

NATURE

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TELEVISION DEVELOPMENT IN BRITAIN

AN important statement was issued on August 24 outlining the Government's policy on the development of television in Great Britain. It will be recalled that the Television Committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Hankey, issued its report early in 1945 with a number of specific recommendations on the manner in which, after the War, a public television service should be resumed and developed in Britain (see *Nature*, 155, 615; 1945). Acting with commendable speed and efficiency, the B.B.C. implemented the first of the recommendations by reopening the London Television Service from the Alexandra Palace Station in June 1946. Next, with the view of extending the existing service to other parts of the country, work was begun on a similar station near Birmingham.

Following a further recommendation of the Hankey Committee, the present Television Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Trefgarne was appointed, and has recently been examining the technical characteristics of the B.B.C. television system in the light of the latest developments which have taken place both in Great Britain and elsewhere. It is considered that the improvements in the quality of the picture presented by any of the alternative systems are slight from the point of view of the ordinary viewer, and are not sufficient to justify a change of system which would make all the present British receiving sets obsolete. Moreover, any change, such as the addition of another hundred or two hundred lines to the existing 405-line standard of definition, would prejudice more substantial improvements, including possibly colour, at a later date. Such developments need further prolonged research before they can be realized in practice, and so far as can be foreseen, this will take several years.

On the advice of Lord Trefgarne's committee, based upon the above considerations, the Postmaster-General has now announced that the London television station will continue to operate for a number of years on the 405-line definition system, and that the same system is being adopted for the Midlands station, and is proposed for other British stations. This timely re-affirmation of another of the recommendations of the Hankey Report puts an end to the uncertainty which has been created from time to time by the claims and propaganda for other systems. It also clears the way for the radio industry to prosecute its plans for developing television markets both at home and abroad. Now that the public has been given a reassurance that the existing system will be maintained, the industry is planning to produce half a million sets during the next three years. Also, every effort will be made to demonstrate the advantages of the British system which, if it were adopted as the standard in Europe, could provide a highly developed source of programmes and benefit from Great Britain's unique experience of television.

Work on the Midlands station at Sutton Coldfield is being pressed ahead, and it is hoped to open it in

the autumn of 1949. The station, although working on the same basic 405-line system as the London station at Alexandra Palace, will have increased powers of the vision and sound transmitters of twice and four times respectively. The carrier frequencies used will be in the neighbourhood of 60 Mc./s., and the station, with its aerial system on a mast 750 ft. high, will have a reception range of approximately fifty miles. The Post Office is providing alternative radio and cable links to convey programmes from London to Sutton Coldfield. The B.B.C. is working out proposals for further television stations on the 405-line system, with the next station in the north of England. The completion of this development should make television available to the greater part of the population of Britain, and set a standard of service which other countries may wish to follow.

DEMOGRAPHY BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

Europe's Population in the Inter-war Years

By Dudley Kirk. (League of Nations: Economic, Financial and Transit Department, Publication 1946. II. A.8.) Pp. xii + 312. (Geneva: League of Nations; London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1946.) Paper, 15s.; cloth, 17s. 6d.

THE Office of Population Research, at Princeton, has abundantly justified its creation by issuing book after book of invaluable data often otherwise difficult to obtain. The book now reviewed is of primarily historical interest, as 1939 is almost lost in antique mist so far as demographic data and political units are concerned. Yet the data for those days must to a large extent remain our guide for the future in spite of the millions of displaced persons and the holocausts of victims of war and dictatorships.

The book is a modification of an earlier plan for a demographic atlas and it is well illustrated with maps and cartograms; but the author wisely emphasizes that a thousand persons in, say, northern Russia may be far more significant than a thousand people in some large urban centre; and on the other hand, he does not forget that, were spatial relations the only or even the main factor, London and the Low Countries would be the distribution centre for Europe. The student of population is always in trouble about the variable connotation of *rural* and *urban*, and this is one of many reasons why we should be grateful to Prof. Kirk for this book with explanatory discussion rather than only an atlas. A small community, of dormitory type, may be called rural simply because it is two or more miles from a town, and on the other hand, a large agricultural community, some attaining 50,000 people, may be called a town.

Estimates for Roman imperial territory run between twenty-three and thirty millions, so the population of all Europe at that time may have been some millions above this. Setbacks in the Dark Ages, through the black death and during the wars of religion, held back increase, so that estimates for 1600 are about one hundred millions, and people increased only slowly until 1750 when roads, communications, faster ships, banks, manufactures and so on started the great modern spurt, to 187 millions

in 1800, 266 millions in 1850, 401 millions in 1900 and 540 millions about 1940. The fastest growth, be it noted, came between 1850 and 1900 when war devastation was relatively slight.

North-western and Central Europe had become before 1930 an area of incipient population decline, whereas in the U.S.S.R. increase is still very rapid; in fact, some fear a tendency to multiplication for some time so rapidly that standards of living may tend to sink to those which are such an unhappy feature of the monsoon lands of Asia. Another aspect of the situation is shown in the estimate (p. 64) that by 1970 there will be about 6.6 millions less men of military age in North-western and Central Europe but 13.2 millions more in the U.S.S.R. Military losses, excess civilian deaths and birth deficits together make war losses about 22 millions. Military losses in the Second World War were heavy on the eastern front but less elsewhere. The losses through systematized murder were very great, especially in Poland and Yugoslavia and Greece. It is estimated that the War's reduction of numbers in the U.S.S.R. was such that the population in 1946 was only equal to that in 1940 before the slaughter began. That equality was more or less attained gives an indication of the height of the birth-rate even during the War. The rise in birth-rates in Western Europe since 1945 may be a consequence of changes in social attitudes and in income schemes, but it may be in a considerable degree a result of the return of the men from the War. The dramatic falls in emigration to the United States after 1924 and to Canada and Latin America after 1930 are notable as a pointer to the reduced opportunities of open spaces. The emigrant would now tend to join an American proletariat, and in many cases he rather joins the proletariat in his own country and swells the prevalent discontent; movements from southern Italy to Milan and Turin are an important factor in Italian affairs. But, on the whole, birth-rates in cities are lower than in the countryside; and territory under Soviet influence generally proscribes emigration as a political crime.

Migration within Europe in the nineteenth century led to a large increase of population in the Ukraine; but in the twentieth century the most notable fact was the movement of Poles, Italians and some Spaniards to France, usually to try to cultivate the poorer soils or to do menial work, sometimes thereby making more 'superior' jobs for Frenchmen. In parts of south-east and north-east France aliens and naturalized persons were more than 10 per cent of the population about 1930; but the economic blizzard sent some Poles back to their native land. The immigrants to France naturally included a large proportion of men between twenty and forty-five. Parts of the south-east Plateau Central have lost population heavily. A renewal of migration within Europe on a large scale might become revolutionary in its effects; it proceeds, however, quietly and very effectively, generation after generation between Scotland and England in both directions.

Expectation of life has been lowest in Rumania and Yugoslavia, with Greece, Bulgaria and the U.S.S.R. a little better. It is highest in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland. Rumania in 1936-39 still lost more than 15 per cent of its babies in their first year of life.

The study of agricultural population could have been made more profitable by using more fully data collected by Dr. C. J. Robertson for a conference on rural life in 1939 and other analyses which show the