

of life in Germany to-day, and in these circumstances an objective statement of the facts, however prosaic, would surely be of more value than a piece of imaginative writing, however effective. The truth is plain enough.

A. R. URQUHART

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[We agree with Mr. Urquhart that Mr. de Mendelssohn probably underestimated the possibilities of fairly rapid patching-up in many of Germany's Dead Cities. Who, after visiting Coventry in November 1941, could believe that it would be working again in three months' time? But for any return to normal peacetime conditions, such short-term repairs are ineffective. There are theatres, picture-houses and night clubs in Germany—improvised in many cases in cellars and buildings which serve the purpose for the moment. Human beings can and do survive in the Dead Cities, and Mr. de Mendelssohn stressed this in his article. But to advance from survival to something approaching normal life does seem, as he argues, a superhuman task.—Ed., N.S. & N.]

"YOGI AND THE COMMISSAR"

SIR.—Revelations in regard to Russia are again the fashion. The novel trait is the emphasis laid by the crusaders on the defence of Western standards of intellectual integrity. The crusaders level amazing charges and treat the sceptical as "Soviet addicts." An example of the manner in which facts and inferences from facts are being fitted in order to arrive at the desired conclusions, is to be found in Arthur Koestler's recent book which was most objectively reviewed by Leonard Woolf in your journal. Koestler reports about the U.S.S.R. that "capital punishment has been extended to children down to the age of twelve;" they "are being dealt with by the firing squad." (*The Yogi and the Commissar*, p. 170.) He adduces a decree of 1935, the text of which he quotes as conclusive proof that Russia has now dropped all pretence of progressive cultural principles, and is sinking, at least in respect to the treatment of juveniles, below the level of any uncivilised country.

What are the facts? Up to 1935 juvenile criminality was dealt with in the U.S.S.R. not by the Courts, as in other countries, but by the educational authorities. In that year the system was changed, since experience showed that the "criminal underworld" was deliberately making use of the children thus exempted. Two important rulings were made: (1) heavy penalties were introduced for adults, who induced juveniles to crime or to prostitution, even if they were not responsible for the juveniles, and had not themselves participated in the crime. The penalty in some cases equalled

that for murder. (2) The Criminal Code was extended to juveniles in the case of theft or crimes committed by violence. In extension of the decree special courts for juveniles were established at the ordinary courts as in other countries. The juveniles who were formally sentenced to imprisonment were committed for re-education to Approved Schools similar to Borstal, if allowance is made for the admittedly more modern methods of the Russians in dealing with offenders during detention and after. Hypothetically, the juridical position involved the possibility of applying the death penalty, since the decree, taken by itself, could be so construed. So far only does Koestler's assertion bear reference to fact. Actually, the criminal code in Russia does not provide for capital punishment for common crime, even in case of murder—a circumstance of which Koestler fails to remind the reader. Of all the crimes for which juveniles may conceivably have to answer under the decree of 1935, robbery committed by organised armed gangs (banditism) is the only one to which capital punishment may be applicable.

Koestler infers that interest in the application of progressive principles of criminology had been dropped in Russia. As a matter of fact, the sociological relevance of the decree of 1935 lay in the circumstance that it formed part of a set of measures based on advanced principles. These took note of the existence of a "criminal underworld" against which both the juvenile and society had to be protected. As long as the juvenile was practically free to return from the educational home to his underworld haunts and the adult members of the criminal world were free to use him as an agent of crime (since he was expressly exempted from punishment under the law) it was in many cases hopeless to try to prevent the juvenile from reverting to crime. The principle of merely individual treatment of the juvenile had broken down and had to be abandoned in favour of his protection against a criminal environment while maintaining the aim of his re-education. Clearly, the rationale of the 1935 decree was to reinforce the risk for an adult who invited the juvenile to commit a crime. So far to my knowledge no serious allegation has ever been made that juveniles have been shot under this decree, which was passed ten years ago. On the other hand, I note in the semi-official *Czech review Central European Observer* of June 29th, an editorial article on "Russia and her German prisoners." I quote an incidental statement from this apparently authoritative article:

The criminals are to be dealt with on a strictly legal basis and their guilt established. There is, however, an important exception to this

rule: the very young. Many who delighted in shocking cruelties are only 14-16 years old, since nearly all the boys between 14 and 16 were recruited for the Waffen S.S. *Under Russian law no young person can be faced with a capital charge (my italics).* The Soviet authorities have asked a number of pedagogues to make proposals as to what is to be done with these politically and morally neglected youngsters."

