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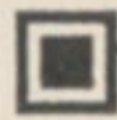
-Dr. Fink

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What To Believe

A Radio Address

By DR. JOSEPH L. FINK



Presented on Humanitarian Hour

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“What To Believe”

BY DR. JOSEPH L. FINK

THIS year there have been two shifts in the record of calculation of the passage of time. There is a calendar of days and a calendar of eras. December the thirty-first as usual marked the end of a year. But December the sixth marked the end of an era. With December the seventh, a new era began in America's history. How long this era will last no one knows. On the one hand, I wish that the end of this new era were as clearly marked on our calendar as is the end of the year 1942. But on the other hand, the very uncertainty of the time should give us hope. No one can increase or decrease the length of the calendar year. It is fixed, predestined, unchangeable. A year is a year, and no one can alter it.

The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your piety nor wit,
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.

But not so with a new era. It is an unfinished process. We can alter it. We can lengthen or shorten it. Its life and its length are in our hands. We can determine what its nature and character, its value and virtue shall be. And it were well, therefore, if we protected ourselves, as a mariner protects himself at sea, by selecting a definite star by which to steer our course. The average American

will prefer, as the first star by which to steer our course, the star of truth. Let us have the truth, he will cry. Let us not be misled by soft evasions for fear that we may not be able to face the hard realities. And yet we find it is the amazing fact that men have not been able to recognize and accept the truth in its stark reality, that is one of the primary reasons for the war having descended upon us. What shall we believe?

One of the lessons that men learned in the last war was that atrocity stories were circulated by one side against the other. In that war those stories were not based on fact altogether. Some of them were exaggerations of fact, others were pure invention. But they were exaggerations or inventions only when one side talked about the deeds of the other. In this war, too, there lingers in the minds of many persons the skepticism that such stories evoked during or after the last war. But there is a vast difference. This time the stories come not from one side against the other in the war, but they come straight from the mouths of the perpetrators of the foul deeds! To apply skepticism to such stories, to such boastful confessions, means merely to delude ourselves. For example, every bit of news that comes from dictatorship countries is strictly controlled. Stories of untried, unjust imprisonment, mass execution of innocents, and government encouraged plundering that are sent out are first *approved by the propaganda ministry* of those specified countries. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe either that such stories are not exaggerations but are rather refinements of the truth, or that they are circulated in their bold realities

as part of the dictatorship program of calculated frightfulness to frighten decent men into terrified submission without fighting. Let us take the statement of Joseph Terboven, the Gauleiter of Norway. "It is a matter of complete indifference to Germany and Germany's war if a few thousand or tens of thousands of Norwegian men, women, and children, starve during the war." That statement, difficult as it is to believe, is *not* a statement issued by an enemy statesman and credited to this Nazi leader. It is an extract from an address delivered by this Nazi representative and issued with the official approval of the sympathetic heads of his own state.

It would be impossible for me even to begin, let alone to exhaust, the atrocity facts of this war thus far, facts issued and approved not by the victims, most of whom are too terrified to talk, but by the perpetrators of the miserable deeds themselves. The attack on Pearl Harbor, in its perfidy and treachery, the attack upon the city of Manila, in its brutality and lawlessness, are not atrocity stories. They are atrocity facts. The slaying of hostages by the Nazis was not an invented tale by a propagandist who intended to deceive. It was a fact approved for broadcast by the Goebbels propaganda ministry. This is what "the slaying of hostages" means. Suppose a crime were committed in a city and the police, unable to apprehend the criminal, selected ten innocent citizens and executed them publicly as substitutes for the unapprehended criminal. In the first two years of the Nazi occupation of Poland eighty two thousand innocent persons were deliberately executed, and I speak not of those who died

of starvation, disease, and other conditions incident to war. I shall spare you the recital of the other atrocity facts that come to us *through official channels*.

The truth is sometimes too grotesque to believe. The truth that comes from the office of Mr. Goebbels is stranger and darker than fiction. Let me share with you this one item of news out of the land of the new order and then I shall be done with these tales, these facts of horror. It is reported, that a peak death rate of fifty young men a week was reached in the concentration camp at Mauthausen, in Upper Austria during the last three weeks of September. Forced to slave labor in the mines, brutally treated, badly fed, and worked under the worst hygienic conditions, six hundred and eighty young Dutchmen, aged from eighteen to thirty-five, had their number reduced by death to about two hundred and eighty from February to October. By the end of July one hundred and thirty had died under the physical strain, and later the rate quickened reaching four hundred by the last month (i.e., October). What should one believe? Well, it will do no good to deny the truth and turn one's eyes away from the facts because they are so repulsively ugly. One must face reality and see that there are areas of our world where men have *shed* their human, not to speak of their divine, character.

