

# Looking at WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — Hopes for peace with Russia, which soared just after the death of Joseph Stalin, have sagged badly in Washington in the last four weeks. The Russians wanted the Korean fighting stopped in March, April, and May. They were somewhat hesitant to risk a war with the United States at that time.

Uncle Sam had the hydrogen bomb and the Communists did not. It was like 1916 all over again when the United States and the Russians had not yet developed the weapon. Like 1946 the bomb was the major stop sign holding back the Communist aggression against the free world.

Now, Kremlin waves know they have the hydrogen bomb secret too. There are reports, not confirmed, that the Russians have discovered a cheap and easy way to make the hydrogen bomb. U. S. scientists know that is quite possible. The reports, though they doubt the reports for several reasons. But it is possible.

The Reds solved the hydrogen bomb puzzle after the Korean fighting ended, and Premier George Malenkov waved the obituary for two months after assuming power. Malenkov at that time announced his program would be one of more and cheaper goods for the people, and he aimed the economy in that direction.

There are signs in the puppet countries that this program is official policy. But the Red army is reportedly insisting the armed services get more attention. Malenkov, not a military man, is successfully maintaining his hold on the throne, but with a civil servant police chief Beria out, and a new man in his place, the Army leaders carry more weight.

The next purge of fighting in Russia may be between the Army and Malenkov. Either Malenkov is getting bolder as a result of Russian H-bomb progress or he is being prodded by the Army. Whatever the motivation is, Washington knows that relations have suddenly worsened.

And despite the U. S. rearmament program, which has the nation at least partially prepared, the Reds still have a great preponderance of military equipment, especially artillery, tanks and fighter planes. It will be recalled that Nazi Panzer General Heinz Guderian estimated Red tank strength in 1933 at 10,000 — an estimate which

caused ridicule at the time. But when Hitler believed the prosier figures of other subordinate in 1941 and attacked Russia (with 300 tanks), he found to his dismay the Russian tanks not only outnumbered him, but the T-34 was better than anything the Germans had. Hitler probably would not have started the war had he known the true strength of Russia.

Today, Russian tank plane and artillery strength are still secret, but the Reds possess a huge edge over the United States. Now that they think they are close at U. S. heels in the field of atomic energy, they become dangerous, bolder and could become very much more aggressive.

The latest Kremlin note to Washington reflects just such a trend. Moscow was more blunt than in months, possibly in years. The administration, from the President down, noted the icy tone with dismay. And peace prospects, which many thought brighter when Joe Stalin died, suddenly disappeared around the corner.

Conflicting estimates on next year's business activity continue to come into Washington, and out of Washington. In recent days there have been several bright predictions from the business world to back up official Washington pronouncements that there will be no serious drop in the nation's economic health.

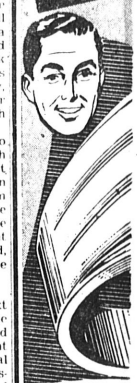
Some of the more recent predictions estimate consumer spending will be up next year over 1953 totals. And 1953 has been a record year for most businesses. But since taxes will be lowered and average wages higher, it is likely that consumer spending will also be higher next year.

The question is whether reduced government spending will offset this change, more than offset it, or prove a lesser influence on the national economy than the higher wages and lower taxes. One clue might be found in the attitude of many of the country's big companies. Spokesmen for Sears-Robuck, many of the bigger insurance companies, Macy's and others have all said recently that 1954 looked like another good business year to them.

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## On the SCREEN

**"Trent's Last Case"**

This importation from England is a polite and static charade, in which Richard Widling, in the title role, plays with smooth veracity the role of the amateur detective who unravels the mystery, while captivating the romantic eye of Margaret Lockwood, a widow, who apparently never sheds a tear over her husband.

John McCallum is quite good as the secretary of the deceased man and Miles Malleon adds a note of light humor with his portrayal of Miss Lockwood's jovial uncle.

**"Jack Slade"**

For those who like gore, and plenty of it, this film of the Wild West of former days may be recommended for its commendable dabs of stark realism. Mark Stevens has the role of Slade who was one of the most notorious killers the West ever knew. Dorothy Malone, who is said to have a generous touch of the Comanche in her spirit is the girl Slade marries. The set eran Bartou MacLane is around as a boozey, brawling bar to who at long last got the drop on Slade and then carelessly allowed himself to be drilled by a bullet.

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