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Radio and the Press

THERE is one comment which it is permissible to make at this stage about the broadcasting conference in London (announced as we go to press). It is not a drive against the newspapers. The conference has been called by the BBC, and the Director-General went out of his way in his public announcement to emphasise that the spoken word can supplement but cannot supplant the written word. Then he added this:

So long as I am at Broadcasting House I will use every endeavour to achieve the synthesis of understanding, co-operation, and accommodation which must exist between broadcasting and the Press in any properly-balanced community. The Press is one of our most enduring and most vital heritages. In our different ways we must help each other.

Competition between Radio and the Press—in those spheres in which competition can take place—is wholesome and helpful. Hostility between them, the kind of hostility that leads to war, would be a disaster from which the community would suffer irreparable harm. When a house loses its windows it becomes a very unpleasant abode, whether there is a void where the glass ought to be or shutters. Sooner or later it becomes unhealthy and uninhabitable, and something comparable with that would happen if conflict between broadcasting and the newspapers dried up the sources of uncoloured news. Fortunately the Director-General of the BBC is a former director of the *Manchester Guardian*. He knows the possibilities of broadcasting in the news sphere, its instantaneousness, and in normal times its lack of interest in anything but fact. But he also knows its dangers and limitations—its inferiority in the field of reflection, and the very great risk in abnormal times that it will be used tyrannically. The newspapers are more truthful than they would be if there were no BBC; but the BBC is less tyrannical, less smug and stodgy than it would be, if there were no newspapers.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

MEMORIAL TO ARCHDEACON BULLOCK.

Sir,—Many radio listeners will have learned with regret of the death of Archdeacon Bullock. He was perhaps one of the most notable of radio personalities in connection with religious broadcasting, not only in respect of broadcasts from his own church but in the devotional sessions; and the appeal of his message was always to the community at large. It is felt that some of those who appreciated his radio talks might care to be associated with the memorial fund to which contributions are now invited. It is hoped that contributions will be such that, in addition to a token memorial, there will be provided a fund to materially assist his widow.

Donations may be sent to the undersigned care P.O. Box 986, Wellington.
—For St. Peter's Vestry,

C. T. COX,
C. M. BOWDEN, M.P.,
R. HERBERT WEBB,
Churchwardens.

"MISSION TO MOSCOW."

Sir,—I write to express my surprise that "G.M.'s" little Zombie, when seeing *Mission to Moscow*, sat unmoved, and actually looked as if he were about to slump in his seat.

The reason, I think, I have tracked down to the last paragraph of the review. Grey, G.M. asserts, is the predominant colour in the world, and not black or white. A film which presents a person or a country as black or white is a diseased film. *Mission to Moscow* presents the Soviet Union as white. Therefore, *Mission to Moscow* is a diseased film.

A supplementary and less important reason is to be found in his somewhat supercilious references to the "simplicity naive in the extreme" of certain episodes and explanations, and the allegation of "distortion of fact." But (a) the simplification of complex issues, for the purposes of popular enlightenment, doesn't necessarily amount to distortion of fact (and didn't, on the whole, in *Mission to Moscow*), and (b), although people and countries may be fundamentally grey, there are many shades of grey, and to depict a country in a pretty light tint of grey doesn't necessarily amount to whitewashing it.

Unfortunately, it isn't possible to answer several of G.M.'s allegations of distortion and over-simplification without writing a political treatise, which I haven't any intention of attempting here. Nor do I want to be pushed into the awkward position of proclaiming the Soviet Union as a Paradise, or Communism as the millennium—which I would be the last to try to do. But is it not possible that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is capable of simplification without distortion because the policy is itself simple? Again, to take another example, mightn't it really be a fact that the accused in the Treason Trials were actually "persuaded by Trotsky to sell their country to Germany and Japan"—an explanation which appeals to me as a lawyer after reading the verbatim report of the trials, and which was later confirmed in essence by Ambassador Davies, many other reliable witnesses, and Warner Bros.?

