a telegram sent by Prime Minister Anthony Eden to President Eisenhower on Sept. 6,

Eden may in the next six weeks or two months depart. He will go to Geneva with any grand gesture but in the well-trodden way the Tories manage these things, with the excuse of nervous exhaustion and the need for a long rest. The first step, with the doctors' orders to rest, now appears to have been taken. His place is being taken by R. A. Butler, Lord Privy Seal.

Between Eden and Dulles is a long history of suspicion and distrust, and with the stigma on Eden of the go-it-alone action, it can be argued that no relationship of trust with Washington can ever be re-established.

Rev. Elson also wrote: "Many of my choicest friends are observant Jews for whom I have utmost appreciation.

Zionism Attacked
"Nor am I anti-Israel," he added, "Although its creation was a diplomatic debacle, Israel is here and must be regarded as a valid entity among the nations. I am not now nor have I ever been anti-Israel, but I am desperately and earnestly pro-American in the highest and most refined sense of that word. Political Zionism, it seems to me, does violence to that concept. The so-called German-American Bund was out of place in American life. In our American political life, similarly, Zionist American organizations are out of place. Judaism is a great faith and the Jews a great people, and these concepts should be clearly separated from political Zionism."

In this connection, White House aides say that Rev. Elson telephones the White House so frequently that he's a "Whit

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round Negro Leader May Escape Prosecution

WASHINGTON
THE Justice Department, which was investigating Negro Congressman Dan Clayton Powell's income-tax returns until he suddenly came out for the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket, is now debating whether to go ahead with the investigation.

Nixon Considered
The U.S. Attorney's office in New York City, which has already convicted two of Powell's secretaries and indicted a third, wants to press the case against the ever, there are indications that the Justice Department planned to drop the case in return for Powell's campaigning for the Republican

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