

*An enquiry into British War Production. Part I: People in Production*, prepared by Mass-Observation. The Advertising Service Guild. Limited edition 10/- net.

OF no subject have more violent and conflicting opinions been expressed than of British War Production. The most emphatic views are held by those least qualified to know: and though theories, anecdotes and statistics exist to support any position one wishes to adopt, no extensive or scientific survey has been produced, to form the basis of common agreement or disagreement, until the appearance of *Change 3*.

For those who have not yet discovered *Change*, it is the bulletin of the Advertising Service Guild, 10 Hertford Street, W.1. No. 1 was on Clothes Rationing, No. 2 on Home Propaganda, and No. 3 the first instalment of an Enquiry into British War Production, covering *People in Production*. These three surveys have all been prepared by Mass-Observation; but No. 3 will be followed by a second and complementary study of the *Economic Strategy of War Production* by Dr. Balogh.

*People in Production* has already been issued in a limited edition of bound galleys, but by the time this review appears, it should be available to the public at 10s. By itself, it is a Mass-Observation survey only of the human factors of War Production, but I say without hesitation that no book published in this war anyway approaches *Change 3* as a constructive contribution to the war-effort, to say nothing of its wider sociological significance. It will always be a landmark in the history of industrial sociology; and if those in Government, industry and politics pay it the attention it deserves, it should mark the turning point of the war on the production front.

British War Production, the report explains, is a subject of great complexity, since it involves such an enormous number of variables in addition to the common sex, age and class groupings. The *horizontal* cross-section reveals five main distinct, but interacting and interreacting groups: (i) the Services, needing equipment all the time, but different types of equipment in different proportions as one phase of war succeeds another; (ii) Supply Ministries, whose function is to plan to meet the demands of (i) and replan when those demands are replaced by new demands; (iii) other Ministries, allocating man-power as, when and where it is needed, making arrangements for its transport, accommodation and feeding, having regard to the dislocation of arrangements not only through expanded war-industry and altering demands, but also through enemy action by air, land and sea; planning the regular supply of raw materials and delivery of finished goods without dislocating the essential civilian services on the one hand and the movements of troops on the other; (iv) hundreds of large, thousands of medium-sized and tens of thousands of small factories, working to the directions of (i), (ii) and (iii), but always with an inevitable time-lag, between them employing millions of men and women, a large percentage of whom are doing jobs new to them; and (v) what is called 'the public' consisting of the foregoing, plus an almost equal number of people engaged on what has stupidly been described as 'non-essential' but is in fact 'essential maintenance work' for the most part. All these five groups are subject, individually and collectively, to the propagandist pressure of events, press, radio, film and conversation; and produce by their opinion of the value

of the work they are doing, modifications of the work-situation, both material and psychological.

Furthermore, even when the glib abstract War Production has been broken down into these groupings, it is plain that in terms of human factors we are faced with a number of abstracts, instead of one, and that each of them must be broken down in its turn until we reach the reality behind the abstract, millions of human beings, every moment of whose lives working, sleeping, feeding, travelling, must be regarded as having a relation to the optimum productive capacity of the nation at war.

These factors are not constants; and the *vertical* cross-section of Industry reveals an equally complex set-up, of which some of the main strands are: (i) the traditional relations between Government, Management and Workers in peacetime, as remembered under *laissez-faire* capitalism operating for personal profit, with its disciplinary sanctions of wages and dismissal; (ii) the wartime necessity of production for use, involving the compromise adaptation of peacetime machinery without attempting to change (a) the permanent economic basis of our society, or (b) the human Government-Employer-Worker patterns of thought and feeling, which had grown up through years of conditioning; resulting in (iii) a situation in which the purely economic incentives on which it was assumed that industry existed were negated, on the employer's side by E.P.T. and on the worker's side by the Essential Works Order and restriction of consumable goods; (iv) springing from this, a desire on the part of industrialists to end the war as quickly as possible to secure a return to the *status quo* of 1939, on the part of the workers a contentment with the wartime security, which they did not enjoy during peace, *provided that Victory is inevitable*, as so many Government propagandists have pronounced it to be; (among the workers, there is a fairly general conviction that peace will mean depression; Trade Union leaders seem to think that if they can restore the *status quo* of 1939, they will satisfy the workers without losing their own usefulness, while a minority of workers demand the nationalization of industry, and worker control on management as the conditions of winning the war and safeguarding the peace; in this former, they are supported by a great body of opinion).

*People in Production* makes no pretence at being an encyclopædic survey, even in terms of human factors. Seven locations were studied, differing in type of product, labour and welfare traditions, industrial history and geographical setting. Material was gathered by direct and indirect interview, using qualitative and quantitative methods; and this, collated with personal and public documents was codified in five main sections. *Tongues* analyses the penumbra of talk about inefficiency in industry, which envelopes industry and reacts upon its efficiency. *Bodies* deals with the utilization of man-power, *Times* with hours, wages, rest-pauses, absenteeism, *Feelings* with the work, climate, health, canteens, etc., and *Relations* with the whole set-up of Government, Management and Workers, with strikes and the direction of production, welfare, leadership and morale.

Every section is crammed with important new data and the evaluation of hearsay. But what are even more important than this are the modern-minded

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analysis of sociological relationships hitherto ignored or distorted by partisans and the action points, arising from this analysis. Ministries, industrialists, politicians, propagandists and Trade Union leaders should study these action points with the greatest care. Some may be impossible, owing to wartime scarcities. Many of them can and should be acted on as soon as possible.