There were, of course, other important factors involved, such as the history of the conflict between the deviationists and the official party, and certain differences in ideology, but the kernel of the case was faithfully recorded in the telescoped excerpts from the actual evidence which were presented in the film. The ordinary man looking for an explanation of the Treason Trials doesn't want a long disquisition on history and dialectics: he wants the guts of the matter in a simple form—that the accused were fifth-columnists under the direction of Trotsky seeking to overthrow the Government; and in *Mission to Moscow* he got this explanation without distortion, just as he got simple and

Notice To Correspondents

The Editor cannot give reasons for the rejection of any letter, or of any portion of a letter. The commonest causes of rejection are, however, these: (1) Letters are too long. (2) They deal with unsuitable subjects (party politics, for example, or religious sectarianism). (3) They are actionable. (4) They are lacking in courtesy. (5) They are disguised advertising. (6) They are copies of letters sent to other publications.

perfectly accurate descriptions of the basic factors and motives leading up to the Soviet-German Treaty and the Soviet-Finnish War.

By the way, if the nasty reference to the Tukachevsky case was a bait, I hereby rise to it. The remark was irrelevant and in bad taste.

—RONALD L. MEEK (Wellington).

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

Sir,—The quotations you give from the booklet "Religious Instruction in Schools" express some curious errors and confusions of thought:

1. It seems suggested that religious observances should not be a part of the regular school day because some teachers could not conscientiously lead them and to that extent would be penalised in seeking preferment. However, schools do not exist as a ladder of success for teachers but as a ladder of life for pupils. If religion is a part of proper living it should be an integral part of school life, which is an early stage of living and a preparation for later stages. The only sound reason for excluding religion from education is a belief that it is not a proper part of living.

Who is to decide this question? Obviously the people who own the schools—in this case the New Zealand community as a whole. Our national practice is (as I interpret what I see about me) actively pro-religious on the part of a minority, passively anti-religious on the part of another minority, and passively pro-religious on the part of the intermediate majority. If this is so the school day should include some act of worship.

Teachers who conscientiously cannot lead it must expect to suffer for their inability to provide what the majority of the community decree to be a service, just as do those who cannot conscientiously give military service. But of course a community is foolish as well as malevolent if it hinders any sort of

conscientious objector from doing work which he will do because he cannot do everything it wants of him.

2. All the above is about religious observances. Teaching what Christianity is and has done is another matter altogether. Any community, whether Christian, Moslem, or Atheist, in its majority practice, is not merely depriving its children of knowledge they need for intelligent living but teaching them false history, ethics, and psychology, if it refuses to describe what the Hebrew or Biblical outlook is and how it has influenced history and our minds. If teachers cannot do this in as objective a fashion as they teach the rest of "social studies" it is not because "dozens of denominations are (creedally) divided—they are not—but because teachers themselves do not understand Christianity. It is not their fault. They have not had much chance to, even at Training College and University.

A.M.R. (Wellington).

SCIENCE AND THE WORLD

Sir,—I think Mr. Todd missed the essential purpose of Professor Polanyi's article. What the professor meant was to give a warning, lest old mistakes should be repeated. Those of his generation, to which I belong, were so cocksure that science provided the golden key to open the treasure chamber of the future; and by science we meant the science of material things—evolution, physics, chemistry, political economy. We had the usual delusions of scientists then and now that the sum of our knowledge at that time was the sum of all knowledge. The spiritual side of things was not considered worth even slight consideration. We regarded it with the contempt that a modern impressionist has for the work of a mid-Victorian Royal Academician.

What we realise now is that we were blind. For all our science and intellectual pride we failed to see that the logical result of our pure materialism, divorced from the things of the spirit, was what the world is suffering from now, Nazism, Fascism, Dictatorism in various forms: material progress perhaps: greater "social security" for some: greater comfort and more to eat for the lucky ones: more power in the world: but at the cost of enslavement of the souls and spirit. Our progress that we were so sure of has ended in reaction.

The afterglow of our bright hopes still colours the ideas of many "progressives" now. The recent report on education here in New Zealand might have been drawn up by one of us so far as it entirely disregards spiritual values. And I think that the weakest side of the new Russian social system has been that it concerned itself entirely with material things, and indeed went out of its way to crush and destroy all spiritual ideas. But I think there are signs that a change is in progress there, even though it at present takes the rather dangerous form of a fervent nationalism.

I hope, with Professor Polanyi, that this generation will be willing to learn from our mistakes of 50 years ago.—K. E. CROMPTON, M.B. (Havelock North).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

K.O.T.F. (Auckland): Actionable.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENT.

"NOR . . . FOR . . . BUT . . . NOR"
(Dunedin): Well taken. Our thanks.