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Decline of Rome: Mahomet

By H. SWABEY.

The successors of Justinian (d. 565) were, in the circumstances, quite creditable. The wife of Justin II "delivered many indigent citizens from the weight of debt and usury." Within a year or two, however, the Lombards arrived in Italy and captured much of it. The next emperor, Tiberius II, had a "principle of humanity and justice, which taught him to abhor, as of the basest alloy, the gold that was extracted from the tears of the people." We may contrast the modern politician's emphasis on Sacrifice! This Tiberius died all too soon, and Maurice—in the language of a contemporary—expelled "from his mind the wild democracy of passions, establishing a perfect aristocracy of reason and virtue." But he was powerless to help the Italians. The Lombard king there held a council, composed of the most eminent, and their decrees had to be ratified by the people. However, "these rude and hasty legislators were incapable of balancing the powers of the constitution, or of discussing the nice theory of political government." But Gregory the Great (590-604) was a skilful and peaceably minded mediator: "He presumed to save his country without the consent of the emperor or the exarch." The exarch was the emperor's governor of Italy. When the empire was brutally usurped, Gregory showed as a politician rather than a priest, and his flattery of the usurper "sullied with indelible disgrace the character of the saint."

Internal strife was the signal for a Persian attack on the ramshackle empire. In the campaign against Jerusalem, the Persian king "could enlist, for this holy warfare, an army of six-and-twenty thousand Jews . . . the massacre of ninety thousand Christians is imputed to the Jews and Arabs. . . . By the oppressive laws of Justinian, the adversaries of the church were made the enemies of the state; the alliance of the Jews, Nestorians, and Jacobites had contributed to the success of Chosroes . . ." In the midst of his successes, the Persian received a letter from an obscure citizen of Mecca, "inviting him to acknowledge Mahomet as the apostle of God. . . . Placed on the verge of the two great empires of the East, Mahomet observed with secret joy the progress of their mutual destruction."

The Roman empire was saved by Heraclius, who reigned from 610-642, and chastised the Persians. There must, however, have been some spirit to respond to his leadership and to expose the fragility of oriental despotism. It cannot be said, for instance, that Mr. Churchill alone saved Britain from the Germans or delivered Europe to the Soviet. Among the Roman allies, were the Chozars, who

"transported their tents from the plains of the Volga to the mountains of Georgia." They were powerful in the seventh and next two centuries, the Greeks and Arabs called them Kosa, and the Chinese knew of them. An exiled emperor, in 685, took refuge among them between the Tanais and the Borysthenes, and married the khan's daughter: "But the faithless Chozar was soon tempted by the gold of Constantinople." A later emperor married a khan's daughter, and the son was surnamed Chazarus and had a short reign as Leo IV. (775-80). Gibbon does not mention the conversion of this tribe to Judaism. But the Persian war exhausted the empire, and brought on the decay of "arts, agriculture and population." During the emperor's triumph, "an obscure town on the confines of Syria was pillaged by the Saracens . . . the prelude of a mighty revolution. These robbers were the apostles of Mahomet. . . . Heraclius lost to the Arabs the same provinces which he had recovered from the Persians."

At this point, Gibbon takes up a new plan, and deals with subjects instead of with the years in order. The first subject is Christology, and Disraeli's comment, in itself a quotation, that he was Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer, is hardly adequate. But in a contest of rhetoricians emotional effect and not precision would be the object. Gibbon complains indeed that the Christians "were more solicitous to explore the nature, than to practice the laws, of their founder." But his aim was to shew that schism weakened the empire. As an example, "The son of the orthodox Constantine pursued with pious hatred a people of soldiers, who might have stood the bulwark of his empire against the common foes of Christ and of Rome." It was significant of the growing influence of the papacy that at Chalcedon (451), "The Orientals . . . accepted the Romans as their deliverers." Justinian persecuted Pagans, Jews and Samaritans as well as heretics ("The Jews, who had been gradually stripped of their immunities, were oppressed by a vexatious law . . .") but appears to have lapsed into heresy himself. The Nestorians penetrated to China, and worked there between the seventh and thirteenth centuries, and the ambassadors of Alfred are said to have visited the shrine of St. Thomas, near Madras, at the end of the ninth century, and to have returned with a cargo of pearls and spices to the king "who entertained the largest projects of trade and discovery." The chapter concludes with the expulsion of the Jesuits from Abyssinia: "and the gates of that solitary realm were for ever shut against the arts, the science, and the fanaticism of Europe."

