

Despite Soviet Success, America's Free Enterprise Still Proves Best

BY RAYMOND MOLEY

At a thousand festive occasions in the months ahead, at least four Democratic candidates will provide digestive relaxation after the coffee and liqueur.

The groaning of the tables under the edibles with which they are loaded will be accompanied by the groaning of the candidates about what dire things will happen to us all if the Republicans are returned to power next November.

★

The food, no doubt, will be comestible, but the oratory should be plentifully sprinkled with salt.

One of the four aspiring senators is poor in pocket if not in spirit and an articulate friend of all who share his sad worldly estate.

Three are worth, in money at least, some millions of 1960 dollars. These millions were accumulated in the chapters of a nation's history in which the virtues of economic freedom were written indelibly and with supporting footnotes.

It requires a certain tolerance, mixed with a soothing sense of humor, to hear them say, as they are saying, that embattled and fanatical Marxism can in the near future disprove that luminous history.

I have neither the competence nor the pretensions needed to argue the relative military might of the United States and the Soviet Union. That de-

bate will be in the hands of those who know what we laymen cannot know. But in the field of economic enterprise, which is also opened to political debate this year, I would like to list a few facts about one of the bastions of an economic system, electrical power.

Perhaps my authority here will be questioned by some as being handicapped by self-interest. Certainly we will be scoffed at by those who hate what they designate as "the power trust." But I shall name my authority, and those who wish to quarrel over his conclusion might address their dissent to him rather than to this mere reporter.

★

Edward Vannard, managing director of the Edison Electric Institute, reported recently about the findings of a group of representatives, of which he was a member, who made two visits, in 1958 and 1959, to the Soviet Union to inspect its power facilities and its plants for the manufacture of electrical equipment.

Their inspection trips occupied some five weeks and covered 16,000 miles in European Russia, the Urals and Siberia. Their conclusion is that, conceding the success of the Soviet's seven-year plan ending in 1965, there is no remote chance that Russia can overtake the United States in the foreseeable future.

The present and prospective figures of production capability are:

In 1959 the United States produced 183 million kilowatts; Russia, an estimated 59 million. In 1965 we will produce 245 million kilowatts. Russia's goal, if attained, 110 million to 112 million kilowatts.

These advantages apply to all three of the means of producing electricity: steam, hydro and atomic energy.

In transmission lines, Russia has 46,500 miles. With a third of Russia's area, we have 240,000.

The per capita use comparison is 4,481 for us, 1,161 for the Soviet Union. Because this is a measure of comparative standards of living, the gap is very meaningful.

★

Since in the philosophy and plans of socialism, government ownership and operation of electric power production and distribution are not only first in priority but easiest to nationalize among all industrial activities, this comparison is especially notable.

There is no reason why we should be complacent. We must continue to progress and grow, not just to keep ahead of Russia but for the benefit of higher standards for all Americans. But the fears of politicians are quite without justification.