

The Battle for the Mind

The last two days I spent at Macdonald College at a conference called by the Canadian Association of Mental Education. The conference, in which educational leaders from all over Canada participated, ~~had~~ ^{was} convened to discuss the contributions which education has to make to the building of a better world.

To me that conference proved stands out as one of the most encompassing events of recent months. It brought to all of us who participated a deeper understanding of some of the fundamental issues of this war.

Teachers & educators included,
Only too many of us have thought of this war exclusively in terms of tanks and planes, of man-power & the production lines, of battles on land, on sea, & in the air. We have often failed to perceive beyond the miriag sand of the African desert, beyond the miasmatic vapors of the South Pacific islands, beyond the black smoke of Russian & German cities in flame, we have failed to perceive that there is yet another front on which this war has to be fought, the intellectual front; that there is another battle to be won, the battle for the mind.

This war on the intellectual front has been fought as ruthlessly by Hitler & his satellites & by the Japanese warlords as they have been ruthless in all other fields. Hitler began his war on the mind as soon as he

came to power in 1933. It was at that time that he proclaimed his educational program in these terms: "I shall eradicate," he said, "the thousands of years of human domestication. I want to see again in the eyes of youth the gleam of the bead of prey. A youth will grow up before which the world will shrink."

This program he has carried out faithfully ever since, as we know only too well. He emptied the universities and secondary schools of their best teachers & students & replaced them by his own henchmen, by boys to whom brains meant more than brains, by teachers who had little interest in the true and the good & the beautiful. He replaced the broad study of the humanities & the fine arts by strictly technical courses & by programs of narrow indoctrination. He & his minions falsified history & the biological sciences in order to prove the superiority of the German race & their claim to world domination. We shrink from this kind of education, if you can call it that, but we must not overlook the fact that Hitler did succeed in one thing: he did give his young people a sense of purpose & of mission in this world & with that a drive & an enthusiasm which proved almost irresistible, as so many European nations have found out to their cost.

Since the start of the war the Axis powers have shown their faith in & their fear of education even more clearly. They have not been content with their initial

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military victories but they have used education & abused it in order to give permanence to their new political & economic order

According to Nazi thought this new order is to be a racial order with the German master race at the top of the racial hierarchy to be followed by the so-called junior partners in the new order i.e. those countries whose people have some teutonic blood in their veins & who for that reason are to be allowed a small measure of autonomy. According to the Nazis, this includes such countries as Holland, Denmark, Norway & most of the other countries to the West & North of the Reich. In line with these ideas these countries have been allowed to keep their own schools, including even some of their universities. At the same time, every effort has been made to bring the teaching in these schools into line with Nazi thought & to replace democratic teachers by Nazi disciples. Fortunately these efforts, by & large, have failed miserably. When the history of this war is written a page of honor will have to be reserved for the hundreds & thousands of teachers & ministers & priests who have died in concentration camps rather than to sell their own soul & their country to the Nazi overlords.

The countries to the East & South East of Germany such as Poland, Czechoslovakia & Yugoslavia are very much worse off. In Hitler's order they, together with the Jews, are at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. They are the slave nations whose only right to existence is

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to be found in merical service to the same German master race. No slaves they are not to have any leaders of their own. This explains the anti-Communist campaign of extermination which has been waged against the intellectual leaders of these countries. Teachers, lawyers, priests & other professional men & women have been singled out for the hangman, the execution squad, the concentration camp or the labor battalion with their terrific death rates. According to the best estimates available, in Poland for instance, about forty percent of the intellectual leaders of the country have been killed. To make sure that no new leaders should grow up, the simple lead the Polish people into a better future every college & university, every secondary school in Poland has been closed in the Polish territories occupied by the Nazis. Poland & to a somewhat lesser degree Czechoslovakia & Yugoslavia see being turned into intellectual deserts. The Nazis are determined that even if these countries should be liberated, as undoubtedly they will some day, it will take generations before they will be able to reconstruct what has been destroyed, to build rebuilt their cultures & spiritual life.

It is interesting to note that the Japanese are following a similar policy in China. In order to hold what they have conquered, in order to prepare for further conquests they are doing their best to destroy learning in China, to deprive the Chinese people of a trained leadership. For years now they have singled out Chinese institutions of higher learning. In their handbooks they have treated Chinese schools & colleges among

their chief military targets. Of some 109 Chinese
 colleges & universities which existed before the war 97
 have either been destroyed or closed by the Japanese
 forces. It is to the everlasting credit of our Chinese allies
 that they in their turn have fought this war on the
 intellectual front with extraordinary skill & vigor.
 Not only have they opened new universities in the Western
 provinces but they have accepted most of their students
 from military service with the result that while China
 in 1936 had some 350,000 university students she
 now has more than 400,000 young men & women in her
 universities to take the leadership in the establishment
 of a better, a greater China within the family of nations.