From the death of Heraclius, 642, Gibbon deals rapidly with the succeeding emperors. Leo III, the Isaurian, founded a dynasty of that name (717). ("Even in the corruption and debility of the modern Greeks, the elevation

of a plebeian from the last to the first rank of society, supposes some qualification above the level of the multitude.") The attack of this dynasty on images, called iconoclasm, provoked the West to assert her independence. Leo's son was still more violent, but was successful in war, and the empire enjoyed an "uncommon plenty." One example will suffice of the numerous murders and mutilations: a rebel had his hands and feet amputated and was conducted through the multitude seated on an ass: "The depravation of manners, as savage as they were corrupt, is marked by the presence of the emperor himself." (829.) Basil the Macedonian, however, "revived the order and majesty of the Roman empire (867); he . . . established by degrees an equitable balance of property and payment," and revised Justinian's laws in the *Basilics*. The next emperor was surnamed The Philosopher, and was "less ignorant than the greater part of his contemporaries." A new dynasty, the Comnenian, arose, and Alexius reigned from 1081-1118. "In the tempest, Alexius steered the imperial vessel with dexterity and courage . . . he balanced the interests and passions of the champions of the first crusade." He remarks that, "The Byzantine empire was most tranquil and prosperous when it could acquiesce in hereditary succession. . . . The entire series of Roman emperors, extends above fifteen hundred years: and the term of dominion, unbroken by foreign conquest, surpasses the measure of the ancient monarchies."

Galled, perhaps, by "the incessant charge of the Jews and Mahometans," and certainly pushed by Constantine V, the Byzantine synod banned images in 754. But while "the Greek prelate was a domestic slave under the eye of his master" (poor Russian Metropolitan!), the popes had had to fend for themselves. "The genius and fortune of the popes again restored the supremacy of Rome." An English or Mercian king had founded a school at Rome, and exacted a tax of a penny from every family, called Romsecote, to support it. This later became Peter's Pence. The pope had little respect for the emperor or patriarch, withheld tribute and defeated the Greeks. An exarch was killed, and soon the office was abolished. (As for the pope's temporal dominion, "their noblest title is the free choice of a people, whom they had redeemed from slavery." Elsewhere it is objected that they "deluged Europe with blood.")

Rome was then threatened by the Lombards, and the pope called in the assistance of Pepin. He later crowned him King of France, to the exclusion of Clovis's line. Donations, real and imaginary it seems, were received by the Pope who, in 800, crowned Charlemagne emperor. In 962, Otho "for ever fixed the imperial crown in the name and nation of Germany." The empires were at peace and a treaty of alliance was signed as early as the time of Charlemagne. The Italian cities revived and developed constitutions: "The legislative authority was inherent in the general assembly; but the executive powers were intrusted to the three consuls, annually chosen from the three orders . . . the invincible genius of liberty prevailed over the two Fredericks." The rivalry between the imperial, Ghibeline, and papal, Gwelf, faction, is well known. ("The Gwelfs displayed the banner of liberty and the church.")

The imperial constitution was elaborate: seven electors chose the Emperor; the college of princes and prelates had four votes; the commons as the third branch of the

legislature had the power of the veto. The emperor "had the right of presiding and proposing in the national senate . . . he disputed with the Pope the sublime prerogative of creating kings and assembling councils."

Mahomet (569-632) is treated fairly and fully enough, in chapter L. As people must be either compelled or persuaded to obey, "the use and reputation of oratory among the ancient Arabs is the clearest evidence of public freedom." The Jihad, or holy war, is contrasted with the Hebrew practice of exterminating adversaries, for Islam offered the alternative of conversion. But Mahomed was quite pitiless with the Jews. ("He believed he was poisoned . . . by the revenge of a Jewish female.") He granted Christians some toleration. ("The disciples of Jesus were endeared to the enemy of the Jews.") But the emperor was approached with the suggestion, or threat, of conversion, as was the Persian monarch. The humane decree that in the sale of captives, mothers should never be parted from their children, is a contrast with modern barbarism. "It is not the propagation, but the permanency, of his religion that deserves our wonder. . . Arabia's sovereignty was lost by the extent and rapidity of conquest."

