

MORALE FOR SIX- YEAR-OLDS

Common sense in guiding children through the war. Should they be evacuated? Should little Johnny listen to the news broadcasts? Alvah Bessie reports what the experts told him.

THE day war was declared, I called up my two boys, who live in another city with their mother. The elder answered the phone, and I said, "How do you like the news on the radio?"

"I don't like it," he replied. (He's nine years old.) "Will you have to go to war again?" he said.

"Maybe," I said. "When you're attacked, you have to fight back, you know."

"I know *that*," he said. "You don't have to tell me. Hitler's a stink-louse. *No pasaran!*"

Then I remembered how, when we came back from Spain, I found him and his younger brother waiting on the stairs. They were six and three years old then, and they were wearing the loyalist caps I'd sent from Tarrazona. They lifted their arms in the Popular Front salute, and said, "*No pasaran!*"

I'd thought, embracing them, that thank God they hadn't had to see what the kids in Spain had seen. I remembered them too, at the railroad stations as we passed through on the way up to the Aragon front, raising their arms in the salute. Their arms were thin, their bellies were swollen, their legs were rickety.

Now, hanging up the phone I thought, Will we have that here? Will the kids have to face the bombing and the shelling; will they have to be separated from their mother, from me; will they have to leave their home in the war industry city, and be evacuated God knows where? Suddenly it all came back, the dislocation and the horror of starving children, children lost from their parents or orphaned, children with large eyes, bewildered and hardened into new and unseemly patterns.

WHAT IS BEING DONE for the children? I wondered. Now? Here? In New York? Throughout the country? We can expect raids, I thought. They aren't likely to be heavy or to last long, like they were in Spain, in London, but we can expect them. Who is working on this? What do they think? I determined to investigate this business, to speak to schoolteachers, child specialists, welfare organizations. I imagine all parents on our coastlines felt the same way. On this point alone I can assure you that the job is going forward. But it's an enormous job—one of the biggest we've ever tackled. On the credit



British air raid veterans enter a school shelter.

side of the ledger I found that a score of organizations is already at work. To give you an idea: involved in New York alone are the energies of the Army, the Office of Civilian Defense, the Red Cross, the Women's Voluntary Services, the State Housing Division, the Board of Education, the Parent-Teachers' Associations, the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts, the Child Study Association of America, the Children's Bureau of the US Department of Labor, the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, the American Legion and its auxiliaries, the churches, the trade unions, the Police and Fire Departments, the Foster Parents' Plan for War Children, the Defense Housing Administration, the Surplus Marketing Administration, the United Parents Association, and innumerable smaller public and private welfare organizations and individuals.

On the negative side of the picture is the fact that there is not, as yet, any single coordinating body to consolidate the disparate efforts of these great forces. Authority is still divided among them, but order must come rapidly out of this chaos. Just as we were faced with a new situation in the military prosecution of a war for which we were not, in certain essentials, as yet fully prepared, so we were faced with an enormous, complex, and brand new situation in the problem of civilian defense. Children are civilians, and their security represents one major task confronting the tremendous energies of our people. It's a task that we will master in time. Patience, as well as energy, is called for—and the participation of every civilian in the country, parent as well as child, unmarried man and woman as well as mother and father.

The greatest single job we have on hand—whatever should happen in the next few months—is to achieve emotional security for our children. This is the factor that determines the

future of every child, if he is to grow into an adult. Emotional security, I was assured by progressive teachers and child psychiatrists in New York, is just as important as physical security. These are the greatest and most indispensable needs of children, whether in times of war or peace. Without them, youngsters grow into warped and maladjusted adults, unequipped for the daily problems of life in a democracy.

WHAT IS THIS emotional security? How can it be achieved? What shall we say to our children? How can the nature of the war be explained to the youngest child? What should the child feel about the war and how much of his consciousness should be involved in it? Should children be evacuated from the great cities on our coastlines? These are the questions that bothered me, thinking of my kids, that everybody wants answered.

For the moment the broad aspects of this problem are susceptible of solution on certain elementary grounds. The innumerable details that will arise can only be solved by a flexible understanding of the problem, and a flexible organization to handle it. Evacuation? No one can answer that question yet—for the US Army alone will give orders for children to be evacuated, or to be kept at home. The Army alone will be in a position to know how great a risk children will run by remaining in our larger cities to face possible air raids. But it is certain that definite precautions can be taken that will look toward the possibilities of evacuation, and solve the physical and emotional problems involved, if evacuation should become necessary.

