

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

A Dictionary Of International Slurs. By A.A.Roback.

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What They're Reading

A DICTIONARY OF INTERNATIONAL SLURS — By A. A. Roback; Sci-Art Publishers, Cambridge, Mass.; 6.25.

The author of this book is undoubtedly both a conscientious scholar and a sincere moralist. His purpose in compiling international slurs was not to increase the animosities among nations and races; on the contrary, his encyclopedia of insults is meant as a warning. "At this stage in history," A. A. Roback writes in his preface, "where a concerted effort will surely be made to coordinate (not as the Nazis have used the word), the nations, it behooves us to make a thorough investigation into the prejudices before matters could be righted. Common parlance is a vast repository of these prejudices, in their most natural state."

The author tries to analyze the widespread tendency of national and racial groups to ridicule and criticize each other. "The national group is still a child, varying in different countries from infancy to puberty," Roback diagnoses pessimistically.

"One reason for the lag," he advises, "is the very structure of national education. While selfishness in the individual is discouraged in the home, the school, at games, and in church, national aggrandizement and aggressiveness are fostered under the guise of patriotism often by the very educators and mentors who frown upon personal aggressiveness. A concrete illustration of this contrast will be seen in the circumstance that libeling an individual is fraught with unpleasant consequences for the culprit, whereas maligning a foreign group is, as a rule, considered a patriotic service, if not an act of heroism, the principle underlying this perversion being that your own group will be raised in prestige as others are downed."

The average person would hardly have thought that there were more than a thousand slurs against all nationalities in the English language. As for ethnophobias (slurs) produced in the United States, Roback points out that "many, if not most of them, are of a jocose nature."

Are expressions like *Limey*, *Chink*, *Dago*, *Dutchie* meant in a derogatory sense? There is nothing really insulting in calling a Filipino a *Pip* (or *Pip*), or in referring to Hungary as *Hunkland* (a term attributed by Roback to "American slang"). Less innocuous, however, are terms like *Greekey*—which means, according to our source, "1. Greek customs or traditions, taken collectively. 2. Cheating, as at cards." As for *Greek gift*, the phrase is used to describe "a suspicious favor, foreboding treachery; something given with a sinister purpose in view." To *play the Greek* means, "to drink to excess."

Roback quotes a long list of colloquialisms referring to the Dutch—all of them uncompromising. To pick out just a few: "*Dutch-kiss*—sexual intimacy; '*Dutch nightingale*—a frog; '*Dutch palate*—a coarse taste; heavy as a Dutchman—massive, ungainly; '*Dutchman's drink*—an emptied pot; '*Dutchman's headache*—drunkenness; '*Dutchy*—dowdy, shabby."

One reason for the unfriendliness of these characterizations may be that in England, and even more so in the United States, the Dutch and the Germans have been confused because of the similarity of the sounds in *deutsch* (German), and *Dutch*.

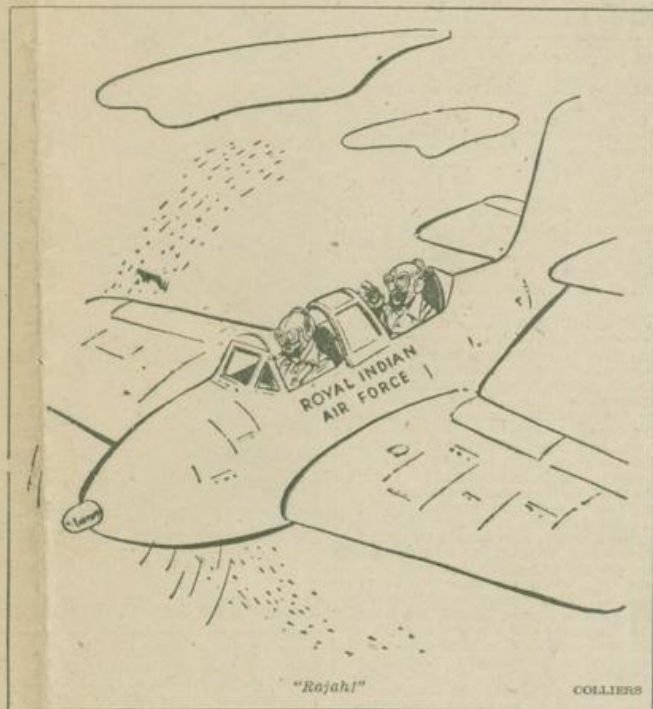
It is true that the United States is treated with comparative mildness by its fellow nations. Roback explains the scarcity of phrases among other peoples relative to American traits. "In the first place," he says, "the United States formed only a century and a half ago. Secondly, the geographical remoteness from other independent nations tends to shut out invidious comparisons. Thirdly, the heterogeneous constitution of the American people has prevented Europeans from saddling it with specific traits, aside from those which are characteristic of a pioneer and fast-growing community. Europe has been looking upon the United States very much as a middle-aged adult regards a bumptious adolescent."

