

Mr. Truman Communes With a Favorite Ghost

By ARTHUR KROCK

WASHINGTON, Oct. 20—When the President accused General Eisenhower of adopting the "Nazi philosophy," of "accepting the very practices that identify the so-called 'master race,' though he took a leading part in liberating Europe from their domination," Mr. Truman again was borrowing from the spirit land one of his favorite ghosts to terrify the American people. In 1948 the President exhibited three of them. This time, in trying to convince the public that Eisenhower has deep prejudices in favor of "Nordics" against people of all other racial origins, he produced only one of his spooks—Adolf Hitler.

But the technique is the same. Speaking at Chicago on Oct. 25, 1948, the President said there were three very evil forces that sought to have the Republican candidate elected. They consisted, he explained, of men who wanted unbridled inflation so they might profiteer; men who were striving to concentrate all power in a few hands—theirs; men who were fomenting racial and religious hatred. When such citizens get economic control of a nation, he said, "they find a front man to run the country for them." He listed Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo as such "front men," and left no doubt he meant that Governor Dewey was designed by the three evil forces to be another.

This attack on Dewey aroused great indignation, though it was not as direct or as slanderous as the President's remarks about Eisenhower. (This error the President sought unconvincingly to rectify today without conceding it.) The voters of 1948 were left to conclude that Dewey might be the unwitting dupe of the "evil forces." But in 1952 the President deliberately implied that Eisenhower had not criticized the McCarran Immigration Bill because he believes it is an expression of the "master race" concept the General shares. And by mentioning only "Nazis" this time Mr. Truman sharpened his point.

Confident He Is Mastermind

In a campaign in which the reference to Dewey was among the mildest the President was elected. Since then he has steadily revealed the belief that his type of political oratory is the only kind that wins hard battles, and that he is the best judge in politics of what to tell the people. Certainly his bracketing of Dewey with Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo should have lost him votes. And in its latest and more scurrilous form it should lose votes for the Democratic ticket this year, as he showed today he realized belatedly. Until he showed alarm today the President doubtless was as confident in 1952 as in 1948 that he could gain far more votes than he lost by these attacks, even though this time their target was the military and civilian hero of millions of American citizens.

But, though the President was elected four years ago, a shift to Dewey by 20,000 voters in Ohio, Illinois and California would have made the electoral count Dewey 269, Truman 223, which would have elected the Republican candidate. Also, nearly everywhere in the country that the two-party system operates Mr. Truman ran behind his ticket.

The President is not running this year, but Stevenson is running in his name and on his record. The period in which Stevenson showed independence of part of this record was brief, and it was terminated by a few sharp reminders from the White House that the President was the "key" to the Democratic campaign and his record was the "only thing" Stevenson had to run on. Therefore, if Mr. Truman's speech in which he linked Eisenhower with Hitler's racist philosophy lost votes, it lost them for the Democratic ticket.

A Deliberate Tactic

It is difficult to believe that the President made a net gain for Stevenson by saying and repeating what he did about Eisenhower. But Mr. Truman, though he often is impulsive, did not make this charge without careful deliberation. And since the purpose of deliberately planned campaign oratory is to gain votes the President must have thought his attack on Eisenhower as a racial bigot would do just that. The risk involved would appear to have been far greater than the one involved in calling Dewey a front man for "forces" such as those that put Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo in power. But it was calculated, which makes the President's campaign doubly deplorable.

Mr. Truman's confidence in his vote-seeking judgment—hence in his estimate of the American people—though plainly shaken today was not shaken by the fact that the change of minute groups in three states would have defeated him in 1948. For this confidence he can give actual, not theoretical, statistics. If Henry A. Wallace had not been running on the Progressive ticket the President probably would have carried New York, Michigan and Maryland, with seventy-four electors. If the 20,000 in Ohio, Illinois and California had voted the other way, but Mr. Truman had acquired these seventy-four electors, the score would have been Truman 297, Dewey 195, despite the loss to the Dixiecrats of thirty-nine formally Democratic electors in the South. And the 20,000 merely provide an argument over what might have been but wasn't, whereas the Wallace and Dixiecrat votes are realities.

Were the situation reversed demands that Eisenhower repudiate would be thrilling from a thousand faculty houses and a congeries of other "liberals" who are not asking Stevenson to prove by disavowing Mr. Truman's charge that his sense of outrage against Dewey is bipartisan.