

## TUNING-IN

Many years ago I read only one newspaper and was satisfied with myself and the world. It was a small-town paper and had very clear-cut human principles which fascinated me. The closed-in world of this newspaper was identical with my conception of the world. The paper gave me something to cling to; it gave me matter for thought as well as information; and its judgments were also mine. I knew the editor personally, and I read his weekly editorials regularly; I liked the clean, simple, and unshakeable convictions I found in them.

The news section, too, of this paper, seemed to me to be beyond doubt. If there was a report that a circus would be showing in the next town one could be sure that it would be there. Just as faithfully correct were the court-room reports. No one in the neighborhood had any doubt that a man branded by this paper as a swindler was a rogue.

Yet one day the ground fell away from under my feet. For Christmas an uncle of mine gave me a subscription to a newspaper with a nation wide circulation. The clear mirror of my gullibility broke, and with it the neatly rounded off world of my newspaper and of my imagination. The great world suddenly looked quite different.

I had been driven from Paradise, and ever since I have felt the heavy burden of the curse that had been placed upon me. I chased after versions, interpretations, and tendencies, in the hope of finding—perhaps on a more intellectual level—truth and peace of mind. Soon I was reading not only two papers, but ten, twelve, fifteen a day, and umpteen periodicals.

With every newspaper and periodical I added to my reading, I got further and further away from the truth and a well-balanced conception. The world was torn asunder, and an unholy confusion reigned in me.

Finally things became altogether too topsyturvy and senseless for me, and I decided to turn my back on all newspapers. Since then I don't read any paper at all. Let everybody be happy in his own way.

For a while I was conscious of the relief afforded by the deep silence around me. No newspapers! And no reformers of world and men! But he who has once left Paradise can never regain it. This relief of deep silence was soon replaced by a consuming boredom and a torturing curiosity. Instead of silence there was emptiness, yawning emptiness, and

I realized that it was impossible to live one's life on a peaceful, isolated island.

In order not to return to newspapers as a source of news and information, I bought a radio. With this modern instrument I hoped to conjure up the voices of the world in my peaceful room. The fairy of distance was to bewitch the world into a magic lantern of my mind. I had great expectations of the spoken word, of the human voice, which surely must be different from printer's ink.

How wrong I was! I jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. While in the case of newspapers, in spite of all the confusion, I had after all been dealing only with the papers of a single country, now the spoken views of the whole world came rushing at me from all sides. But I made up my mind to put up with it this time, so that I might not entirely desert this exciting world. I decided scientifically to investigate this radio propaganda. Although I did not believe that lies could be entirely banished from the world, I wanted at least to discover the limits to the possibility of deception, perhaps to stumble upon the truth of lies.

I know my radio set, and I know the wave-lengths of the important transmitters in the world. I have long overcome the so-called technical difficulties of tuning-in. Of course I cannot do anything about the inevitable atmospheric disturbances and I accept them philosophically as an act of Providence. What else could I do? But I am annoyed by the artificial, deliberate interference from the "other side." Every station has its enemy, just as every human being is envied and opposed.

The first thing I discovered was that every station has its personal note which, quite aside from the language, shows the mentality of the country to which the station belongs, together with all its worries, troubles, intentions, and joys. From an American station a different spirit fills the ether than, for example, from a German transmitter. And a Japanese station again is different from a Russian or Indian or Chinese one.

The range of radio propaganda is much wider than that of printer's ink. Just as every newspaper has its face, so has every radio-station too. Indeed, it has more: it has its own color and its own tone. It requires a fine and delicate sense to hear it properly. If, in the case of newspapers, one need only read between the lines to find the hidden meaning, in the case of radio . . . Here the difficulties

begin. The ether has no lines to read between. Radio demands far greater concentration and devotion by its readers—beg pardon, listeners.

A good announcer must be a good actor or speaker who, as an artist, really lives the material he has to deliver. Through the vivacity and realism of his voice and delivery he gives the impression of authenticity but carries away his listeners. Indeed, he often only makes the material interesting to his listeners through his voice. However clear and unequivocal the written text may be, a good announcer is capable of giving this text, through his voice, a completely different meaning, without changing a single word.

Every day I am kept busy by about ten stations, mostly during the evening and at night. There are some stations I feel an affection for, and their announcers have become my good friends. Among the stations some are interesting, some boring, some are harmless and some vicious, some are on their toes, and others always just miss the bus, some are accurate and some not so particular about the truth.

I recognize the different stations by the voices of their announcers, just as on the telephone one recognizes by the voice who is at the other end. I also know approximately the way the mind of each announcer works.

For example, there is the announcer of the London B.B.C. station: I have no idea what he really looks like, but I imagine him to be tall. He is a self-assured man, and very matter-of-fact. His voice is clear and distinct and betrays no trace of passion. He never stumbles. Coldly he tells sometimes the truth and, just as coldly, sometimes an untruth as if it were the truth. The voice is that of a gentleman, rather severe, like that of a superior British officer in the colonies.

An entirely different type is represented by the announcer of the American station KGEL. He is a hearty fellow, who almost certainly makes violent movements of the body while speaking. His voice sounds slightly admonitory, as, indeed, with many American

speakers. It is the voice of a reporter used to sending out sensational news into the world, hurrying, lively, with a decidedly optimistic undertone. It knows neither punctuation nor pause for breath; is not at all melodramatic but nevertheless rich in modulation. It sounds like the yells from the bleachers of a baseball game. It seems to report without any semblance of order. But the careful listener feels that this medley is well-prepared, that there is method behind it.

I also listen with pleasure to the Khabarovsk RV15 transmitter. The announcer seems to be a regular fellow, at least judging by his voice: it thunders through the ether, loud, powerful, and clear. I am sure that, when speaking, he often clenches his fist and is almost carried away by his own words: he even outdoes himself. He seems to carry all of Siberia within himself as a sounding-board. He is one of the announcers one can really understand without difficulty; for he speaks slowly and will not be hurried. I am sure he does not perspire while speaking; one is conscious of his reserves of strength. His voice is unaffected and deep: a Russian bass!

Besides this man the Khabarovsk station also has a girl who announces. As a rule I do not care for women announcers, since nearly all of them have something pretentious in their voices. But this girl is an exception: her voice is soft and undulating, very agreeable, with something refined and womanly about it. She really should not speak about a subject so full of horrors as politics, but rather about farming or care of children. It is an ideal voice for a kindergarten teacher. What a pity that television is not more widespread, for I should like to have a look at that girl, especially at her eyes—they must be sad but shining.

I have just remembered that I have not yet told you my name. Every station has a name made up of some mysterious letters. Why should I not have one? I christen myself with the calling-letters:

ECCE.