The department, "National Slurs in Proverbs," includes only three samples of anti-American cracks—all of them rather poor and, incidentally, of German origin. These are the three sayings: "A Jew will dispose of three Christians, and a Yankee will outwit three Jews." "Help me to betray the Indians, and I'll give you half." (Supposed to have been the attitude of the pioneer settlers in North America). "In America the hour has forty minutes." (Everything is done in haste, as if the hour were shorter).

Most allusions to America in European vocabularies seem to satirize the American tendency to do things in a hurry, and the American sense of bus-

iness. The term *Amerikanitis*—quoted by Roback as one of the "Ethnophobias in English"—is supposed to characterize a kind of "nervous tension resulting from the ceaseless drive associated with the inhabitants and civilization of contemporary North America." To the Germans, the notion of *Amerikanismus* suggests "a materialistic, utilitarian, or commercial point of view." In the French language, the epithet *Americaïn* has assumed the meaning of "shrewd, alert;" "to have the American eye" (*avoir l'œil Américain*) means, to take in a practical situation at a glance. The Italian slang expression, *Americanata*, refers to "an American stunt"—that is to say, a play for publicity or a clever advertising scheme. The Hungarians, however, have their own ideas about American efficiency. In their language, the verb *amerikazni* ("to American") signifies "to loaf on the job while pretending to work hard." As for the rather nasty nickname, *Uncle Shylock*, it has been used by all those nations who resented the American tendency not to forget the debts of the First World War.

But if the Europeans are not very delicate in their allusions to the Americans—what they have to say about each other is certainly worse. The Germans, almost needless to say, outdo all the others—especially in venomous anti-Semitism. On the other hand, the German people have been a favorite target of foreign wit and criticism throughout the centuries. Some of these anti-German proverbs are in-



deed quite poignant. For instance: "No matter where you put him, the German is all over the place like a willow tree." (Ruthenian). "The fellow must be a German; he yells so." (Polish). — "Wherever Germans are, it is unhealthy for Italians." (Italian). — "One German—a beer; two Germans—an organization; three Germans—a war." (Polish). — "The German may be a good fellow, but it's better to hang him just the same." (Russian). Maybe it's a good thing that only

one thousand copies have been printed of this curious encyclopedia. Readers who are not quite free of the bacillus of xenophobia might enrich their own vocabulary with some of the international slurs compiled by A. A. Roback. But by doing so, they would act in contrast to the author's intentions and ignore the message of his concluding chapter which stands under the motto, "Above all Nations, Humanity!"