~~In the battle over the mind of man~~
~~by our hand, we in the Western world have done~~
~~nothing to help them. We have been so busy~~
~~with our own materialism that we have not~~
~~been able to do the work of our opponents.~~
 we have been ~~so busy~~ ^{so busy} ~~with our own~~ ^{with our own} ~~materialism~~ ^{materialism} ~~that we have~~ ^{that we have} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~able~~ ^{able} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~do~~ ^{do} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~work~~ ^{work} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~our~~ ^{of our} ~~opponents.~~ ^{opponents.}

is the battle for the establishment of a rational, intelligible
 international order, an order not based on force &
 oppression, on the secret ^{hangman} ~~places~~ & the concentration camps
 but an order based on understanding & compassion,
 on learning & rational planning. There are still
 millions of people on the North Am. continent who
 have no clear idea of the nature of this war, no
 clear-cut idea of the purposes for which it is fought.
 They do not know what kind of peace settlement,
 what kind of international order they want after
 this war. Their mind is in a fog & they are lacking
 in drive & determination even in the prosecution of the war.

Much of this must be ascribed to a failure
 in education which has resulted in a lack of under-

standing of the world in which we live.

The origins of that failure go back to the years between the two wars & even beyond. During the twenties & thirties our schools did a poor job in 'deprogramming' war in showing its gruesome aspects & its futility. Unfortunately, they did little to put anything in its place. They were negative rather than positive in their teaching. They did not bring it home to their pupils that in this tightly knit world of ours, in this modern interdependent world, nations have been pushed up against each other to the point where there is bound to be almost continuous friction & warfare unless we establish some form of international control of our mutual relationships, some form of collective security, which would protect us against warlike aggression. Thus we lacked to give our young people a vision of their opportunities, of their task in creating a decent international order, with that a purpose which would have given meaning & content to their lives.

More serious still, many of our schools & colleges have during recent decades cultivated a deadly ^{spirit of} relativism which threatened to destroy ~~it~~ or to pervert all our sense of values. It was all done in the name of objectivity. We told our young people to keep an open mind on everything - including Hitler & the Japanese imperialists. He had a lot to say

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about propaganda analysis we warned our
students never to believe anything that ^{cannot} be proved
statistically. Now, I am all for propaganda analysis
if it means that we ought to assemble all available
tabe data, to evaluate them, before we make up our
minds. But that is not what propaganda analysis
came to mean. We were invited to keep an open
mind at all times, to view any affirmative statement
with suspicion to the point where in the end we could
not distinguish any more between good & evil.
Our sense of values became blunted, we were willing
to compromise with the devil himself — in other
words, we kept our minds so open that our brains
fell out.

Needless to say, this is not the way to hold our
end in the battle of the minds. We need a faith,
we need convictions as strong & stronger than those
held by the people of the Axis. We need a new emphasis
in education that ^{will} give our people, young & old, that
there are certain ideas ^{of} values that are lasting
& creative, such will help us to build a better world.

Take the idea of the freedom of the individual —
that is not an idea invented by a clever politician ^{in the course of} a campaign.
On the contrary, it can be shown & must be shown in
our teaching of history that throughout the open civiliza-
tion has flourished ~~flourished~~ wherever the rights of the
individual were safeguarded. Just as essential as
the freedom of the individual is the other ~~the~~ fact that
nations have been happy & prosperous & creative whenever

individual citizens voluntarily accepted their responsibility to their fellow citizens, where freedom was interpreted as meaning rights as well as obligations as well as rights. Thus, ~~hardly in the best days of ancient Greece, democracy business & the arts prospered in democratic Athens, while reigned, totalitarianism failed to produce one great artist or sculptor or writer in the 900 years of her existence. By the same token Germany produced her greatest poet & thinkers in the early part of the 19th century, a period of compressed freedom, ^{& a high degree of popular unity} but since that time has come to foster, ^{in Germany} ~~reigning~~ the soul of Germany, hardly a book has been produced ~~for the world~~.~~

If we apply these ideas to the post-war world I mean that there will be peace only & prosperity only if freedom of full development is granted to all nations, including the ex-enemy nations, provided they accept honestly their responsibilities towards the family of nations.

However, we must not be satisfied with teaching these general ideas. In high school ^{through forums & discussion groups} & college we must make a greater effort to arrive at a clearer understanding of our modern world. We must show that all countries depend on each other that no country, however powerful it may be can live by itself. As stated before, no one must remain ignorant of the fact that we shall have war after war unless we can establish some form or other of common

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consultation between the various nations, some form of international control. Call it a new approved League of Nations or whatever you like, start it as a nuclear alliance between Great Britain, the United States, France, Russia & China or in some other form - these are matters of detail that can be worked out provided our people are willing & determined ^{to give up their provincialism &} to share in ~~its~~ ^{to support} a truly international order & to support it.

To those who are listening to my remarks I should like to ~~say~~ just one more word. You & I, we ~~have~~ are living in a terrible age, an age of untold suffering of starvation & death for millions of people. And let us not forget, we are also living in a glorious age. As I am speaking our ~~own~~ heroic men & women are winning military victories on several continents & in the seven years, which after 20 years of torture will offer us another opportunity to create a desirable, peaceful international order. Science & technology have put at our disposal instruments which will enable us to create a world of plenty for all of us & for all nations. We are going to beat again or are we willing to use our native intelligence, to enlarge our understanding & thus to make room & unexplained death prevent over ignorance & the forces of destruction.

Many of our educators are awakening to their special responsibilities in the present situation and I hope, I fervently hope, that this war will not be won only on the field of battle but also in our schools. Only that can ensure us of a lasting victory.