SPREAD OF BIASED NEWS BY THE PRESS
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Pacifists have always demanded that those who incite nations to hatred by means of the daily press should be prosecuted and that international conventions to this end should be concluded. From 1914 onwards various attempts have been made to check this abuse and as a matter of fact the Danish, Austrian and Swiss Statutes books contain provisions for dealing with the matter, but both nationally and internationally the problem has proved difficult of solution. It is hard to know where to draw the line in the matter of admissible and inadmissible freedom of the Press. This is the more difficult when we remember that quite often Governments encourage Press ventilation of certain polemical questions, so that it would be futile to expect to get any international Court sentence put into effect. An example of this is the Italian Press campaign in favour of an Abyssinian war. Would Mussolini be likely to have charges against the Press brought before the Italian courts or would he brook intervention of an international Court?

The German Penal Code has an article protecting State institutions against Press deformation of news and the same protection should be afforded to organisations and to foreign countries. The law should, however, go further than does the German act; instead of condemning merely the spread of news which the journalist knows are false, the spread of news, the truth of which is inadequately established, should also constitute an offence. The penalty provided by the German law (fine of 500 marks or imprisonment up to two years) is not sufficiently severe for cases in which attempts have been made to poison the international atmosphere.

An international Court should be created to deal with these cases and to elaborate a uniform legal procedure.

An international Convention should be drafted providing penalties for the spread of biased news which may imperil international peace, or discredit national and international institutions or régimes. Newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets or books containing such matter should be confiscated. Governments and individuals should be entitled to lodge complaints. The accused parties should have the right to appeal against a sentence awarded by a national tribunal, and to this end a criminal court should be set up within the Permanent Court of International Justice.