

JANUARY 21, 1944

Year of Destiny

DESTINY has such a bad time in the newspapers, and in the mouths of preachers, politicians, rotarians, and speech-makers generally, that we should hesitate to discuss it without a special excuse. Our excuse is Field-Marshal Smuts, who declared last week in Pretoria that 1944, unless we make some incalculable blunder, will be "a year of destiny and of decisions that will affect the world for generations to come." It is true that others (including the Fuehrer) have opened their mouths wider than this; but Field-Marshal Smuts is a realist. He allows something for stupidity, and something for the unforeseen, but can still say, because he can still see, that the nature and destiny of European man will be settled within the next few months. There is certainly a very special sense in which history is being made as we write. It is difficult to follow the Russian offensive without feeling that Marshal Vatutin is not merely driving the Germans out of Russia, but driving them right out of Europe so far as control is concerned. He is making it clear that, if there is a single ruling power in Europe during the next fifty years it will give orders from Moscow and not from Berlin. In that region destiny has overtaken the world already. Central and Eastern Europe, Western and Northern Asia, are passing under the shadow of the U.S.S.R. No one can believe anything else—no one who tries to see the centuries whole and history in perspective. It was in fact something like this that Field-Marshal Smuts had in mind when he said some time ago in London that the war would end with the five great Powers of Europe reduced to two. It is a bleak prospect for the smaller and weaker countries wherever they are, but not so bleak as it would be if the great Powers were still allowing the small Powers to hope that they will somehow or other recover full liberty of action. They will—when the great Powers somehow or other discover how to police the world without war.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

RUSSIA AND POLAND.

Sir,—Youiffer that I must be a clairvoyant to see Soviet-baiting in an address on Polish women. I am no more so than Molotov, who exposed that cunning camouflage—a Polish government in exile. The democratic position and influence of women in Pilsudski-Beck Poland were as real as are the victories of Mikhailovich in Yugoslavia.

A. McLEOD (Remuera).

(We did not suggest clairvoyance. We may have suggested that we smelt a rat.—Ed.)

RACING AND THE REST.

Sir,—I am writing to support the complaint of your correspondent "Talmagundi" in your issue of 7th January, not only in connection with the apparently foolish and inconsiderate switching of station 3YA during the first race at Riccarton on November 24th, but also in connection with the continual switching of racing and other sporting broadcasts for the war news. To me the reply from the Director is unconvincing. What about the frequent switching and postponement of other regular features in favour of the many political addresses delivered under the guise of important national messages.

My radio licence is paid as a necessity, not as a luxury. Although my tastes are fairly cosmopolitan, the principal value of the licence to me comes from the war news, classical and semi-classical instrumental music, talks, addresses, and other features of educational value, and sport broadcasts. I am one of those who are pleased that the radio services in New Zealand are being brought under one control. But is this unified control put to the best advantage? Surely, with the coverage from our main national and commercial and auxiliary stations, taken along with the fact that the war news can be heard from the main stations six to eight times each day depending on reception conditions, the interests of more listeners would be served by allowing race and other sports broadcasts to continue uninterrupted from whichever YA station they are being broadcast than by switching them to weak auxiliary stations.

I think that the average listener is more annoyed by the continual switching of sporting broadcasts than by any other fact connected with our generally satisfactory radio services. "AVERAGE LISTENER" (Wellington).

Some technical questions by our correspondent have been referred to the Chief Engineer.—Ed.

OUR SOLDIERS AND OTHERS.

Sir,—With reference to the poem appearing in the issue of *The Listener*, No. 237 of the 7th inst., we, as an old English couple, would like to extend our thanks to the author thereof for recognising the fact that British soldiers also figure in the Empire's war. Thanks also to "Ex-2nd N.Z.E.F." (Wellington) for sending same in.

MATABELE VETERAN (Auckland).

PARLIAMENT AND THE AIR

Sir,—With the approaching reopening of Parliament I feel I must ventilate an old grouch which I have felt for so long and which, I am sure, is shared by many other listeners.

If Parliamentary proceedings must be broadcast (I feel this question should be raised, too), why has 2YC always to suffer? In my opinion, the

2YA programme could be cut out or could substitute that of 2YD. Why always drop 2YC's programme which, of all the Wellington stations, is almost invariably arranged to give listeners who appreciate good music an opportunity of doing so for at least a few hours each week? The regular dropping of this station's programmes means that these listeners must lose their interest in listening to their radios. At worst, why not alter the stations which are forced to relinquish their advertised programmes so that Parliamentary broadcasts may go over the air? I can't think of any technical difficulty in this, and the great injustice which, I feel, is being done to so many listeners under the old method would be eliminated. I am sure that many other listeners feel as I do on this question.—"AUDIATUR ET ALTERA PARS" (Wellington).

"THE ENGLISH OF THE LINE."

Sir,—I am grateful to "Ex-2nd N.Z.E.F." (Wellington) for his reference to my verses "The English of the Line." This was published some 20 years ago. On February 18, 1942, verses on the same theme appeared in *Punch* over the signature J.S.H. The title was "Amongst Those Present . . ." I quote the first of the three sections of the poem:

*Oh, them chaps wot writes the papers
'as a mighty lot to tell
Of the Aussies and New Zealanders an'
Indian troops as well,
An' them youngsters from South Africa
wot's givin' us a hand—
And, mind yer, don't mistake me now,
I'll say they're doin' grand!
But it some'ow seems to 'appen when
they're making such a fuss
Of 'oo took this and 'oo 'eld that, yer
don't 'ear much of us!
But if yer counts the 'eads yer'll find
there's five in every nine
A-servin' in a good old English Reg'ment
o' the line!*

Later on the writer mentioned the Scots and Welsh and Irish, and concluded by saying that "up with all the best" were the "stick-it-lads-and-beat-'em-to-it English Reg'ment o' the Line!"

ALAN MULGAN (Wellington).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

Brian L. Fisher (Papatotetoe) writes: "In appreciation of the many pleasant hours afforded by the George Edwards players."

Penelope Smith (Auckland) asks to be: "Spared this year such a sad mess of escapism as that discussion of the literature and music we would like to retire with from this world."

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT.

"Crossword" (Wellington).—Yes, "repeating" should have been "repenting." Our mistake. Thank you.

CORRECTION

In an interview in a recent issue with Mr. T. G. Grant, M.B.E., of Fiji, we made him say that he had come to New Zealand to see a daughter who had just completed her third year's training at St. Helens Hospital, Auckland. The daughter has now asked us to say that this was "an error of statement"—that the training she is getting in Auckland is a six-months' course in midwifery, undertaken to enable her to "help my Indian women at home."