

literature, and produces one monthly official magazine—the *Journal of the Patriarchate of Moscow*.

The Church is governed by the Patriarch with the aid of a council of bishops. A Soviet government representative is attached for liaison with the Ministry of Culture.

Where possible, points of agreement with the government are emphasized. There was a clear example of this at the end of 1959, when the governmental condemnation of the sect of Jehovah's Witnesses was echoed by an ecclesiastical condemnation both on theological and national grounds—the pacifist, anti-state nature of the sect received undue prominence, so that the loyalty of the Orthodox could be emphasized.

But it is almost impossible to get a really balanced view of the Church from printed sources because the official Soviet press in general simply ignores its existence.

DAVID BLACK and DENNIS O'BRIEN

HEARD AND SEEN Shakespeare re-dressed

IT is usually salutary to see a Shakespeare play in modern dress; really modern dress, that is, not these whimsical Victorian or Edwardian excursions that, whatever else they may do, certainly do not add immediacy. But just as the studied infelicity of a Knox phrase in gospel or epistle may jerk one out of a Sabbath trance into an enraged examination of the real meaning, so to see doublet and hose or rapier and breastplate exchanged for dinner jacket or battledress may give an altogether new dimension to a play whose anatomy has been dissected out in lessons, or whose magic may have rubbed off through over-familiarity.

If I live to be a hundred I never hope to come home from *Hamlet* again in quite such a pitch of high fever as was induced by Tyrone Guthrie's modern dress, uncut production at the Old Vic in 1938. The twenty-four-year-old Guinness—whatever the flaws James Agate may have found in his performance—made Hamlet a creature of such contemporary concern that nothing, not even the second Gielgud Hamlet, will ever quite come up to it. In seaman's jersey and rubber boots, newly landed from the pirate ship to stumble, with André Morell, his faithful Horatio, upon Yorick's skull and Ophelia's grave, he seemed so demonstrably a young man of our day and age that the whole climax of that hysterical scene moved to a different rhythm, and the end of the play became nearly unbearable.

Or again, in 1939, with Hitler's bellows and the answering 'Sieg Heil' of the Nazi crowds for ever clamouring through our own or our neighbours' loudspeakers, *Julius Caesar* at His Majesty's became a very loaded play indeed. Blackshirted, high-booted, the conspirators brought off in the Forum a Night of the Long Knives that seemed no more bloody than one

much nearer to us, and the idiot crowd, hypnotized and yelling at Antony's oratory, was altogether too true to be good. It was extraordinary how close the parallel could be pressed, and how terrifyingly recognizable we were forced to find it.

Michael Macowan's *Troilus and Cressida*, at the Westminster in 1938, was not designed as a tract for the times as was the *Julius Caesar*, but was allowed to make its own point about war, and the military types who wage it, with the help of one of the fastest, most exciting productions possible. Using, for the first time that I remember, a technique that Macowan developed much further in his A.B.C.A. work during the war—that of blackout and spotlight—the offensive swung from Greek to Trojan and back again almost literally in the twinkling of an eye, as each group of combatants was brilliantly lit or suddenly doused while the machine-guns chattered menacingly. The conventional decent chap that Colin Clive made of his Trojan, the odious Pandarus of Max Adrian, the shabby, snarling agitator in dirty flannels of Stephen Murray's Thersites—all combined to bring vividly alive Shakespeare's utterly disillusioned mood in this play, and to underline the truism we all recognize so easily between the wars, and forget so conveniently the moment peace departs, that in war no one wins, least of all the victors. This production simultaneously made one understand much more of a bitter play, and wryly aware that the situation it painted was uncomfortably familiar. A couple of years later, of course, and we might not have been able to take it at all.

The new production of *Henry V* at the Mermaid Theatre, in a version by Julius Gellner and Bernard Miles, is described in the admirable (and free) programme as 'An Essay in War', and instead of Shakespeare's five acts we are given a play divided into Peace, War; interval; War, Peace, which certainly very accurately summarizes the experience. This production, it seems to me, was envisaged more purely as an entertainment than the earlier ones we have recalled, and perhaps for this reason far more liberties have been taken with the text. Not only is it cut to ribbons to enable it to be given twice nightly, with the chorus turned upside down and inside out; not only are great chunks of the main plot and all the subsidiaries mainly excised, but the two adaptors have done something that is really almost inexcusable: they have re-written. 'Think, when we talk of armour, that you see—tanks' was a grave error of judgment.

'Upon the king', says Henry, in one of the best speeches of a part crammed with wonderful speeches, 'let us our lives, our souls,

Our debts, our careful wives,

Our children, and our sins, lay on the king:—

We must bear all'.

And he who plays the king must, in addition, shoulder the major part in the success or failure of the play which bears his name. *Henry V in Battledress*, which is how the Mermaid billed its play, had a very good Henry indeed. William Peacock appeared young, modest and yet quick to assume authority when required; neatly good-looking with a pleasant voice and a remarkable gift for keeping still, he made an immediate impact on his first entry, with

the transition from easy friendliness among his flannelled companions to a cold rage at the Dauphin's arrogance. Perhaps more company commander than commander-in-chief, he nevertheless did look and behave very like a gallant soldier, and his love-scene with the delightful Katharine of Suzanne Fuller at the end was charmingly gauche. In flannels, service dress or combat smock, the English were true to type, and rather cleverly not least in full mess kit at the final triumphant ball. The French were slightly over-dressed from start to finish, and their horizon blue more 1914 than anything the English wore; I liked the Dauphin's high-strung racial pride, and the old king, in dressing-gown and slippers, was more moving than often in furred gown. About the use of cinematic back-drop and excessive gunfire I was not so sure, but there is no doubt that it all raced along so fast, with the aid of wonderful revolving gadgets and the truncated text, that one did have very much the impression of a breakneck adventure story with a splendid hero: which is, after all, perhaps what Shakespeare would have liked. Certainly, the feeling that these few, these happy few, were indeed a band of brothers was very marked, and the common soldiers had that indefinable, off-hand independence which is the hallmark of the British under discipline.

For myself, I enjoyed this rather rum production as a curiosity, but though the modern military equipment forced one to re-estimate character and situation, on the whole the play had been subjected to unnecessary manipulation. It would have been better value had it been more Shakespearean.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FATHER HUDDLESTON AND SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Sir,

Four years ago under the above title I severely criticized Father Huddleston's book *Naught For Your Comfort* in *BLACKFRIARS*. In view of recent developments in South Africa, and particularly a series of statements by the Catholic Bishops, the Editor has agreed to print this letter. Another statement has recently been made by the Catholic Bishops which destroys the foundations of the criticisms I made at the time, and in a letter to *BLACKFRIARS* in 1957.

In the ten years after the war in which Father Huddleston worked in South Africa, and at the end of which he wrote the book that caused such a tumult both here and in England, well-wishers of the non-Europeans had a confusing problem. It was quite clear that, with Africa emerging so rapidly, the old plans of keeping the majority of non-Europeans in South Africa in subjection had to be changed quickly. Liberal opinion was pressing for the abolition of all discriminating laws restricting their rights politically