It is impossible to condense the gist of over 200,000 words in a brief review, though I have tried to indicate its scope above. A few quotations will give the savour of the report, which is written with the spit-fire wit and punch, characteristic of Harrison.

'The Prime Minister has called 1942 the year of the crisis of man-power. There is a real danger (to war production) that man-power be thought of as *numbers* of men and women. . . . While quantities are important, qualities (as the A.T.S. have discovered) are equally so. To a noticeable degree, the stress in the industrial field is still on labour quality and its associate, *time*, rather than on quality and its associate *effort*. It would be almost equally valid and perhaps more thought-provoking to describe 1942 as the year of the crisis of *mindpower*.'

'The indiscriminate demand for 100% use of *everything* is a contradiction in terms. . . . The question is rather one of getting 100% of optimum out of 100% of the *people*, whatever this may involve in terms of everything else.'

'What was special about Dunkirk? Simply this. Here was a time when people expected a great disaster. The disaster was great, but *not so great as had been expected*. The consequent relief at the disaster being less great . . . liberated a dynamic energizing effect in a forward, urgent, realistic way.'

'One of the reasons why they (the problems of war production) have not been explained is that *nobody is responsible for thinking in terms of people's minds in production*. . . .'

'Though they overlap at many points, there are clearly two distinct sides to industry, the side who decide what to do or help decide, and the side who do it. . . . There is a special aspect of it which is becoming more acute. One side, the tellers, are temporarily in the position of being told to (by the Government). Their principal fear, and in some case their principal mental preoccupation, is about getting out of this position after the war, into at least the same *sort* of position as 1939. The other side, the doers of what they are told, have precisely the opposite concern. . . .'

'So long as the worker is working for *somebody else*, these restrictions, inhibitions, experiences, mythologies of relationship cannot fail to operate, though they may be temporarily obscured. A minority of workers consciously elevate this to a theology. This finds expression in the detailed anxiety about the reinstatement of precise pre-war privileges after the war. It is possible that if this existing relationship which persists unaltered in the war was drastically modified, *the relationship between hours and output might be modified too*.'

These quotations are selected almost at random. They do not represent a summary of the arguments of the report, which demands complete and careful reading, followed by immediate and sweeping action.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

A LIVING DEATH. *Grey Eminence*. By Aldous Huxley. Chatto & Windus, 12s. 6d.

Let the worm try to be superlatively himself, the best of all possible worms. The perfect ideal, it seems to me, would be the ideal, not of superhumanness, but of perfected humanity: For at the root of this aspiration to be more than human in knowledge and behaviour we find, at a last analysis, a kind of cowardice, a refusal to cope, except desperately, by the most brutal and mechanical means, with the facts, the complicated, difficult facts of life. The ideas of Plato, the One of Plotinus, the Alls, the Nothings, the Gods, the Infinites, the Natures of all the mystics of whatever religions, of all the transcendental philosophers, the stoic's brutal sacrifice of the physical, instinctive and passional life, the ascetic's self-castration—what are they but convenient and consoling substitutes for the welter of immediate experience, home-made and therefore homelike spiritual snuggeries in an alien universe? To aspire to be superhuman is a most discreditable admission that you lack guts, wit, and the moderating judgment to be successfully and consummately human.

Good words, these; brave words, and, down to the very worms, characteristic of their author—the author of *Grey Eminence* some ten years ago. Much has happened in these ten years to make the good and the brave turn away from that ideal of humanity perfected and consummate. Many have ceased to cope and, instead, sought a consoling substitute for the no longer merely difficult and complicated, but the irreparably sad and heart-breaking facts of reality. Once again, life has become too bad to be true. Therefore, it is not true. Reality, the reality of human desire and aspiration, has ceased to be a reality. It is an illusion. Ultimate reality, Mr. Huxley reiterates throughout *Grey Eminence*, is only in God; transcendent and immanent at once, it is outside time, outside the human plane of existence, yet latent within the individual consciousness and realizable by the individual who is prepared to give up his self, in the fullest emotional, physical and intellectual sense, to 'lose his life in order to save it'. There is no salvation on the human plane, we are told, not even temporal salvation, for the merely human plane cannot be productive of good other than incidental and fragmentary, carrying within itself the very seeds of its own decay. We are warned against the consequences of 'merely behaving like human beings, of existing unregenerately as natural men. We may sincerely wish to avoid the crimes and follies of past generations; but at the same time we wish to live that natural life which (along with its quota of goodness and beauty) produces the very crimes and follies we wish to avoid.' Such, with its truly cautionary illustrations from seventeenth-century power politics, is the moral and metaphysical theme of *Grey Eminence*. Aldous Huxley has now definitely come out on the side of 'superhumanness'. With another kind of courage, the man who wrote that 'to talk about religion except in terms of human psychology is an irrelevance', who prefixed those mocking capitals to the philosophers' Alls and Infinites, now writes, unflinchingly, of the That and the Thou. To the world, jealous, and a little sad, for having lost him, the change is somewhat disconcerting. Yet it was neither sudden nor surprising. When, in Mr. Huxley's teens, the *Philosopher's Songs* were written, the red light had already gone up in that spiritual niche ahead.