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The Civil Population and Air Attack

SINCE the issue of the circular to local authorities in Great Britain by the Air Raids Precautions Department in July 1935 urging them to co-operate in schemes of passive defence, public attention has been continuously engaged with this subject, but despite the growing activities of the Department it cannot be said that public opinion is at all happy upon the question. It is increasingly aware of the concern with which informed scientific and technical opinions regards the proposed measures, and the decision of the Government to transfer the shell-filling and other explosives supply departments of Woolwich Arsenal to four centres in the west and north of the country, which are regarded as less vulnerable to air attack, tends to increase rather than to dispel alarm.

While many local authorities have accepted the suggestions of the Government in regard to the organization of air raid precautions and defence, and many large firms are giving the matter active consideration, other local authorities have only accepted the suggestions so far as they relate to the training of fire brigades or police, while a few have refused to co-operate. At first sight, this latter attitude appears somewhat indefensible. The precautions professedly are purely humane in their intention and effect. The five handbooks already issued by the Department outline comprehensive schemes dealing with protection against gas, either in the way of first-aid services, the establishment of the requisite preliminary organization in large commercial or industrial firms and the like, precautions for merchant shipping and methods of decontamination of materials. It is common sense to take every reasonable precaution against so appalling a danger, however remote the probability may be. When the danger is one that can be

aggravated so seriously by panic, the support of measures likely to promote order and discipline in the event of attack may reasonably be urged as a public duty.

While this is so, and while it is obvious that effective safety measures cannot be improvised at a moment's notice, a body of opinion, strongly supported by some scientific workers apparently qualified to express views on this subject, has offered important criticism or objection to the proposals on at least four grounds. These objections are summarized in a series of reports which from time to time since August 1935 have been distributed by the National Peace Council, and the present position has been summarized in No. 27 of these reports, by Dr. A. F. W. Hughes, issued in December last.

In the first place, the plans of the Air Raid Precautions Department are regarded as inadequate both in degree and in kind to afford protection for the people from air attack. The main measures of defence advocated are those against gas attack, and the most important criticism is that the danger from gas attack is far less than from attack by high explosive and incendiary bombs, from which there is no protection whatever except properly constructed shelters either underground or with a heavily reinforced roof. The main defence suggested by the Department is that of a gas-proof room with windows and chimney blocked, and to be used for no other purpose. It is obvious that only a minority of the population will be able to set aside a room specially for this purpose. Of the remainder, many live in crowded areas, sometimes in houses insufficiently protected against the weather. Although officials of the Department have publicly admitted the inadequacy

of the ordinary house to provide any shelter at all, in October last, Commander Franks, of the Department, was still advising those who could reach their homes to take shelter in them. Moreover, although expert opinion to some extent appears to believe in the possibility of creating bomb-proof buildings as well as gas-proof structures, the need of research in this field has been admitted freely, notably by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, who stated in July last that an influential committee had been set up to advise on the Air Raid Precautions Handbook "Structure Precautions against Bombs and Gas" which is in preparation. Experiments are still required to establish data in regard to the effect of various types of bombs and gas, and also the resisting power of the miscellaneous materials used in a modern building. Even the possibilities of air-conditioning as a defence against gas have as yet scarcely been explored.

These facts in themselves are sufficiently disturbing. The efficiency of the gas mask has also met severe expert criticism. Apart altogether from the psychological difficulty of inducing unskilled workers to wear them—a difficulty with which the industrial chemist is only too familiar—or the attendant discomfort, there is the practical problem of devising a mask effective against any gas which the enemy might possibly use. Without such knowledge, use of a gas mask may be quite ineffective and even engender a false confidence. On the other hand, while that very confidence, whether well founded or not, may help to sustain morale and diminish casualties by avoiding or diminishing panic, the fact should not be overlooked that air raid drill and practice with gas masks may have an effect on the health of the population quite opposite to that intended. The use of the mask may, in fact, engender hysteria and nervous strain that may more than outweigh all the advantage gained against panic.

The second main ground of criticism of the proposals is that they are an essential part of war preparation and have as their avowed object not directly the saving of life or the prevention of suffering, but the strategic necessity of maintaining the public morale and so decreasing the danger in war time of a craving for peace. There is little room for doubt that Government policy in Germany and in Italy is fairly open to this charge, but so far in Great Britain there is little evidence to disentangle this criticism from opposition to the Government defence policy really based on

political grounds. At least it can be urged that those who take this view should show that the drawbacks to the gas mask proposals, for example, outweigh its advantages on psychological, apart from technical grounds. There is scarcely any evidence that the whole outlook of the people of Great Britain is other than fundamentally pacific, and those who bring this charge against the Government policy would have a much stronger case if they also attacked that section of the Press which consistently fosters a war mentality and pillories all constructive effort for peace.