On this score the experience of Great Britain becomes valuable. I was told that the first British evacuations went off badly. The British people too were facing an unprecedented situation for which they were largely unprepared. And while it is unlikely for the time being that New York or San Francisco will have to face repeated mass attacks (as London did), it is well to know what mistakes were made in Britain when those attacks were delivered. Both the Foster Parents' Plan for War Children and the Children's Bureau of the US Department of Labor have made public reports bearing on the British experience with children under conditions of aerial attack.

To condense this information—to oversimplify it—it was discovered that evacuation can only be successful (from the standpoint of the child's adjustment and happiness) if it is carefully prepared, organized to a T, and under the supervision of individuals specially trained in the handling of young children. Without these prerequisites, I was told, it is better for families to be together. To this end, it is now known, the New York State Housing Administration is utilizing the efforts of 8,000 volunteer enumerators, who are canvassing upstate counties to locate foster homes for evacuated women, children, and aged and infirm individuals from the city. Classes are being formed (contact your local OCD office, Board of Education, etc.) to train women in the handling, feeding, and care of potential evacuees. Mothers, teachers, men, and women with training in first aid, nursing, and dietetics must demand their complete integration into organized bodies to handle such an emergency, should it arise. For group feeding and nutrition in New York State alone, it has been estimated, 20,000 trained men and women will be required.

SHORT of actual evacuation to safer communities (if it should be felt advisable by the military authorities) much can be done to assure the physical security of children in large cities.

In air raids people do get killed, and children too, but the number of killed and injured can be greatly diminished by proper air raid precautions, rigidly observed and enforced. Scare psychology, employed by frightened and misinformed individuals (as well as by fifth columnists), must be stamped out. In his excellent little book *Bombs and Bombing*, Willy Ley states that "... with all the air raids it has undergone, Great Britain has a lower death rate at present than in peacetime." Barcelona, Madrid, London, Chungking, and Moscow have proved that air raids cannot break the morale of a determined people—they can only strengthen it. The chances of any single individual's being the victim of a direct hit can be roughly calculated (and the individual somewhat reassured) when it is considered that modern cities (to quote Mr. Ley again) "contain more than fifty percent street, park, and courtyard area." And "... the roofs of buildings form much less than half of the total area of a city. This figure varies ... from fifteen to twenty-five percent, twenty percent on the average."

Knowledge of this sort can mitigate panic which, as Mayor LaGuardia has told us, can kill more people than bombs. And more children too. With such instruction as is currently available and distributed by governmental, state, and municipal agencies, we already possess a large body of information that will help us fight the menace from the air.

Too we possess the knowledge that the child takes his cue from the adult—in all things. This is what is meant by emotional security. Parents require education in behavior under wartime conditions, and the attitude of the parent is invariably the clue to the attitude of the child. Panic in the parent means fear in the child. He must be with someone he likes and respects, and that someone must behave correctly. That someone must do everything possible to prevent an attitude of tension in the home, the school, the playground, or the foster home. There must not be too much conversation about the war, about the danger of air raids, the effects of air raids. News broadcasts should be listened to by children capable of understanding them, but the desire to listen to broadcasts must not be permitted to become an obsession with the child. He must be kept busy at all times, busy with the normal routine of his child's life—if this routine is maintained in its normal day-to-day fashion, he will feel secure from danger.

For it is impossible to lie to children. In a fifteen-page bulletin to parents just issued by the Child Study Association of America, you'll find the following, and it's worth quoting:

"It is not our words that convince but rather the child's feeling that his parents have matters under control." Further: "Whatever morale means, it means something more than a 'front.' It means more than a grim silence or a pretense of courage. For families it means a frank but balanced recognition of a common danger and a feeling of confidence that, come what may, its members will stand by one another.

"We have long known how foolish it is to try to deceive children. If a surgical operation has to be faced, telling a child that 'it won't hurt a bit,' is not the best way to help him through it. On the contrary, we tell him, briefly to be sure, that it probably will hurt some, but that his mother will be right beside him."

This excellent little pamphlet can be obtained by writing to the Association (221 West 57th Street, New York City) and enclosing five cents in stamps for mailing charges. It contains some information, also, on the British experience, and says, "For children under seven the inability to grasp this large and threatening situation, to understand it or do anything about



Their parents engaged in full time war work, these British youngsters spend the day at a nursery established by J. B. Priestley.

it, only increases the feeling of frustration and insecurity that go with being little."

It must therefore be understood that very small children cannot possibly understand the nature of the war or the horrors of aerial bombardment. Their parents must set the mood for them by their own behavior, and should an air attack be delivered, they must be handled with *common sense* (remember the phrase, it's very important), just as they would be handled in any natural catastrophe to which the human race has been subjected ever since it came to consciousness.

