Goldwater impression abroad

By EDDIE PRICE

Mr. Price, a Hanszen Senior, read History at Cambridge last year as the Abraham Exchange Student from Rice. He was invited to contribute an essay based on his experience abroad dealing with the Goldwater candidacy. This is his report.

Last week Barry Goldwater charged that American prestige in Europe has “dipped below the peril point.” His information came from the CIA, but you don’t need access to any confidential reports to know that what he says is true.

You can read it in any European paper or ask anyone who has been there recently. For this summer the United States committed one of its worst blunders in foreign relations since the outbreak of the Korean War. It let Barry Goldwater be nominated for the Presidency.

Don’t be fooled by any of Goldwater’s talk about consultation with our allies to strengthen NATO. The only people in Europe who want to talk to him are the Fascist rulers of Spain and the neo-Nazis in Germany. (Goldwater, of course, is not a Nazi, but it is extremely difficult for a European to visualize an anti-fascist rightist, and in politics what you are is often much less important than what people think you are.) Everyone else in Europe is scared to death of the Arizona senator.

Warmonger?

What Goldwater is saying today to ameliorate his warmongering image will, I suspect, have little effect in Europe. What really worries the people there is what he might actually do if he were elected President, and this is something no one, not even Goldwater himself, can safely predict.

But the Europeans are genuinely afraid that this man, who proclaims an unswerving dedication to the permanent emasculation of all Communists everywhere as the only thing he needs to formulate an effective foreign policy, and who proposes to reply to major international crises by turning the military loose to “solve” the problem any way they want to, might do something which would provoke the Russians into responding in a rather unpleasant way, with nuclear missiles.

No Provocation

He wouldn’t mean to, of course. That’s the most frightening part. For he doesn’t seem to realize that, however uniquely determined America must be to cut off Communist aggression of any kind, we must not be provocative.

When a great nation has drawn a line and said, “Thus far and no further,” it is not going to, it cannot allow that line to be crossed with impunity. Not even England in 1939. Not even Russia.

And once a conflict has started between two nuclear powers over something which both sides consider vital — un-negotiable — or an unclarified action is initiated which may seem to threaten what one side holds sacred, the side which is losing is going to be forced to escalate the conflict to avoid catastrophe, even if escalation means mutual annihilation by nuclear missiles. That “victory” to which Goldwater is dedicated will never be won, for Krushchev would push the button of destruction before he would see Russia defeated by the United States.

President’s Burden

The security, the prosperity, the very survival of Europe as a civilization depends almost entirely on the actions of the American President, for any nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union would involve massive retaliation against Europe just as surely as against America.

And yet the Europeans are bated for interference in our internal affairs when they protest against our selection of this man who holds their lives in his hands, this man over whom they have no power of choice. No wonder the Europeans are uneasy in their dependence, no wonder they are mistrustful of America as a guardian.

The very fact that a major American party sees Goldwater as a credible possibility for the Presidency, the fact that Goldwater is going to maintain his grip on that party for many years to come, the fact that he could become President any time between now and 1972, is enough to terrify any European. And any American as well.