



BROADCASTMINDEDNESS

THE RONALD KNOX RADIO HOAX

ON THE 16TH OF JANUARY 1926, ROBERT KNOX...



PERPETUATED PERHAPS THE FIRST GREAT RADIO HOAX

A FULL 12 YEARS BEFORE ORSON WELLES' INFAMOUS WAR OF THE WORLDS BROADCAST.



DURING HIS SHOW "BROADCASTING THE BARRICADES" HE WAS SEEMINGLY INTERRUPTED BY A NEWS REPORT OF RIOTING IN LONDON, ALONG WITH REALISTIC SOUND EFFECTS OF SCREAMING AND EXPLOSIONS.



THE REPORT SPOKE OF THE LYNCHING OF GOVERNMENT MINISTERS



THE LOOTING OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY



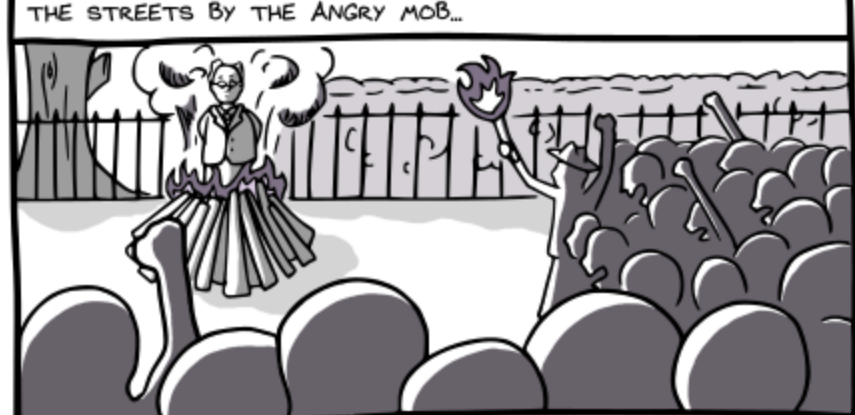
AND THE BOMBING OF THE SAVOY HOTEL



WHEN REPORTING ON THE DESTRUCTION OF BIG BEN AND THE CLOCKTOWER, HE SAID THAT THE TIME WOULD NOW HAVE TO BE TAKEN FROM "UNCLE LESLIES REPEATING WATCH"



POSSIBLY THE WORST FATE WAS RESERVED FOR SIR THEOPHILUS GOOCH, WHO WAS REPORTEDLY ROASTED ALIVE IN THE STREETS BY THE ANGRY MOB...

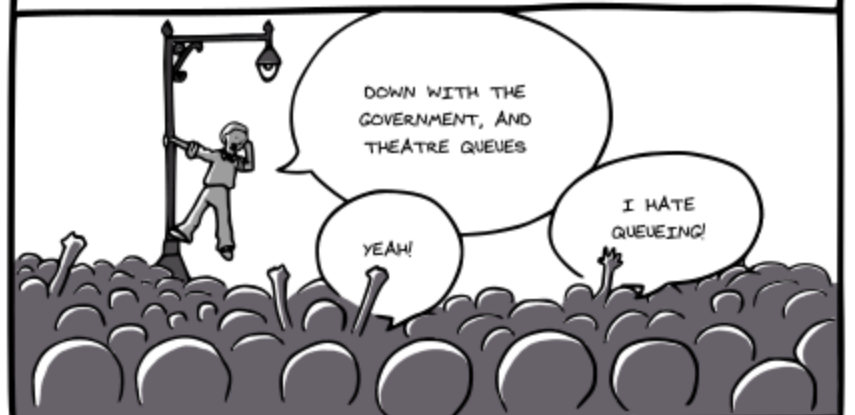


MEANING THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, HIS BBC TALK WOULD HAVE TO BE CANCELLED



NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT THE SHOW HAD BEEN INTRODUCED WITH A REMARK THAT IT WAS GOING TO BE A SATIRICAL SKIT ON BROADCASTING, IT SHOULD HAVE BECOME OBVIOUS THE REPORT WAS A HOAX WHEN THE NAME OF THE RING LEADER WAS MENTIONED.

"THE CROWD HAS NOW PASSED ALONG WHITEHALL AND, AT THE SUGGESTION OF MR POPPLEBURY, SECRETARY OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT FOR ABOLISHING THEATRE QUEUES, IS PREPARING TO DEMOLISH THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT WITH TRENCH MORTARS"



HOWEVER THE PUBLIC WERE AFRAID OF CIVIL UNREST AND COMMUNISM, FOLLOWING THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION BARELY 10 YEARS BEFORE



AND MANY REACTED PRETTY BADLY

THE SAVOY HOTEL, THE BBC, AND THE NEWSPAPERS WERE INUNDATED WITH WORRIED PHONE CALLS FROM PEOPLE ANXIOUS FOR NEWS OF THE REVOLUTION



IT DIDN'T HELP THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE RADIO STATION, AND THAT BAD WEATHER DELAYED THE DELIVERY OF THE NEXT DAY'S PAPERS



THE BBC ISSUED A STATEMENT AT 9PM ON THE EVENING OF THE BROADCAST IN RESPONSE TO THE PANIC.



THE NEWSPAPERS, EVER KEEN FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO KNOCK THE NEW RADIO TECHNOLOGY THEY FELT WAS MUSCLING IN ON THEIR TERRITORY, WERE DAMNING IN THEIR CRITICISM OF THE BBC, BOTH IN THE UK AND ACROSS THE POND.



HOWEVER LORD REITH, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE BBC, WAS DELIGHTED. THE BROADCAST GENERATED ALMOST 10 TIMES AS MANY LETTERS OF APPRECIATION AS LETTERS OF COMPLAINT.



YEARS LATER KNOX WOULD BUILD ON HIS EXPERIENCES TO WRITE A BOOK ENTITLED 'BROADCAST MINDS', IN WHICH HE CAUTIONED THAT THE PUBLIC SEEMED TO BE TOO EAGER TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING THEY HEARD ON THE RADIO.



THOUGH, PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO COME FROM THIS HISTORIC RADIO BROADCAST, WAS THAT EVEN THE ANGRIEST OF BRITISH STREET MOBBS CAN BE EASILY MOLLIFIED BY GIVING THEM COPIES OF THE RADIO TIMES.