Highgate.

KARL POLANYI

POLITICAL POLICE

SIR,—The Tories have made much of the suggestion that a Socialist Britain will mean a Political Police, a Gestapo. I want to know if we have had one for years, mostly under a Tory Government. For men who seem to know the ropes say that the Home Office has a room in which the dossier of every known Left-wing speaker and writer is filed. If this is so, who compiled this list? Surely not the civil police. If this is so, will Labour, if it wins, abolish this alleged piece of Gestapoism, or failing abolition, will it add the names of the better known Right-wing speakers and writers? The answer is of the greatest importance, for had Hitler invaded in 1940 and taken London, all the Left-wing biographies would have helped him a lot. There may be no truth in the report, but if there is, what is democracy doing that it tolerates a secret police?

A. S. NEILL

EDWARD WHITLEY

SIR,—In your notice about Edward Whitley, nothing was said about the scientific side of his life and about his interest in Biochemistry. Early in this century his interest in Biochemistry was kindled by Professor Ramsden at Oxford, while he was an undergraduate at Trinity College, and he took the Final Honour School in Physiology. Following this he worked in the newly developing Department of Biochemistry at Liverpool with Professor Benjamin Moore, F.R.S., and other colleagues, taking especial interest in problems related to the growth of marine organisms. In 1906, the first volume of the Biochemical Journal was launched by Professor Benjamin Moore and Mr. Edward Whitley, a journal which has proved so successful that it was taken over in 1913 by the Biochemical Society shortly after its formation. This journal is now recognised as one of the leading journals in this active and growing subject; the Biochemical Society, which still controls it, now has over 1,000 members. During the last war Mr. Whitley worked with Professor Ramsden and colleagues at Liverpool upon the estimation of quinine. In 1920, he was instrumental in the founding of the Whitley

Chair of Biochemistry at Oxford, of which the first holder was Professor Benjamin Moore. Subsequently, during the tenure of the present holder of the Chair, he acted as University Demonstrator. There is no doubt that his interest and generous support have done much to further the progress of biochemistry. In this field there are now hundreds of research workers; the growth of this borderline subject has been one of the astonishing achievements of a scientifically vigorous age.

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R. A. PETERS

MORRISON AND EAST LEWISHAM.

SIR,—“M.C.” states he has been told that the Tories in East Lewisham had been making much use of Mr. Herbert Morrison having been a conscientious objector in the last war.

As the Conservative candidate will you allow me to say that I never made any allusion to this fact, that all those who came to speak for me were asked not to do so, and did not do so, and that so far as I am aware no mention was made of it by those working for me?

ANSWETON FOWNALL

SPLIT VOTES

SIR,—Sidney Dark is quite right about the confusion caused by split votes and, in particular, by my intervention in the East Ham's contest, but there are one or two more things which need to be said.

The confusion was heightened by the obstinacy of one or two prominent individuals, including a regular contributor to your columns, who confessed to me their belief that the Liberal programme was that could be desired or achieved for the present, and used their reputations as Socialists to persuade Labour supporters to vote Liberal. It was also increased by the fact that the Labour Party organisation, on which I had relied to help me spread the Socialist basis of Common Wealth policy, turned out to be non-existent except for a few scattered individuals and a group in Petersfield who gave me amazingly enthusiastic help.

Nevertheless, it gradually became plain in most parts of the division that, of the two Left candidates, one was paying lip-service to Churchill and upholding private enterprise, while the other was opposing Churchill and preaching Socialism. In consequence the enthusiasm, and later the attendance, at my meetings was greater than at those of the other candidates. The volunteer helpers in Petersfield alone got out all our Election addresses with days to spare, and we were able to hold up to eight meetings a night.

Had there been evidence that the policy and personality of the Liberal candidate were such as to arouse real enthusiasm for the cause of the people

HERBERT JENK