The Arabs evidently had a simple constitution, which "united . . . the dispatch and execution of despotism, with the equal and frugal maxims of a republican government." Persia was soon conquered, and the king took refuge with Taitsoong, the first Tang emperor of China, who "may be justly compared with the Antonines of Rome." The Saracens ("invincible in fact, since they were invincible in opinion") soon reduced Syria. In Egypt they were "received as the deliverers of the Jacobite church": the new governor abolished the capitation but introduced a profits tax, and was said to have "balanced the demands of justice and policy." The first campaign in Africa was not too successful, but they were invited back "by the cries of the Africans themselves," who had been stupidly taxed. They were invited into Spain by a faction (711 A.D.), and while the conqueror protected the Christians, "his gratitude and policy rewarded the Jews, to whose secret or open aid he was indebted for most of his acquisitions . . . that outcast nation embraced the moment of revenge . . . and the alliance between the disciples of Moses and of Mahomet was maintained till the final era of their common expulsion." The province was improved by agriculture, instead of being ruined by goldmines, and enjoyed its "most prosperous era." Yet an enormous tribute in gold was exacted. Christianity fell in North Africa, as did Zoroastrianism in Persia, and declined in Spain.

Constantinople, however, held firm, largely thanks to the use of *Greek fire*, and Charles Martel expelled the Saracens from France (732). But soon an age of Arabian learning opened and "continued about five hundred years." They specialised in medicine and chemistry. Their power extended over Crete in 823, and over Sicily a few years later. But in Rome Pope Leo IV "stood erect," and established a colony of Corsicans at the mouth of the Tiber. Meanwhile the Turkish guards in Bagdad created a diversion and rivalled the brutalities of the prætorians of Rome ("so uniform are the mischiefs of military despotism.") The empire of the caliphs was beginning to decline and fall apart.

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons: June 24, 1952.

Central Land Board (Land Acquisition)

Mr. Poole asked the Minister of Housing and Local Government in how many cases during the present year the Central Land Board have made use of their compulsory powers of acquisition of land.

Mr. H. Macmillan: Four.

Departmental Staffs (Food Subsidies)

Mr. Lewis asked the Minister of Housing and Local Government how many men and women, respectively, working in his Department neither pay Income Tax nor receive family allowances, and consequently, have received no compensation against the cut in food subsidies.

Mr. H. Macmillan: This information is not available. But I must frankly admit that no one has yet solved the problem of how to take a tax off people who do not pay it.

Mr. Lewis asked the Minister of Labour how many men and women, respectively, working in his Department neither pay Income Tax nor receive family allowances, and, consequently, have received no compensation against the cut in food subsidies.

Sir W. Monckton: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Lewis asked the Minister of Works how many men and women, respectively, working in his Department neither pay Income Tax nor receive family allowances, and, consequently, have received no compensation against the cut in food subsidies.

Mr. Eccles: The information is not available.

£ Scots (Value)

Mr. Mitchison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of the £ Scots, in English currency, for the purposes of the qualification of the General Commissioners of Income Tax.

Mr. R. A. Butler: One-twelfth of a pound sterling.

Income Tax Payers

Mr. Lewis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer the total number of persons paying Income Tax in the year ended April, 1952; and what number he anticipates this will be reduced to in the year ending April, 1953, by reason of the implementation of his Budget proposals.

Mr. R. A. Butler: On the level of incomes ruling in April, 1952, the total number of persons paying Income Tax would have been 16 million. The Budget proposals will reduce this to 14 million.

House of Commons: June 26, 1952.

Classes

Lieut.-Colonel Lipton asked the Minister of Education how many primary and secondary school classes there now

are with over 60 pupils; where these schools are situated; and what special steps are being taken to reduce the numbers in those classes.

Mr. J. Johnson asked the Minister of Education how many classes containing over 60 children there are in primary and secondary schools; and what steps she is taking to abolish these.

Miss Horsbrugh: Full statistics for 1952 are not yet available, but of the 15 classes recorded as having more than 60 children on the register in January, 1951, only four remained of this size in January 1952, and the children in them were grouped for registration purposes only. They were actually taught in much smaller groups.

Lieut.-Colonel Lipton: Does that mean that there are
(continued on page 6.)

CO. DONEGAL.

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Saturday, July 19, 1952.

From Week to Week

"Even among bank customers [our emphasis] the question has been heard 'How do the banks do the work gratis on behalf of the account holder?'" (*The Scotsman*). (Scottish banks are to charge 6d. for every cheque drawn.)

• • •

A broadcaster, Colin Wills, reporting on the opposition aroused by the British Electricity Authority's private bill seeking powers to extend its hydro-electric undertakings in Snowdonia, sided unmistakably with the objectors. They evidently are understood to have dynamite in their hands, as they have. If the commendably energetic collectivity of poets, architects, farmers and (local) officials whose views were expressed during Mr. Will's tour of inspection and investigation, understood credit, and in particular *social* credit, the dynamite would go off.