Older children (say from ten through adolescence, and sometimes younger) can understand simple facts and act upon them. "Remember," a New York child psychiatrist said to me, "that children want *simple* answers. They don't want elaborate explanations of anything; in fact, they won't listen to them." Answer their questions, he said, with assurance, and with simplicity, briefly.

"Small children can understand that there are bad men in airplanes who wish to hurt us," said a progressive-school teacher. "Older ones can understand that the people who rule Germany, Italy, and Japan want to rule the world; that they have made war upon us, and that we must fight them with all the means at our disposal if we want to continue to live the free and happy life we now enjoy."

A map, this teacher said, would help explain to children of the pre-adolescent age group something of the nature of the war. On that map children can be shown who are our Allies in this just war (and they *must* be made to feel that it is a just war)—the people of Britain, of China, of the Soviet Union. Much can be told the children about the peoples of these great countries; their questions should be freely answered. Pictures can be shown to children, so they may see what these countries look like, what their people, their armies, and their children look like.

Common sense is the rule here, with not too much emphasis upon the potential horrors, nor too little emphasis upon the seriousness of the situation with which our country is faced. Older children—girls and boys of the Scout age—both the psychiatrists and the teachers stressed, *must* feel that they are

a part of the common effort; they should be encouraged to participate in those defense activities for which they are physically and otherwise qualified, if it involves no more than saving paper and tinfoil, knitting for little girls, junior air raid warden jobs for the older children. In this way, they will not feel that they are left out of their parents' and brothers' interests, for the parents and brothers, too, will be deeply involved in the national war effort, whether in the armed service of their country, or in the many and varied community efforts for civilian defense.

This feeling of participation, I was told, is important in peace, doubly important in wartime it goes without saying. It is important in air raid drills which, at the instigation of Boards of Education all over the country, are now a daily routine in our schools. Group activity is the key to correct social attitudes for children and adults—it is a precondition among children, if they are to be good members of a social group. Hence, it is possible, on this basis also, to prepare children for possible evacuation from their homes—a drastic measure, to be sure, but one which need not result badly for the child or for his parents, if properly carried out. Should it become necessary—some time before it is necessary, in fact—children should be prepared for it, calmly, sensibly. Your child must feel that he is not being forcibly ejected from his home, or that he is being abandoned, or is alone. He must be told that it is something thousands of other children are also doing, that his parents will visit him frequently, communicate with him even more frequently, and insofar as possible, evacuation must be presented in the guise of a vacation in the country. Parents, here too, must not display anxiety, for their anxiety will be communicated to the child, and fear for the safety of parents can ruin the child's happiness.

These factors cannot be repeated too often, nor overemphasized—they are basic to the adjustment of children at all times.

This is a task the magnitude of which is staggering, but it can be accomplished through the united will of the people, just as the war against Hitlerism can be fought to a successful conclusion *only* by a united people.

ALVAH BESSIE.

NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

Editors

BARBARA GILES, A. B. MAGIL, RUTH MCKENNEY,
JOSEPH NORTH, JOSEPH STAROBIN, JOHN STUART

Washington Editor

BRUCE MINTON

Business Manager

CARL BRISTEL

★

A Mighty Army

VERY shortly—on Sunday, January 18—New York City will be the scene of a national rallying of the generals in the campaign to secure Earl Browder's release from Atlanta Penitentiary. These generals are the nationwide representatives of the Citizens Committee to Free Earl Browder, whose top officers are Tom Mooney, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Louis Weinstock, and Robert W. Dunn. It is a mighty army, already numbering more than 2,000,000 American citizens. At the January 18 meeting representatives of the Citizens Committee will "formulate an immediate program of action to secure the immediate release of the incarcerated anti-fascist," in the words of the conference call. Signers of the call also point out that "in this world emergency, especially in *this* world emergency, Browder's continued imprisonment should not be permitted to mar our national record." And "We insist that American justice and fair play is essential to the life of America, now, today." The committee again urges that every fair-minded American "wire President Roosevelt asking in the name of justice and common decency for the immediate release of Earl Browder." And again **NEW MASSES** wholeheartedly seconds that plea.

Now

"OUR task is hard. Our task is unprecedented and the time is short. We must strain every existing armament producing facility to the utmost. We must convert every available plant and tool to war production. That goes all the way from the greatest plants to the smallest, from the huge automobile industry to the village machine shop."