—Cpl. KLAUS MANN

RADIO STAGE SCREEN

Sharps And Flats

Tommy Dorsey may buy a surplus army plane in which to transport his postwar orchestra. . . . The sixth annual Negro Musical Festival was held in Chicago last week. Its climax came with 1,000 voices chanting *Faith Of Our Fathers* in tribute to the late President, whose favorite hymn it was. . . . *Shay Fields* band is still mired in N. Y., alerted three weeks ago by the Army for overseas. . . . Evelyn Klein, better known as "Evelyn and Her Magic Violin" of Phil Spitalny's All-Girl Orchestra, will wed her boss as soon as the leader's divorced. . . . Billy Rose's old tune, *It Was Only A Paper Moon*, will be revived in a new movie. . . . Booth Tarkington's *Seventeen* may become a musical on B'way. . . . Betty Hutton will take a six-piece band overseas. . . . Disney's next will be *Make Mine Music*. Except for one scene, it'll be all cartoon, with bands and voices in back. Dinah Shore, Benny Goodman and ballet star David Lichine are signed up. Goodman will do *All The Cats Join In* and *After You've Gone*. The *Hit Parade* for August 4 ran like this: *Dream, I Wish I Knew, If I Loved You, There, I've Said It Again, Sentimental Journey, I Don't Care Who Knows It, The More I See You, Bell Bottom Trousers* and *Remember When*.

Screen Shorts

Max Baer, hoping to re-enter the movies, says the Army has changed him. "I am a different guy. No more acting smart alecky." . . . Previewers of Shirley Temple's latest wonder how it got past the censors. . . . Alice Faye's real name is Alice Leperd. She's 33 and Irish-German-French. . . . All unpublished tunes of George Gershwin have been bought up for a Betty Grable-Dick Haymes film, *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*. . . . Darryl Zanuck, home from Europe, said that some of Germany's wartime color processes for movies excelled anything H'wood has turned out. . . . Not a single H'wood star joined up with actress Anne Baxter, who



Bob Hope sits one out on the Champs Elysee during his latest overseas tour. Currently, he is in the Riviera area. The girl on the right is unidentified, but she's one of his troupe.

pledged herself to postwar vet hospital shows. . . . Hedy Lamarr's *Ecstasy*, which has been playing in Chicago for 10 years, has just been banned there. . . . The 28th Tarzan picture has been started. Each one costs about 600,000 dollars and brings in 2,000,000 or more. . . . Linda Darnell says she'll quit the movies when she's 25. She'll be 22 in October. Her high cheekbones came from her mother, who was part Cherokee Indian.

Times Change

The New York Times intends to build an addition to their newspaper plant and to do it they had to "evict"

the Stage Door Canteen from its old home in the basement of the 44th Street Theater, which the Times owns. Last week, Mayor La Guardia, carrying a chair, headed a moving-day parade across Times Square to the canteen's temporary new home in the ballroom of the Hotel Diplomat at 43rd Street. About 150 actors and actresses trailed La Guardia, lugging canteen property in a marching rhythm which an observer said "would have made a general shudder." The heavy moving was done by professional movers, but of course it didn't hurt the stage folk any. . . . been (and printed as-having been seen), bearing a load for the boys. Frank Fay took a big tin of cottage cheese. Lucy Monroe balanced a jar of chopped Spanish olives on her head. She did not, thank goodness, sing *The Star Spangled Banner* at the same time. That would have been too much, even for the B'way columnist who probably thought up the gag.

What CAN Be Done

Someone mailed the book and music of *Oklahoma* to GIs in China. The gold mine fell into the hands of Cpl. Donald G. Painter, vet dramatic coach. Painter got to work, and the entire musical was put on at an air base hangar playhouse. . . . EM, officers and civilian employees of at least 15 different units made up the cast. GI designers and costumers scraped up old N. Y. magazines for pictures of the show's settings, for no one had seen the show. Mud was used for scenery paint. A missionary contributed his best suit to be used by one of the leads. There was only one female impersonation and only two professional performers in the whole show. It was supposed to play two nights, played five and now is on the road. If there are going to be 28,000 GIs left in Italy, seems that there should be enough talent therein so that someone could go to work right now to get permission to use the book and lyrics of *Oklahoma* or other current hits for GI casts in this theater.

—Sgt. RAY REYNOLDS