



## BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

## The Innocent and the Damned

**M**OLLY KAZAN'S new play "The Egghead," constitutes a reasonably engrossing and well-written drama of political intrigue. A passionately liberal university professor finds a former Negro student who is being investigated by the FBI as a suspected Communist. The professor refuses to cooperate with the FBI beyond giving his word that he will not reveal the FBI's visit to the ex-student. Furthermore, he stubbornly schedules a lecture to his class by the suspected Red. The mysteries of whether the suspect really is a Communist, and which of six people who knew about the FBI visit tipped him off, make good suspense. Yet Mrs. Kazan is attempting something more than entertainment. Because her own husband once felt it his duty to reveal the names of Communists who had been in the Party with him, and suffered the disdain of many for so doing, Mrs. Kazan has a real grievance here. Her egghead professor becomes a scathing portrait of the well-meaning "liberal" who condemned Mr. Kazan's "informing." And, conversely, she defends cooperation with the FBI by holding that the danger of subversion is greater than some of us believe it to be. As arbiter she sets up an ex-Communist German refugee professor. This man, who has been through the European mill, sees Americans as irresponsibly naive about the whole business; like Graham Greene, he decries our "innocence." His message and Mrs. Kazan's is that we should grow up and toughen up.

"The Egghead" is most effective when attacking the "intellectual" who refuses to see the total picture. Its most memorable moment comes when the professor's gentle young wife finally lets him have it. "Talk about prejudice," she says. "You don't like the younger generation. You think they're going to the dogs—and you don't like Germans—and you don't like Catholics—and you don't like Southerners. That's quite a list!" But because the playwright wants to present the picture as it is in life, such dramatic outbursts occur only occasionally. And the majority of the evening is concerned with making each necessary event in the demonstration seem plausible. In this the performers provide valuable assistance. Never letting herself be more-or-less heroic than any really good wife, Phyllis Love is heartbreakingly

genuine. And Karl Malden takes pains not to let the professor disintegrate into caricature.

But for all its plausibility and moments of excitement, "The Egghead" has important shortcomings. The Red threat seems mild and vague rather than urgent. The professor seems too politically unsophisticated to pass, let alone teach, a course in political science. And at the end of the play, when Mrs. Kazan suddenly tries to defend the man she has destroyed, she states his value without being able to demonstrate it or even to find for him a positive course of action. Thus, at the same time that we applaud her for not ending with a phony action or speech, we are also left unsatisfied, because of the imponderables remaining to be thrashed out before we can conclusively judge the ethics of the play. Mrs. Kazan might well be persuaded to apply some of her honesty and talent to a second play exploring the Egghead-in-Transition. Or, at the very least, to add to the published edition of the play a Shavian forecast of what happens to all the characters.

**P**ETER USTINOV'S "Romanoff and Juliet" was reviewed in these columns (SR Oct. 13, 1956). Now, the Broadway production seems just as hilarious when Mr. Ustinov is doing his comic routines and just as gratuitous when he is not. The comedy defeats itself with its whimsical artificiality and superfluity of witty embroidery. The notion of a zany but practical prime minister in a tiny country that keeps the peace by "balance of feebleness" is delightful. But the broad parodies of the American and Soviet embassies and the unreal love affair between the American ambassador's daughter and the Soviet ambassador's son dissipate our interest. But if fun and wit are enough, Mr. Ustinov gives the funniest and wittiest performance of the season.

**T**HE Tyrone Guthrie production of Schiller's "Mary Stuart" succeeds in making a rather remote historical drama surprisingly unbor-ing. Eva Le Gallienne and Irene Worth contrast splendidly as the two queens, and the supporting cast plays with unpretentious conviction. Donald Oenslager's fluid scenery and Alvin Colt's beautiful costumes contribute enormously to this memorable production.

—HENRY HEWES.

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## TV AND RADIO

### The Climate of Fear

"Robert Moses, Chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Slum Clearance, refused to make a scheduled appearance on a television discussion program yesterday because the script was unfriendly."—The New York Times (October 6, 1957).

THE script in this case means the questions Bill Leonard, of CBS, proposed to ask. Mr. Moses had sent to Mr. Leonard a series of questions he thought he and his fellow-guests (chosen by himself) should be asked and some of these were incorporated in the final script. No suggestions were made as to the answers.

The subject of the program had been publicly debated for some time—it was an official matter of grave concern—and every one of the "unfriendly" questions had been asked before. They were thorny, they dealt with three major areas of controversy: race, religion, and the relocation of poor people and small business. Mr. Leonard's questions were, in effect, quotations. A representative of the city of New York not only refused to answer them, he refused to allow them to be asked in his presence—on television.

I put beside this another disquieting episode which was described in a recent issue of *Harper's* by Leo Rosten. There had come into Mr. Rosten's hands a series of reports on some extraordinary actions taken by American citizens. The individuals concerned were as far apart as a waitress in a diner and a vice president of a huge steel company. They were united in one thing: in each case a man or woman had gone out of his or her way to protect the rights of a fellow human being—usually risking something of value: a job or the continued friendship of the community in which they lived. In every story there was drama and a warmhearted central character for people to "identify with." Mr. Rosten offered these stories free to the makers of TV programs. Producers were enthusiastic—but in every case "somebody" vetoed the project and again and again the reason given was that the stories were "too strong."

Note that in every case the finest principles of American life triumphed, the Bill of Rights was confirmed as an active ingredient in contemporary American life. What then was "too

strong"? The one essential of drama: the conflict. For the Bill of Rights to triumph it had to be challenged or violated. Sometimes it was violated by authority, sometimes its spirit was violated by groups or individuals—but every time Americans reasserted its validity. Yet the material could not be presented—on television. (Some of the episodes have appeared as advertisements issued by the Fund for the Republic. In offering the material Mr. Rosten specifically waived any credit to or mention of the Fund.)

MR. MOSES, by his action, asked Mr. Leonard to limit his interview to such questions as would let him and his associates appear in a favorable light, depriving the audience of part of the story. The broadcasters who refused Mr. Rosten's material were censoring out of existence a noble aspect of American life because it involved showing an ignoble one.

A few weeks ago, in this space, I defended those programs which risked or exploited a vulgar curiosity because they provided some balance to the softness and mediocrity of so much of television. I have since seen a Mike Wallace interview with a hapless strip-teaser whose tortured replies brought acute and audible discomfort to Mr. Wallace himself; the whole interview wavered between cruelty and bad taste. It had a grotesque quality when Miss Lili St. Cyr expounded her belief that the men who live on the planet Venus are less moved by "lust and greed" than earth-people are, and it had flashes of integrity when she explained that she didn't believe in the institution of marriage but yielded to it because she had to make a living. But I felt that it should never have taken place, that the victim had been ill-advised to seek publicity in this way, and Mr. Wallace ill-advised to use her.

But if that is the price we have to pay for preserving some freedom and some reality on the air, I still say we should pay it. I think there is another way to keep the air alive: by public interest and public protest. It seems to me that the people of New York ought to do something about Mr. Moses—and that everyone interested in the freedom of the air should congratulate Mr. Leonard and CBS for sticking to their guns.

—GILBERT SELDES.