Those words of President Roosevelt's opening message to Congress are a program for America—a victory program. But the head of the OPM and his business associates in the automobile industry seem determined to secede from America. Bruce Minton, our Washington editor, presents another report from the production front on page six, and it is even worse news than the reverses in the Pacific. Sixty thousand planes, 45,000 tanks, 20,000

anti-aircraft guns, 8,000,000 tons of shipping, and huge quantities of other war materiel must be produced this year, but the OPM and its friends still cling blindly to the faith that, in the words of C. E. Wilson, president of General Motors, "ordinary business ways will take care of the emergency too." But these are precisely the ways that have failed so dismally to take care of the emergency and have kept war production totally inadequate.

After precious days lost in fighting every attempt to implement the victory program outlined by the President, the OPM has set up a committee which will merely "assist" in converting the auto industry. The appointment of three representatives of the United Automobile Workers-CIO to this body to serve along with three representatives of the manufacturers, is a gesture toward recognizing labor's indispensable role, but whether it will be more than a gesture remains to be seen. The chairman of this committee, Cyrus Ching of the United States Rubber Co., is reported to belong to that group of businessmen who favor all-out production. But even if this is so and if the committee does adopt the necessary proposals, will they get past Bottleneck Knudsen, who still is the real power?

A contrast to Knudsenism is the development in the communications field. James Fly, chairman of the Defense Communications Board, has announced that labor will participate with management "in the over-all task of planning for the nation's communications system." This has come about in large part as a result of the efforts of the Labor Advisory Committee of the DFB, consisting of the representatives of three different and, as Fly pointed out, "heretofore differing labor organizations"—Robert Watt of the AFL, Joseph Selly, president of the CIO American Communications Association, and Paul Griffith, of the National Federation of Telephone Employees, an independent group.

Sooner or later President Roosevelt will have to intervene to end Knudsenism—and later may be too late. Sooner or later he will have to end the chaos of conflicting agencies which have no power of coordinated movement in any single direction. We need, and need at once, an over-all civilian board to plan our entire productive effort. And its directing head should not be Knudsen or anyone remotely resembling him.

Victory Budget

THE President's budget message is the blueprint for building the financial structure of victorious total war. It is bold in conception, global in spirit, but everything depends on the execution. Of total expenditures of \$59,000,000,000 in the fiscal year beginning July 1, almost \$53,000,000,000 are for war pur-

poses. This is about one-half of the national income. Toward other expenditures the President adopts an approach which expresses the monolithic character of the titanic struggle which our people are waging. "In a true sense," the budget message states, "there are no longer non-defense expenditures. It is a part of our war effort to maintain civilian services which are essential to the basic needs of human life."

One may, however, question the manner in which the President has applied this principle in specific instances. The cuts he recommends do not go as far as the proposals of Senator Byrd's committee, and, unlike Byrd, he does not call for the complete obliteration of the CCC, the National Youth Administration, and the Farm Security Administration. Yet some of the President's proposals will hardly help "maintain civilian services which are essential to the basic needs of human life." For example, an already badly mangled farm tenant program is further reduced to a mere \$4,192,000. And with several million still unemployed and large numbers of employed workers being temporarily thrown out of jobs because of conversion shutdowns, it is doubtful whether the tentative estimate of \$465,000,000 for WPA—a cut of nearly fifty percent—will meet the need.

To finance this program the President asks "taxes and bonds, and bonds and taxes." He proposes an increase of \$7,000,000,000 in new taxes, plus a \$2,000,000,000 rise in social security levies. The budget message rightly places the primary emphasis on progressive taxation, that is, taxes on incomes, estates, gifts, and profits, and opposes any increase in social security rates unless "the worker is given his full money's worth in increased social security." But unfortunately the message also opens the door to the sales tax, and within a few hours the press pushed through that door a "movement" for a sales tax.

In an early issue **NEW MASSES** will publish an article presenting a constructive win-the-war tax program. For the present we wish to emphasize the necessity of not permitting congressional reactionaries to do what they did in 1940 and 1941: convert even the progressive method of taxation into a means of saddling the people with inequitable burdens. That will not help national morale. It is particularly important to stiffen greatly the corporate income tax and the excess profits tax, and to reenact a strong undivided profits levy. Our present excess profits tax yields less than \$500,000,000 a year, whereas the excess profits taxes in 1918 amounted to \$2,506,000,000. England has a fifty percent levy on "normal" corporate income and a 100 percent excess profits tax; this compares with our twenty-nine percent tax on the first \$25,000 net profit and thirty percent on the rest, and