

BACK-SEAT DRIVERS

I WONDER whether too much importance is not given to the kind of change that has been announced [in Russia] this week. Of course, when political power is highly concentrated, as it is in Russia, and when the country concerned is one of the world's biggest powers . . . it is natural that any changes in the ruling group should excite great interest and speculation. The speculations, I have noticed, often differ, but they often manage to agree in one respect—they often turn out wrong. So often the wish is father to the thought. The wish, of course, is that the Soviet's ruling group are fighting among themselves, and that the disintegration of the regime has begun or has even reached an advanced stage. Such speculations in the past have been proved idle by events. The Soviet regime over the years has had a high degree of stability.

What has happened now may be no more than that the majority have found, for various reasons, that they are unable to work with Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and Shepilov, so they have been thrown out. This sort of thing happens occasionally in democratic countries, but the throwing out process is generally more polite. The ejected one may resign on account of ill-health, or it is announced they are returning to private

Extracts from a recent commentary on the international news, broadcast by Main National Stations of the NZBS

business, or—it has happened—they may be elevated to the House of Lords. But in Russia when someone has to go it's likely to be announced that he was really a villain. . .

This time the accusations made against the departing Ministers are not as melodramatic as usual. If they are to be believed, and they certainly appear plausible, the offence . . . consists in having no faith in the general line of policy and in doing what they could to get it altered. The general impression one gets is that they are stick-in-the-muds, and the majority can't bear with them any longer. Well, it may be true. . . But it is not necessarily a sign of instability; it may be, I suggest, evidence of *stability*, evidence that the majority are united and feel that even a formerly powerful figure like Molotov can be thrown out without rocking the boat. Anyway, they've gone and apparently they're not going to be liquidated. This at least shows that what may be called the amenities of politics in Russia have improved a little.

UPPER HUTT 7.57

ON the map of my meaning
Awakening to the world's wide morning
She sparkles the sea along the inland reaches
Where the harbour water goes
Lipping and lapping the leaning hills.
I suppose

That her dreaming head never considers
Nor her eyes reconnoitre
The far ledges of cloud in the listening sky
That are hers should she claim them
Inverted isles as fair as Erin's
And though she does not know or name them

They conspire to bind us
And the clamouring gulls that never mind us:
Small waves that nudge the shore we move along
Move towards us and are gone
And the railway lines, the train on time,
Plunge inexorably on.

—Lyster Paul

The really important question to the outside world . . . is whether the change portends any alteration in the Soviet's foreign policy. I see nothing yet to suggest that it does. I think Khrushchov and Co. have got rid of four back-seat drivers. The new line of amiability and sweet reasonableness will continue, but, remember, it wasn't amiable and sweetly reasonable in Hungary last November.

THE Commonwealth Prime Ministers' talks are over and the communiqué is published . . . The criticism applied

to similar communiqués in the past is likely to be repeated. One is reminded of Calvin Coolidge's reply when, on returning from church, he said that the minister had preached on the subject of Sin. Asked what the minister had said about sin, Coolidge said,

THE COMMONWEALTH against

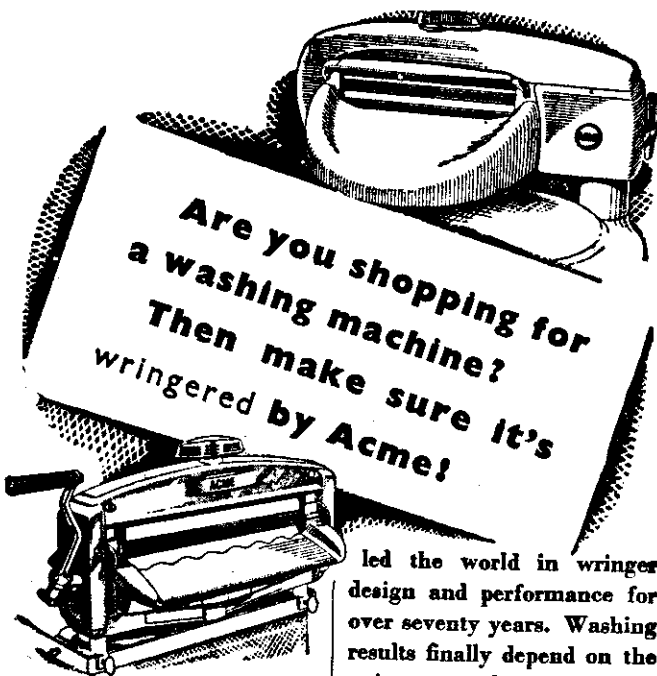
it." Well, the communiqué from the Prime Ministers' conference isn't locanic—it has a good many words—but it doesn't take (continued on next page)

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