

FIVE YACHTSMEN ON THE SEVEN SEAS

Sailing Between Salesmanship

SIX young men sail a yacht. They earn their livings as salesmen. They enjoy their living as crew of the 40-foot A Class keeler, *Tucana*, Port of Lyttelton, flying the pennant of the famous Banks Peninsula Cruising Club.

They are restless, for neither the sea nor salesmanship tolerates anything static. They decide to go abroad. One stays at home. Five see the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Baltic, and other seas. Four have just come home. They have lost touch with the other.

They did not tell *The Listener* whether the Atlantic was terrific, or the Pacific all it's cracked up to be. There was no time during a brief stop in Wellington in passing between Auckland and Christchurch. But there was time to say the most important things. They said them, without purposeless tacking about, and said what was in their minds as most yachtsmen will.

The urge to get away, and the opportunity, did not coincide for all these young men. A. Geissler has been away two years. G. J. Plank a rather shorter time. B. F. Geissler and G. F. Allen had scarcely arrived in England before war broke out and sent them hustling back home for, if they're not easily panicked, like Englishmen they're easily bored, and London in darkness lost interest for them. B. Webber stayed at home to keep a friendly eye on B. F. Geissler's *Tucana*, in case Lyttelton's weather opened the seams too much, or she had too much attention from the seagulls.

In Germany Last Year

A. Geissler was in Germany just before the September crisis of 1938. The Germans, he says, are fine people. Their food is good, their beer is good, their hospitality is good. By good beer he meant absolutely wonderful beer. By good food he meant absolutely wonderful food—everything that anyone could want in a three-course restaurant meal for 1/6, with caviare, stripped salmon—and the *sauerkraut*!—he indicated that it was more than better.

There was no great feeling of tension among the people as international events marched towards last year's anti-climax. But there was an inability to talk very much, a

distrust of neighbours and a suspicion of strangers born of the *Gestapo*, and a common and general dislike of the Government.

Geissler said these things as if he had watched carefully for the truth.

He also firmly believed that the Germans nourished no hatred against the English. The English they regarded as kindred spirits.

Hatred Across the Frontiers

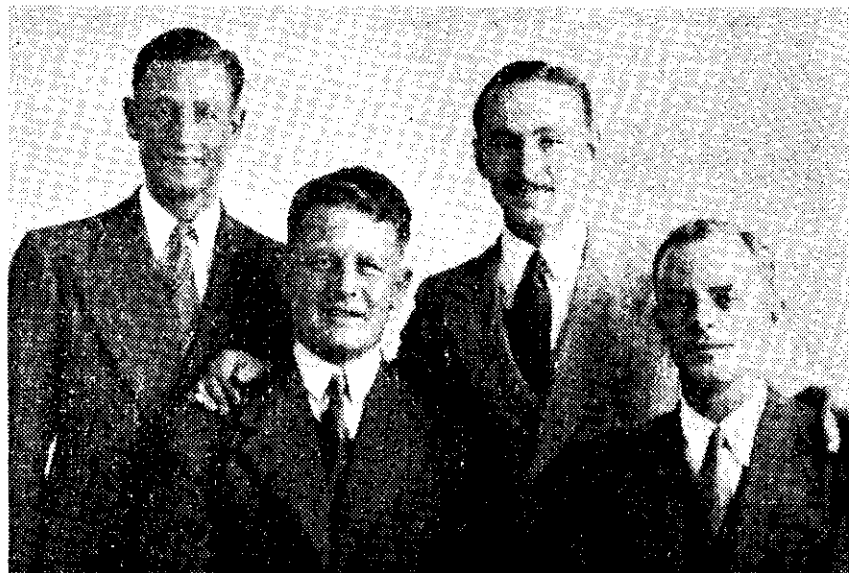
To the French, on the other hand, they were definitely hostile, and Geissler found in France that hate crossed the Maginot and Siegfried lines without need of encouragement either way.

Most trenchant of his comments on Belgium was: "You can smell the cities 10 miles before you reach them." Belgium evidently impressed him very much; but the wrong way round. He remembered chiefly the smells, and the dirt, and the unhygienic practices in public places.

He worked in the West End for 18 months and has just returned, like the others, by way of Panama.

All Over the Place

A string of names like a League of Nations' directory came from G. J. Plank when he was asked where he'd been. Here are some of them: Rio de Janiero, Capetown, Zanzibar, Bombay, Colombo, the Dutch East Indies, Bali (where the native girls really are "the most beautiful women of their colour in the world"), Hong Kong, Port Darwin, Honolulu, half a dozen Pacific islands, San Francisco, and the Exposition, New York, Reykjavik, Hammerfest (Norway's most - nor-



Just back from Europe—From left to right: A. Geissler, B. F. Geissler, G. J. Plank, G. F. Allen

therly-in-the-world city), North Cape (where the sun shines at midnight), all the Norwegian fiords, Stockholm (a beautifully clean city), Copenhagen, Danzig, Tallinn, Leningrad.

Facts About Russia

Out of this tremendous itinerary emerged similar sentiments about Leningrad as Geissler had voiced about Belgium; except that while dirt and smells had been Belgium's swan song, Plank tacked dilapidation against Leningrad. It was as if the population had left the place for 20 years, let the paint peel, the boards split, the stones crumble, and returned to carry on as if nothing had happened. "It was not quite the same conception of Communism as Russia offered me in her pavilion at the New York World's Fair."

And About England

It was left to George Allen and B. F. Geissler to supply the topical comment about England. A. Geissler refused to comment. He had been, he said, in the West End of London all the time and had seen the best of everything. The other two went into the northern industrial areas.

"What are living conditions like?"

"What are they like!" they exclaimed, and metaphorically threw their hands up to High Heaven in despair.

"They are the depressed areas. We could see it in our own faces. We were depressed, too. We could not smile, or make any joke. These people are hopeless. They can do nothing for themselves. They cannot even think for themselves. And it is the same in every closely populated area in Europe. If these are living conditions, then let us scratch up an existence in New Zealand."

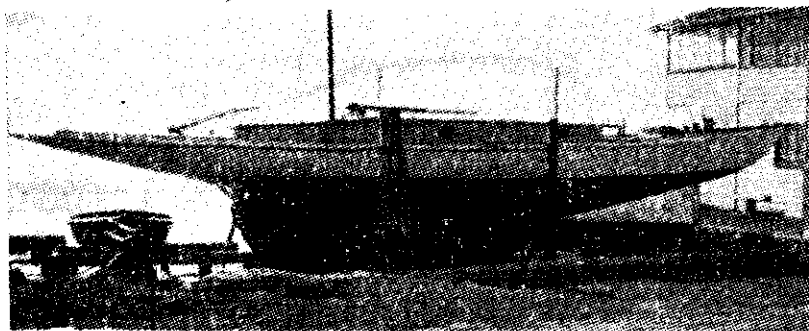
"A Dull Voyage"

These two had intended staying longer in England and then visiting South Africa. They returned under convoy, with lights always blacked out—"a dull voyage, not to be done for pleasure."

They had other friends still overseas. Indiscreet use of cameras in Germany caused the arrest of some just before war broke out. About the other member of their crew they know nothing—whereabouts quite unknown.

About the *Tucana*? Will she be in the Ocean Race next January?

"We'll have to see how things are before we say anything about the future."



TUCANA, 40-foot A Class keeler. On the hard, while her crew saw the world