

UTOPIA IN THE PACIFIC

Radio Links Pitcairn With The World

IN Europe, aeroplanes drone overhead in formation, each bearing its cargo of death; troops march past in gigantic military reviews. In China war rages; Spain and Ethiopia are ravaged by fighting. War and rumours of war hang over every continent, so that no man there can feel safe. Life goes on in a tension-charged atmosphere, and in fear of what may come, people hope and wait.

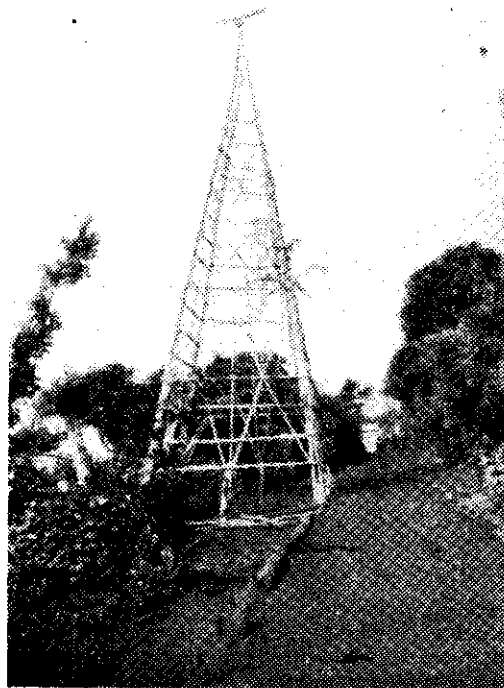
In the middle of the Pacific lies the small island of Pitcairn. It is one of the few places left in the world where it is impossible to worry successfully. When Samuel Butler created his imaginary Utopia in the South Island of New Zealand he probably did not know of Pitcairn, or of life on the island. For although hardly on the grand scale of Butler's ideal state, Pitcairn appears to be the nearest thing to the theories of idealists.

Floyd McCoy, a descendant of one of the Bounty mutineers, who recently arrived in this country from the island, had some interesting comment to make on life there, when interviewed by *The Listener*. The method on which the affairs of the 230 inhabitants are run might be called Communism by some; by others, common sense. The resources of the community are pooled, and the supplies needed are procured by agents. Each person has his or her own plot of land with a house, and when a new arrival comes to Pitcairn he is given land and a place to live. "If people cannot grow their own crops of kumaras, or fruit," said Mr. McCoy, "well, they share with the others. Life there is on a share-alike basis."

On the island, he remarked, a pound note is not very important; but as soon as the island is left it becomes the thing for which everyone is striving.

Generally the people are contented with their lot. About two-thirds of them have never left their island home; and they do not hanker after other lands. Only one aeroplane has ever circled the island: that was when the *Leander* called. And that was the only occasion most of the islanders have ever seen a battleship. To them, "War" and "Defence" are just words on the radio, or in newspapers and books. But they know what is meant by "Peace."

The island's isolation is at once its strength and weakness. It was wireless which brought the people of Pitcairn into touch with the outside world. In 1923, when the old "*Rimutaka*" called there, Sir Thomas Robson asked the magistrate why the people did not learn wireless. He left behind some Morse cards. With these Mr. McCoy and one of his neighbours practised with torches from the tops of the two highest parts of the island. Sir Thomas, arriving back in England, went to the Marconi Company, with the result that



Not the radio mast on Pitcairn, but the windmill which is used for generating electrical power.

a receiving set was sent out. In 1927, Mr. McCoy went to England to study wireless, and visited the Marconi Company, where they were very anxious to know how the set was working. When he returned to the island in 1928 a transmitting set was installed, which, driven by a kerosene engine, could send out messages within a range of 100 miles.

When Mr. McCoy went back to the island in 1936, after several years' stay in New Zealand, an American yacht, the "*Yankee*," called and stayed for a week. The wireless operator on board, seeing possibilities for better transmitting, wrote to an American radio paper. The paper was interested. One of the editors wrote to Pitcairn saying they would

have a receiving and transmitting set constructed specially for conditions there; the set was duly shipped from Panama in 1937.

With it came two engineers, who installed it; and the islanders were soon able to speak to Rhode Island, U.S.A., and to Canberra in Australia. Andrew Young, who had been operating the earlier set since its arrival, was thrilled to hear his name called from the Australian station.

The wireless, said Mr. McCoy, has been a real boon to the island. In 1914 the people did not know of the Great War until six weeks after it started. Now they hear the latest news every night from Rugby (England), from KFI (Los Angeles), and from New York. Besides, they have music and all the fare that radio has to offer for entertainment. It is a curious fact, but Australia and New Zealand are frequently hard to get on the island, while from Japan, and as far north as Norway, the broadcasts come "roaring in."

The High Commissioner at Fiji has prohibited broadcasting with the rest of the world, but the islanders can communicate with other stations. This is invaluable to them; for example, last year typhoid was reported on the island, and had it not been for radio the people would have found it difficult to deny the rumour and assure passing ships that it was safe to call. As it is, Pitcairn receives a fortnightly call from passing ships, and although the people could, if necessary, live on island produce for an indefinite period, the visits from the outside world are very welcome.

Mr. McCoy said that he intends to stay in New Zealand for about three months, but then he will return to his island home. Yes, one was a little discontented when one returned there from other lands perhaps, but it was a grand life, and he would be glad to be back.

HE EXPECTED A REDSKIN!

★ **W**HEN I arrive in different countries people always seem surprised when they see me," said Madame Olga Coelho, Brazilian soprano and guitarist, in an interview with *The Listener* the other day. "They expect to see me arrive dressed in feathers." She mentioned, with a smile, her experience with an interviewer in Budapest. He was disappointed that she was not what he had expected, but remarked in his paper: "Instead of a redskin, the charming Brazilian singer is brunette and very modern and sophisticated."

Madame Coelho has many times encountered ignorance about her country, especially in Europe. One interviewer in Germany asked what was her religion, and when she told him, Roman Catholic, he was

★ astonished. "Did you think I was a Protestant?" she asked. No, he replied, he thought she would be a pagan, and worship the sun and the moon.

A life of travel is always interesting, but besides visiting many countries Madame Coelho has met many famous people; among them King Leopold, the Duchess of Kent, the Duke of Windsor (when he was Prince of Wales), Queen Mary, the Aga Khan, and Mussolini. She played the guitar and sang for Queen Mary, who was pleased with her South American songs. The Queen was surprised at her small hands, and tried to play the guitar herself.

Signor Coelho, her husband, helps her to find her songs. He is a journalist and correspondent for the biggest chain of Brazilian newspapers.