• • •

We may be wrong in thinking that the broadcast by Bernard Wall on "The Vatican in Contemporary Italian Politics" in the Third Programme on July 7, repeated on the 9th, was significant and important as well as interesting. It explained one thing which appears inexplicable to some people when stated, as it usually is in 'progressive' circles, *positively*: Why it is that political discussion is fantastically unreal whenever and wherever "The Church" does *not* formulate the problems?

• • •

The people who understand their own vital interest in what is happening in, e.g., British Columbia, Alberta, Chicago,—let us say ourselves and the Sanhedrin—look to *The Times* (when they do look) for details and confirmation. Neither of the two—and there are only two—irreconcilably contrasted and opposed sides to the conflict of the ages is intelligibly represented by Publicity great or small. Publicity and High Finance are concentric. Our enemy dare not be understood, and need not wish to be, even if it dared. We figure in the corollary. Just as there is no limit to the expansion of production for Finance's sake, so there is no limit to the expansion of "free discussion" as a basis for pseudo-"democratic institutions" for Power's sake. If you can 'say the truth' about anything at all, what you say must have a referent. If you want to tell lies, equally you must find a referent. Newspapers are the repositories of referents. Having attained "free democratic institu-

tinos," you must have newspapers, and they must, as any newspaper man will tell you, "cover the news," i.e., admit everything to the category of referents. At the present moment, the liars must take care that they do not inadvertently awaken suspicion among the English that "free discussion" is ahead of them in Canada, or suspicion in Canada that "free understanding" doesn't amount to much in England. So *The Times's* headlines on the middle page on July 8: "British Columbia Elections: Social Credit Success" carries just the right degree of complacency. And why not? It encourages the congenitally disposed to ballot-box democracy, and only those who know will remember that the C.C.F. (now shamelessly labelled 'socialist') was for long *The Times's* fancy for the electoral stakes. The 'news' published was as follows:—

"From our Correspondent, Vancouver, July 7: British Columbia has refused to renew the mandate of Mr. Byron Johnson's Liberal Government in the General Election, which has produced many unexpected results.

"The counting of alternative choices has been completed in 38 ridings, with the following results: Social Credit 15, Socialist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation 14, Liberals six, Conservatives two, Labour Party one. Of the 10 results still awaited, four are in Vancouver, and they may govern the formation of the next Government, for the Liberal leaders have indicated that they might support Social Credit, though not as a coalition. The Liberal and Conservative alternative choices went against Socialism while the C.C.F. second choices, though rarely used, went to Social Credit.

"The Premier, Mr. Johnson, was defeated by a C.C.F. candidate in New Westminster, and so far only two Ministers have been re-elected—Mr. E. T. Kenny (Lands and Forests) and Mr. W. T. Straith (Education). Victoria re-elected three Liberals, Mr. Straith, Mrs. Nancy Hodges, the Speaker in the last two sessions, and Mr. D. J. Proudfoot. The Conservative leader, Mr. Herbert Anscob, was unseated by a Liberal in Oakbay, which is traditionally Conservative, Mr. E. C. Carson, Public Works Minister before the coalition was dissolved, and Mr. L. Giovando, were the only Conservatives elected."

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It would be interesting to know what filled the hiatus in the following report by Reuter (published in *The Times* of July 9) of a passage in General MacArthur's 'castigation' of the New Deal Administration now seemingly on the way out: "The Administration's leaders, 'by spendthrift policies which stagger the imagination; by discouraging adherence to the principle of private ownership of property . . . have established the prerequisites to a Socialist or even later a Communistic State.

"And, as they thus chart a course with such reckless abandon leading toward ultimate national bankruptcy, they endeavour to mislead and control the public mind by a patronage of money by devices calculated to create an artificial appearance of prosperity, and by a continuous flow of irresponsible and deceptive propaganda."

"Now boys, a little of the truth about a lot, or a lot of the truth about a little; for after all, *de minimis non curat Lex*, and it's our law;—whichever you like: it doesn't matter!" (In fact, of course, Truth is not quantitative.)

Not in Confidence

An Open Letter to a Friend in the United States:

By NORMAN F. WEBB.