One of the reasons for that mal-development is that for years the youth of the fascist countries have been subjected to a system of education that glorifies what America has consistently condemned, that condemns what

America has eagerly glorified. They have an implacable hatred of religion—*all* religion and *all* religious ideals and virtues. They call ideals of mercy, charity, and love "degenerate affectations of degenerate races." To us truth telling is elementary religious virtue. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" is a cardinal religious obligation from the sacred book that all of us venerate. But their sacred book, the book which they have substituted for the Bible and on which they have built their life, teaches: "Keep on lying; even if ninety-five percent is rejected, humanity is so gullible that the last five percent will stick." You see, they make a virtue of what to us is a vice, and they make a vice of what to us is a virtue. Many of us believe that the theological Satan was slain long ago. But we are now confronted with a biological Satan, who is more than an even match to the one we overcame with so much difficulty. *What should we believe?* Seeking a ray of hope we must believe that this world of evil, symbolized by the biological Satan, will be overcome, as all evil is sooner or later overcome. In justice to the evil-doers, we must believe that the evil course of action followed by our enemies is not the result of innate evil tendencies, but the result of a program of education that was diabolically planned and ruthlessly executed. In fairness to our enemies we must believe that the perpetrators of those ghastly deeds are themselves the victims of psychological cruelty just as shocking as the physical cruelty to which they subject their own victims. We must also believe that some fragment of reason, however befuddled, prompts the villains to commit their cruel acts. And we must attempt to under-

stand their minds even as we condemn their actions. The primitive head-hunter in darkest Australia who commits murder conscientiously in honor of his blood-thirsty god believes that he is committing a virtuous act. Doubtless he is perfectly sincere, and, by his own lights, he is acting on the highest level of nobility and virtue. Yet, despite his sincerity, he is a savage, and for the sake of humanity we must condemn such a deed and punish such a criminal. Similarly, the slave in uniform who, at the command of his Mikado—a half god or at the command of his dictator—an egocentric anti-god, commits deeds that shock our humanity, must find his deeds condemned by us, and he must in time be tried for his savagery.

I recall reading long ago a fanciful story of a people living in a strange place called Flatland. This place imagined by the author was of only two dimensions. Everything had width and length but no thickness. The people who lived there had ordinary bodies and ordinary brains, but they were completely unable to visualize any direction like up and down because they lacked the perception of thickness. And apparently there are many persons in our world who have ordinary bodies and ordinary brains, but who are lacking moral sense. Like the people of Flatland, who lived with a two dimensional sense in a three dimensional world, so these immoral persons live in our world of moral purpose with no perception of moral values or ideas. They are too morally indifferent to respond to humanitarian or to religious appeals. They respond with vehement enthusiasm to the raucous cries of their leaders; they fight to death for the

glory of their fatherland; they reach on into the most destructive barrage of bullets with the name of their national tyrant on their lips; but they do not and cannot respond to such ideas as brotherhood, peace, love, and truth. We cannot abandon the world to such men in their present condition of moral insensibility. To do that would mean to surrender all the principles of religion, democracy, and truth by which men have lived through the ages.

There is a gigantic mortal combat in the world today. In its deepest sense it is not a combat between nations or between peoples or between empires. It is a combat between the muscle and the mind of man, the brute and the brain, the blind savage and the awakened spirit of man. The mind, the brain, the spirit will surely prevail. This is not the first such struggle, though it is the most gigantic struggle in history. We must believe, as Lincoln believed, that the spirit of man will prevail over the savage in the end, just as in the past the brutal conqueror always in the end succumbed to the enlightened conquered. The spirit of man though overwhelmed here and there, and now and then, is never completely conquered, never utterly destroyed, never permanently enslaved. It is an unconquerable spirit. I shall never forget how deeply moved I was when as a boy I first read the story of Captain Robert Scott, who died on his return trip from the South Pole. Captain Scott was in his tent in the violent Antarctic region with a comrade asleep on one side and another comrade asleep on the other side. The forces of mad nature outside their tent were too fierce to

battle. He picked up his diary and wrote in it. The last page of that diary, a sacred page, is in the British museum. As you look over that page you can see how he wrote until the pencil fell from his frozen fingers. What did he write in that last great moment?

"Outside the door of the tent it remains a scene of whirling drift. I do not think we can hope for any better thing now. We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far. It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more . . . Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale . . ."

Yes, they do tell the tale of man's spirit unconquerable even against the mad forces of nature. We believe in that spirit fighting against the mad forces of human nature. That spirit is the light that illumines man's hopes, the light that through the ages has guided and will continue to guide man on to higher levels of human living.