None the less, it must be admitted that the third objection to the precautions policy of the Government that, whatever their intention, the precautions cannot fail to create a war mentality which is in itself the most mischievous danger to peace, undoubtedly holds some truth. The nation, however reluctantly, has accepted the Government's defence policy, but is still far from the frame of mind which regards war as inevitable. It would be foolish, however, to ignore the tendency of the whole tenor of recent events in Europe to encourage the mental outlook which will accept conflict as a welcome release from the strain of suspense. It is only too easy to slip insidiously and unconsciously from mere repugnance to war to acquiescence in it on the principle of knowing the worst rather than remain in suspense.

What is equally untoward is the check which the intensification of preparations for war has given to almost all effort designed to deal with the fundamental problem of the elimination of the causes of war. The important discussions which have taken place in the daily Press regarding the future of the mandates system, raw materials, population and the German colonial claims, are only a few examples of directions in which impartial investigation or research is required to provide a satisfactory basis for settlement or to demonstrate the speciousness of merely partisan or propagandist arguments. Despite Sir Samuel Hoare's statement at Geneva in August 1935 regarding an impartial inquiry into raw materials and colonial questions, no steps have apparently been taken to implement the inquiry. The whole spirit of the present defence measures has apparently paralysed such effort. No single action of the Government, however, could do more to disarm the foregoing criticism of its air defence proposals than an emphatic demonstration in some such way of its willingness to make constructive contributions to the elimination

of the causes of war by the initiation of these or similar inquiries which might diminish international friction.

Positive action of this type would also offer a weighty reply to the fourth main ground of serious objection to the air raid precautions in which most scientific workers are agreed, that the precautions conceal the truth that there is no possible protection of civilian population from air attack other than the abolition of bombing from the air. Those who realize the limitations of a policy of evacuation or even of the replanning and rebuilding of great cities with an eye to defence against attack by air, as in the Middle Ages they were built against attack under different defence conditions, carry a heavy responsibility if they fail to inform public opinion of those limitations.

Only so can we secure that widespread and intelligent public support for proposals such as the control of national air forces, the organization of an international air force or of effective collective security upon which alone the future safety of civilization appears to depend. Nor can we reasonably doubt that, if the public once realized how limited is the protection available even for those who can afford it, there would be forthcoming that large volume of informed public opinion which, while realizing the inevitability at the present moment of pressing on with measures for national defence, would insist that simultaneously no effort was spared to explore every possibility of international understanding and co-operation in the search for the causes of war itself.

Papuan Pygmies and Art

(1) Walkabout:

a Journey in Lands between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. By Lord Moyne. Pp. xxvi + 366 + 97 plates. (London and Toronto: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1936.) 18s. net.

(2) Art and Life in New Guinea

By Dr. Raymond Firth. Pp. 126. (London: The Studio, Ltd.; New York: The Studio Publications, Inc., 1936.) 10s. 6d. net.

(1) **T**HOSE interested in Pacific affairs may recall the unusual and stimulating collection of ethnographical specimens, predominantly from New Guinea, exhibited by Lord Moyne in his London house last summer. His volume, "Walkabout" (Pacific 'pidgin' for travel beyond the tribal territory), records the experiences of the expedition upon which this fine series of objects was collected and also tells us something of the animals brought back to the Zoological Gardens at Regent's Park, London, and of the difficulties of getting them there. But while the collecting of animals and ethnographical specimens was one of the major objects of the expedition, its chief aim seems to have been to study a group of relatively light-skinned pygmies who were said to inhabit the foothills on the north-eastern slopes of the Bismarck Range in Mandated Territory.

The volume sets out in vivid fashion how far the party were successful, and the misfortunes (they came near being something worse) endured in carrying out the programme, in which they

succeeded to the extent of bringing home a magnificent series of photographs of pygmies taken by Lady Broughton. These photographs and their discussion constitute the backbone of the book, and the discovery of the Aiome pygmies is no doubt the most important result of the voyage. These pygmies differ entirely from the darker riverain natives, as they do from those of the Aiome foothills, who are still darker than the River people. Twelve males measured by Lord Moyne had an average stature of 54½ in. (extremes 52½ in. and 58 in.), while three women varied from 50½ in. to 53 in. The photographs show that they vary greatly in facial characters, nevertheless certain generalizations can be made:

"Their upper lips were fleshy, projecting and sometimes everted, with rather pendulous lower lips and receding chins. Brow-ridges were not noticeable. The noses generally were straight and broad, the roots being clearly marked. The ends of the nostrils were set square and not diagonally, the bulbs being made to stand out by a bird's quill or as many as four fine sticks cut from the fronds of a sago-palm and worn right through the septum."

Like other New Guinea pygmies, they are skilful gardeners, and it seems impossible to bring their culture into close alliance with any of the Indonesian pygmy groups with which we are acquainted. Who then are these New Guinea pygmies? Are they local groups of 'Papuan' of very low stature, or are they part of a vanishing