

# Panoramas of Our Times

By Chalmers M. Roberts

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MEMOIRS by newspapermen, and there have been some good ones, are usually no more than footnotes to history. But Arthur Krock, who tells of "60 years on the firing line" at home, and Edgar Ansel Mowrer, who writes "a personal history of our times" covering almost as long a period, most of it spent abroad, are notable exceptions.

These two fat volumes demonstrate that working journalists are men of conviction and that they often have a rôle in shaping history — and that they sometimes purposely try to shape history. For those who argue over the ability of, or necessity for, newspapermen to hew to "objectivity," Krock and Mowrer provide plentiful grist for case studies.

Krock is perhaps the better known in Washington because he worked here so long and for the powerful New York Times. Mowrer's pieces for the Chicago Daily News foreign service, a powerful instrument of influence in its heyday, strongly affected thinking at home about affairs abroad, especially in Europe.

Each man was the product of his environment and each has written enough of his early life — Mowrer in the Midwest and Krock in a border state — to demonstrate that truism. Each went on to rub shoulders with the great and to absorb their ideas and their times but not to give up the continuing quest for facts or lose the determination to tell all the world the truth as he saw it.

Krock is a conservative in domestic affairs and Mowrer an unyielding opponent of tyranny as he sees it in foreign affairs. The reader of each book will soon spot the viewpoint and the prejudice; yet, once aware, the reader will find each volume a panorama of our times, and the historians will find each a gold mine of insight.

Krock deals with many men, but chiefly with Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson. His admiration for Eisenhower's domestic lull and for Truman's pugnacious foreign policy outshine his feelings toward FDR, JFK and LBJ.

To the extent that he reveals them, Krock tells us that among his major sources were Bernard Baruch, Herbert Bayard Swope and Joseph P. Kennedy. In the latter case, it meant that Krock knew the Kennedy boys almost from infancy (Sen. Ted from kindergarten days, in fact) and his insights into their upbringing are fascinating. An unexpected source on prime occasions was Jus-

## Book Review

### 'Memoirs'

By Arthur Krock (*Funk and Wagnalls*, 508 pp., \$10)

### 'Triumph and Turmoil'

By Edgar Ansel Mowrer (*Waybright and Talley*, 454 pp., \$10).

tice William O. Douglas, who found no conflict of interest in dropping word to Krock of what the President had said at a White House dinner.

Krock writes with charm, with an Old South flavor. Memoranda of conversations with the great are illuminating (one special case is Defense Secretary James Forrestal) and all this is mixed with quips and with recollections of "Marse Henry" Watterson of the Louisville Courier-Journal and of FPA at the Algonquin roundtable, as well as with out-of-sorts remarks about current trends at the New York Times. Especially valuable for historians is a Krock appendix of Clark M. Clifford's 1946 top secret memorandum to President Truman on Soviet-American relations at the onset of the Cold War, a memorandum useful today in gauging Clifford as Defense Secretary.

Mowrer is a more intense man, far more deeply versed in history and literature, preferring the sharp retort to the quip, but always full of *joie de vivre*.

It was Mowrer, perhaps more than any writer, who raised the alarm about Adolf Hitler. His 1932 book, "Germany Puts the Clock Back," served that purpose for his reviewer as for many others. He was kicked out of Germany by Hitler and out of Italy by Mussolini (with whom he rode the train to Rome to install fascism) and barred by Stalin from the Soviet Union. He was at Caporetto with the Italians in World War I and left journalism for a while in World War II to join Elmer Davis's propaganda machine.

Mowrer's journalistic scoops and how he got them are as fascinating as Krock's. Each has much to say, too, on the never ending battle between officialdom and the press both at home and abroad.

Memoirs are the stuff of history, each the view as one man saw it. None is in itself complete but these two volumes are fat additions to the totality of the 20th century.

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