(Concluded)

As regards the present rapidly disintegrating order of society, it is arguable, of course, that all material power and authority must expect to be challenged, and that if it cannot withstand attack, then the old must, and will, give place to the new. Those who advocate the change point out, also, that we have no real experience of what the New Order is like, and therefore no grounds for assuming that it won't be as good, or maybe better, than the one it is displacing, and which it cannot be denied was a welter of abuses.

Such a line of argument can be very difficult to rebut;—in fact, there is no effective answer you can make, except to say, wait and see, and then, if you are right, it is too late. But I haven't tried to do anything of the kind or, as is often done, negatively to argue that black is white in respect of past abuses. Instead, I have tried to establish in your mind two positive facts, which I will repeat. The first one is this: That some thirty years ago the cause of all our so-called economic troubles—I don't say the solution of all of them; but to know the real cause is to be some way towards the solution—was discovered and publicly explained. If you object that Major Douglas's assertions were examined by economic experts, Mr. Gaitskell himself being one, and found to be baseless, the only answer I have—beyond pointing to the existing state of the world, which he foretold correctly—is to refer you to Mr. Gaitskell's findings regarding your own country's present position, which we have just analysed, and which exhibits a mass of contradictions between economic facts and financial demands. What truth or value have they got? And remember, there are quite a considerable number of individuals in every part of the world, among whom I am to be included, who have remained totally unconvinced from the very start of the correctness, or even the genuineness, of the British Labour Party's findings in 1921, or any of the subsequent endorsements of them.

You might further object, Why should anyone in his senses wish to hide up the discovery of a mistake of this kind, that you say was, and is, bedevilling the economic issue all over the civilised world? The answer to that concerns the second point I have tried to bring home to you, which is the fact that this discovery of Major Douglas's, if it had been allowed to be correct, and therefore to be acted upon, while it is quite beyond the capacity for intelligent human anticipation to compute a fraction of the profound changes it would inevitably bring into society, would unquestionably have accomplished one thing, and that is, it would have automatically *dispersed* for all time, all the power and authority over other men's lives invested in the control of the sources of Money, financial-credit-creation; removing it out of the hands of the Banking Profession, and into the hands of the consuming public, Society, which is the only source and origin of whatever real credit there may be. It is surely obvious that if that result is implicit in the analysis and proposals of Major Douglas which have come to be known as Social Credit, its disclosure would automatically have deprived the financier of his one great asset which the control of finance—the sole right to create costless financial

credit—gives, and would have reduced him at a stroke to his correct social level, as the director of a public utility, *the paramount public utility*, if you like.

Assuming, then, what we know to be a fact, that all specifically modern Political Economy—to keep our horizon fairly confined—stems from Karl Marx and the Fabians and their London School, and reflects not only their economics and policy, but the philosophy of their avowed backers—assuming all that, is their approach to what is implied in Social Credit certain, or even likely, to be without bias? Should the correctness of their findings in 1921 have been taken so much for granted in the first place? Or, even more to the point, be so completely exempt from re-examination today, in view of the accumulation of circumstantial evidence of its incorrectness. To one, like myself, who so long ago studied the Social Credit thesis, and satisfied myself of its correctness, and who has watched world events, particularly in the last twenty-three or so, years, working out, both economically and politically, so exactly according to Major Douglas's profoundly simple observations, it seems just sheer, almost incredible, gullibility to accept the Fabians' unchecked word on this matter. As well, go to the thorn bush expecting grapes.

Whatever secrecy, or suppression of relevant facts, may surround the promotion of the coming World State, those who work for its promotion make no secret of its objective, or of their belief that the end justifies the means; that, one way or another, the present order *must be made* to give place to their New Order. That is the Socialists' communistic conviction, put forward with such fervour as those of us who are not similarly minded find it hard to combat. But is the matter really as simple as all that? Is it just a question of two similar forces—two wills—representing different ways of ordering society, opposed to one another? We must not allow ourselves to forget that the Order that we are told must inevitably be replaced, is a Christian Order. The Christian Order, Western Christendom. And that its fundamental tenet, however poor the service we pay it, is that the end can only be justified in its means. We must remember that this is not the view held by the backers of the World State, who, not only in theory, put in practice, stop at nothing, *not even the deliberate suppression of truth*, or facts, as I am hoping I have been helping you to realize in this particular case. That Mr. Gaitskell, with all his intellectual attainments, has really missed the truth of Major Douglas's analysis, I find very hard indeed to believe. But, assuming he has, most certainly his backers, those who provided his economic education, and had him groomed for his service to "the future Socialist State," have not overlooked it. I am convinced they know, as well as I do, that there is an existing alternative to the present bellicose, and economically threatening trend of events which they are determined shall have all the appearance of being inevitable; but they are more than satisfied to allow it to remain unperceived and unheard behind the organised distractions of Mr. Gaitskell and the rest.

