

PSYCHOLOGY

Propaganda Cannot Cause War; Minds Must be Ready

Peoples Will Not Fight Unless Social Situation Has Already Caused Them to Develop Fighting Mood

PROPAGANDA cannot bring on a war, Dr. Gregory Zilboorg, New York physician specializing in mental disease, told the meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science.

War propaganda can have no effect in rousing the people to war unless social conditions have already put them in a fighting mood, he said:

Conditions which allow expression to man's natural hatred and resentment are not those which put a people in the mood for war, the psychiatrist declared. Instead we must blame those social conditions that suppress the civilized ways of giving vent to indignation.

"In times of peace we have a multitude of civilized ways of expressing our hatred in political campaigns, in violent sports, in vicarious participation in crimes and in that form of public revenge which is known as criminal justice," Dr. Zilboorg said.

"In times of war there are no civilized ways of hating—we must become primitive and we do.

"The more regimented and uniform the state, the more thorough the subjugation of the individual citizen, the more a people is driven into unwelcome passivity, the fewer normal outlets for hatred, the greater the reservoir of hatred stored up within the nation which at certain points is ready to explode.

"An explosion directed against one's own government is revolution, directed against a neighbor it is war.

"This is the reason why dictatorial countries of today are so militarized, so aggressive, so bellicose. They must fight within or without, for they hate and fear either their government or their neighbors.

"Since hatred is easily displaced from one object to another, since we either curse our friend or 'let it out on the dog,' we find the constant shifting, constant displacements of this brewing hatred in the dictatorial states.

"They are called 'purges,' squelching counter-revolutions, espionage plots, Jews, foreign enemies.

"Aggressive though these countries appear to democratic communities, their people as well as their governments are sincerely convinced that they do nothing more than defend themselves . . . These are real and not imaginary emotions which give cohesion and strength to the masses."

For this reason also free and democratic countries seem relatively peaceful.

"If citizens can dethrone a king and see him into exile because they don't like the woman he loves," Dr. Zilboorg explained, "if they may call him a quitter, they will feel that a great amount of aggression and hatred has been 'let out,' lived out, done with.

"In a country where a president may be and is called names, where there are

occasional riots and frequent social battles, where men can strike and picket and curse and accuse and make peace and settlements and fight again—in such a country there is so great a variety of outlets for hatred, aggression, socialized defeats and victories, that the nation as a whole must feel more pacific than belligerent towards the rest of the world.

"It is psychologically impossible in such countries to succeed with war propaganda.

"War propaganda," Dr. Zilboorg concluded, "is somehow hopelessly inefficient when people have enough to eat and when they are not afraid and when they are permitted to be socially angry.

"On the other hand, war propaganda becomes extremely effective even in the true democracies, if events 'strike home,' if there is little to eat, if a Lusitania is sunk, when fear and hatred come as natural reactions to an increasing sense of insecurity."

Science News Letter, May 7, 1938

The European starling, introduced in New York's Central Park in 1890, is migrating westward and many are now seen in Wyoming.



JAWBONE OF A WHALE

If Samson could have had a jawbone like this when he conducted his little mopping-up party against the Philistines it would have served his purpose even better than the one he did use. But this whale lived long before Samson: something like 34 million years, geologists estimate. This interesting fossil is now preserved in the museum of the Catholic University of America (See SNL, April 23, p. 275.)