

THE ENGLISH PRESS, NEWSPAPERS AND NEWS, by Jane Soames, with a Preface by Hilaire Belloc (Stanley Nott, 3/6)

There isn't space to do much more than recommend Miss Soames' excellent little book. On the whole she confines herself to clarifying, documenting and reinforcing 'what everybody knows'—things that can't be too well known. The main insistence is on the control of the press by a very small ring of profit-makers, on the almost complete lack of a real opposition press (there are some enlightening asides on the Odhams *Daily Herald*), on misleading selection and emphasis in the presentation of 'news,' and on the way in which the law of libel—an effective censorship—strangles necessary comment on matters of public interest ('the defence of fair comment . . . is all too often a broken reed'). Perhaps the most important chapter is on 'Some Omissions'—things which the public are not allowed to know: how many people, for example, know anything about the recent establishment of a large body of voluntary police in London? 'In this country we are never told why prominent people are given their posts, or by whom; by what methods well-known persons have made their money—and above all are we totally unaccustomed to anything like real attack on the Government, its personnel, policy and methods.' There are some useful comparisons with French newspapers, and with the English press in the nineteenth century. ('There is nothing to replace the lively uncensored comment upon public affairs which our great-grandfathers assumed to be essential to the formation of public opinion'). And those who believe that the dissemination of information of this kind is only useful in conjunction with an educational effort will find some fodder in these pages; a comparison of the vigorous *Times* leader of 1831 (p. 105) with its modern equivalent is not, I know, beyond the powers of an average W.E.A. class.

L.C.K.

U.D.C. PAMPHLETS:

A Catholic Looks at Spain, José Maria de Semprún Gurrea.

Survey of the International Committee of Non-Intervention in Spain. Union of Democratic Control, 34 Victoria Street, S. W. 1.

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