In trying to tell you something of the background history of the Socialist Movement in this country, and of the education of Mr. Gaitskell, I may have said more than I originally intended. But it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to have kept the name of Social Credit com-

pletely out of this, especially since Mr. Gaitskell has constituted himself, so to speak, its official opponent. I make no doubt my letter bristles for you with unsatisfied queries; notably, what is known as *unemployment*, which really constitutes the immediate crux of the whole situation. But everything cannot be touched on at one and the same time.

What I have tried to do—and I can't help feeling must to some extent have succeeded in doing—is to show up the futility of Mr. Gaitskell's proposals as applied to your more than self-sufficient country, in a simple manner, which has so far proved impossible over here. One of my motives is to warn you in the United States, as strongly as I can against taking internationalist advice regarding your national policy, or your domestic affairs. To the same end—and I make no pretence about it; though I have no personal animosity against him—I have tried my best to discredit Mr. Gaitskell and the sources of his inspiration, because he is party to the suppression of Truth; of a truth, for lack of which the economic system of both our countries threaten to collapse, leaving the Soviets temporary masters of the material universe, without the detonation of a single atom bomb.

This is my last word:—Import our lovely antique furniture; our Gainsboroughs and Raeburns, if you like. But for your own, and Heaven's sake, put a ban on our archaic political economists, and try a return on your own part to first principles.

PARLIAMENT—

(continued from page 3.)

no classes now with more than 60 pupils being taught by one teacher? If that is so it will mean that a horrible blot has been removed from our educational system.

Miss Horsbrugh: I hope that more blots will be removed shortly.

Mr. Johnson: Is the Minister aware of the intense feeling at all teachers' conferences about the size of classes, and will she, as a gesture, issue one of her now famous circulars outlawing any class of over 60 under any circumstances whatever?

Miss Horsbrugh: All the figures I have given on the subject of the number of teachers and the size of classes, as the hon. Gentleman knows, refer to the time when my predecessors were in office. The figures I have quoted about the training of teachers come from the report of the National Advisory Committee. I have only given the suggestions of those who are carrying on this work and the figures that were produced by my predecessors. If the hon. Gentleman knows any way of doing what he suggests without outlawing the children from the schools, I shall be very glad to hear about it.

Film Quota Defaults

Mr. Swingler asked the President of the Board of Trade what advice he has received from the Cinematograph Films Council concerning the quota defaults of the Empire Cinema, Leicester Square; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Wyatt asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he can now say what prosecutions have been decided on for breaches of the Quota Act, 1948, for the quota year ended September, 1951, as a result of his recent consultations with the Films Council; and in particular, whether he has now decided to institute a prosecution against the Empire Cinema, Leicester Square.

Mr. P. Thorneycroft: As a general rule, I do not think it would be appropriate for me to comment on the cases of individual theatres, but I am prepared to do so in this case because the hon. Member for Aston (*Mr. Wyatt*) has put down his Question at my invitation. After full consideration of the case of the Empire Cinema, Leicester Square, and of the advice tendered to me by the Cinematograph Films Council upon it, I have decided not to institute a prosecution in this case. On the question of prosecutions generally, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave on 10th June to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (*Mr. Swingler*).

Mr. Swingler: Would the Minister care to explain to the House how it is that his advisers have recommended to him that the most flagrant violator of the film quota should not be prosecuted? Does this not show that his advisers have a complete contempt for the law, and, therefore, will he not do something to get a better set of advisers?

Mr. Thorneycroft: I take my advice from the Films Council set up under legislation introduced and passed by the Government which the hon. Gentleman supported.

Mr. Wyatt: Is it not a fact that Mr. Sam Eckman, a United States citizen, is a member of the British Films Council, is managing director of the Metro-Goldwyn Mayer company, which runs the Empire Cinema, Leicester Square, and was called upon, in his capacity as a member of the Films Council, to give advice that he, an American citizen controlling a British cinema, should not be prosecuted under British Law? Is this not an absolutely fantastic state of affairs, and is it not time that the Minister looked into the whole question of prosecutions under the Quota Act, which, with the connivance of his officials, are not being undertaken when they should be?

