

Letters to the Editor

WORKING FOR PEACE

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian

Sir,—We are committed now in Korea to a war for which, since the "branding" of China, no end can be foreseen. We are committed to a rearmament so vast that our sheer daily absorption in it must rob us more and more of the spiritual freshness and energy indispensable for the achievement of peace. Every day now our minds are being more completely conditioned: the "hell bomb" is the latest attraction in the Sunday press, and Amiel, whom not one Englishman in ten thousand has even heard of, is brought on from the grave to warn us that, long before "the Hun" invaded Belgium, "the Russians" were barbarians. It is impossible to exaggerate the deterioration even during the last two months. Useless, then, to repeat like a parrot that war is not inevitable: war is now quite inevitable unless we make an almost superhuman effort, of a new and more positive kind, to prevent it.

I suggest a two-point programme. First, the proposed conference with Russia, which has been hanging about as if we had eternity at our disposal and now looks like being held up (if it comes off at all) for heaven knows now many further exchanges, should be pressed on with as if our lives depended on its immediate convening. Hack diplomatic routine, "preparation," manoeuvring for position, warfare by "Notes," all should be thrown overboard: we just have not time for them. Abandoned, too, must be lengthy arguments and counter-arguments about the agenda, about whether the scope should be narrow or wide, about whether we should negotiate on Russia's set of points or on ours, Childish irresponsibility, when meanwhile every moment we draw nearer the abyss! The great thing is to get together on anybody's ground, and then make a desperate effort to widen things out and achieve agreement. But now comes the crux: however certain our statesmen may be—and I share their certainty—that the Kremlin is primarily responsible for our present disasters, we must yet negotiate, as Mr Nehru has urged, not in the mood of war but in the mood of peace. Nothing could be harder; but if we can make so vast an effort to rearm materially, cannot we make a comparable effort to disarm spiritually, to subdue our passions? And I suggest that, apart from this particular conference with Russia, we should always and everywhere substitute human negotiations face to face for long-range paper warfare.

Secondly, we should take the initiative in proposing for immediate discussion some variant of the plan already proposed by Walter Reuther—namely, that a great international fund should be established, as an urgent matter of life or death, for improving the conditions of those fellow human beings who, to the number of hundreds of millions, are starving, destitute, and in despair. I should like to see our own country, by the size of its proposed contribution, challenging the world to a new kind of rivalry, a rivalry in the works of peace. So might international discussion, leading to international administration, find itself with a fruitful topic instead of a sterile one. So might the trend to war, issuing from a concentration on national as opposed to international interests, be reversed. So at last might swords be turned into ploughshares.

May I ask through you, sir, that all who are in agreement with this letter should send a postcard with just the word "Yes" and their name and address to me at 14 Henrietta Street, London W.C. 2. I do not guarantee any action of any kind, but if the response is large enough something might possibly come of it.—Yours &c.,

VICTOR GOLLANZ.

14 Henrietta Street, London
W.C. 2, February 7.