Mr. Thorneycroft: The procedure under which these questions of breach of quota are examined is that introduced by legislation brought into effect by the previous Government. I am, in fact, following that procedure, as I am bound to do under the statute, and I have followed it in this case.

Mr. H. Morrison: Why does the right hon. Gentleman evade the factual information put by my hon. Friend? Why does he try to rest on an Act of Parliament which was passed by a previous Parliament? Surely, the Minister has the responsibility of answering the factual allegations of my hon. Friend to the effect that a gentleman who was an offender against the law is retained as an adviser on how breaches of the law should be dealt with?

Mr. Thorneycroft: In fact, the advice came to me from the Films Council, as such, of which the gentleman referred to is no doubt a member. The advice to which I am bound to pay attention is the advice of the Films Council as existing under this legislation.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is now after half-past three.

COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS

Freedom of Movement

Sir W. Smithers asked the Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations if he will consult with Commonwealth countries with a view to making reciprocal arrangements to permit the unrestricted movement of members of the British Commonwealth between Commonwealth countries.

The Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations (Mr. John Foster): The question of restrictions on entry of citizens of British Commonwealth countries into the territories of other members of the Commonwealth is a matter not for Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom but for the Governments of the countries concerned.

Sir W. Smithers: In order to help the policy of Her Majesty's Government of trade, not aid, will my hon. and learned Friend do all in his power to facilitate the free movement of goods and persons all over the world?

Mr. Foster: I have given the position in regard to the independent countries of the Commonwealth.

Sir W. Smithers: Will my hon. and learned Friend use whatever influence he has got?

Mr. Driberg: I could not understand whether the hon. and learned Gentleman indicated assent to the last supplementary; if so, may I ask whether that includes Seretse Khama?

Mr. Foster: I did not indicate assent.

House of Commons: June 27, 1952.

Passport Applications

Sir R. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he will look into the present methods of the Passport Office and, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, endeavour to work out a system that, whilst preserving an adequate measure of control over persons holding British passports residing in foreign countries, does not necessitate a similar procedure when the individual has been resident in a British Dominion or Colony for over 25 years nor requires such detail as the name of the village or town where each parent was born over 50 years ago.

Mr. Nutting: United Kingdom passports can only as a general rule be granted to persons who are citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, and the sole object of the inquiries to which my hon. Friend refers is to ascertain that the applicant does in fact possess that citizenship. Residence outside the United Kingdom and Colonies for however long a period does not entail the loss of United Kingdom citizenship or affect in any way the applicant's claim to that citizenship, but if the applicant or his father was born in another Commonwealth country he may, according to the law of that country, be a citizen of that country.

A citizen of any Commonwealth country is according to United Kingdom law, a British subject, but unless he can establish that he is also a United Kingdom citizen, the proper travel document for him is a passport of the Commonwealth country whose citizenship he possesses, and he is referred to the authorities of that country.

Where a person possesses both United Kingdom citizenship and the citizenship of another Commonwealth country, there is no objection so far as this country is concerned to his holding a United Kingdom passport in addition to a passport of the other Commonwealth country.

House of Commons: July 3, 1952.

Film Quota (Prosecutions)

Mr. Swingler asked the President of the Board of Trade how many members of the Films Council are connected with cinemas which failed to fulfil the quota in the year 1951; and to what extent he took such connections into account in considering the council's recommendations about prosecutions.

Mr. Wyatt asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he will remove from the Films Council all those persons concerned with the ownership or management of cinemas which have become liable, through persistent defaults, to prosecution under the Films Quota Act 1948.

Mr. P. Thorneycroft: With the hon. Members' permission, I will answer this Question and Question No. 26 together.

Mr. Wyatt: I do not give my permission. My Question is quite different and I want a separate answer.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member will only get the same answer twice.

Mr. P. Thorneycroft: I am prepared to give the same answer twice. I apologise for its length. It is as follows:

Six members of the Cinematograph Films Council are directors of exhibiting companies which, at some of the theatres owned by them, did not exhibit in the 1950-51 quota year the prescribed number of British films. I do not think that this fact either makes necessary any changes in the Films Council as set up by the Cinematograph Films Act of 1938 as amended by the previous Government in 1948, or casts any doubt on the fair and reasonable nature of the advice which the Council has given me in the cases so far examined.

The Act provides that if any member of the Council is convicted of an offence under the Act, he shall forthwith cease to be a member of the Council. The House should, however, be aware of the wide defences available to any person charged under the Act. The fact that the exhibiting company does not fulfil the prescribed quota does not in itself constitute an offence if it can show that its failure was due to circumstances beyond the company's control. Section 13 of the Act provides that failure to fulfil the quota can be deemed to be due to circumstances beyond the control of the exhibitor if, "owing to the character of the films available or to the excessive cost of such films, it was not commercially practicable to fulfil that requirement." And if an offence has been committed by a company, a director can be prosecuted only if there is evidence to show that he personally aided or abetted the default or that it was attributable to his neglect.

The procedure of the Council is under the Act a matter for the Council itself to regulate. But it is already part of that procedure that members of the Defaults Committee should withdraw from the meeting during consideration of

cases in which they have any personal interest, and that they should take no part in the subsequent discussion of these cases when they come before a full meeting of the Films Council. I have in addition suggested to the Chairman that they might also withdraw on these occasions.

Mr. Swingler: Is the President aware that practically everybody, apart from himself, now appreciates that the Films Council has become an open conspiracy to defy the law? Is it not quite clear from what we were told last week that this Council recommended that the most notorious defaulter of all, the Empire Cinema, Leicester Square, should not be prosecuted, and that the Minister has accepted that advice? Will he disregard the recommendations of the Council in a situation like this—when vested interests are represented on it—or else ask the members connected with defaulting cinema circuits to resign from the Council forthwith?

Mr. Thorneycroft: I do not accept the description applied by the hon. Gentleman to the Films Council, of which at least one hon. Member of this House is a member. It has 22 members, seven of whom are independent members of standing, including Lord Drogheda, the Chairman, and there are, in addition, some members—I think seven—who are exhibitor members. However, I realise that there is some substance in the point that if an exhibitor member is sitting on the Council when the case of a cinema for which he is responsible comes up for consideration it would be better if he were not there during the deliberations. I have accepted that. In fact, such members do not attend when the Defaults sub-committee meets. I have suggested to Lord Drogheda, as I said in my answer, that they would do well to withdraw when the cases relating to their cinemas are considered by the full Council.

Mr. Wyatt: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that according to a document which I have here, issued by the Board of Trade itself, his answer was inaccurate in that there are not six exhibitors on the Film Council but seven? On the Defaults Committee and the Quota Reliefs Committee there are seven exhibitors out of 14 members, and on certain occasions the place of Sir Arthur Jarratt as a renter is taken by Mr. Sam Eckman, who is the controller or owner of the notorious Empire Cinema, Leicester Square, and these occasions give the exhibitors a majority on the Defaults Committee. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that all defaults are first considered by a Defaults Sub-Committee, which has four members of whom two are exhibitors? Is it not absolutely fantastic that this situation, with its ramifications of interests, should be allowed to continue? Even if exhibitors withdraw when their own cinema is under discussion, naturally their friends and business associates will not recommend their prosecution in their absence.

Mr. Thorneycroft: Exhibitors are members of the Films Council because that was laid down not by me but by the previous administration. I have no doubt that we could have a discussion as to whether that was right or wrong, but it is a fact and one that we have to accept. My job is to try to administer that arrangement in the fairest possible way. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that the proposal which I have put forward is a reasonable one, that we should accept the Act passed by the previous Administration and that a member of the Council who is concerned with a cinema which comes before the Council should withdraw during the consideration of its case.

(To be continued).

Severin Reinhard

References and extracts from a letter dated 26th May, 1952 received from the author of *Spanischer Sommer*, reviewed in *The Social Crediter* for July 1, 1950:—

Severin Reinhard has in disgust left his native Switzerland and sought exile in Spain. He writes regarding the Swiss press:—

"I was described as a 'died in the wool Nazi' who spread anti-semitism . . . A German periodical, issued in Hamburg, *Die Zeit*, joined in the libel. Curiously enough, to the owners of this periodical who were put in by the Warburgs, there were added extraordinarily low and stupid statements by a millionaire from Zurich, who once upon a time as a financier was reckoned to be one of the extreme anti-Semites. At the same time the Communists demanded my transfer to a hospital under supervision of Doctors, which demand caused me to ask in public whether they themselves would not prefer a Swiss workhouse to a Russian clinic."

Reinhard continues to explain that he got tired of this slander and libel and proceeded to prosecute one of the offenders in the Swiss Courts:

"The Court gave a decision against me. I took my papers away, liquidated my affairs and left the Land of my Fathers finally. After my brother as a monetary reformer had been the victim of a legislative error and was driven to his death, I saw myself being the victim of a misuse of judicial power and so did not wait until the executive power used violence against me."

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