

FEBRUARY 9, 1945

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES:

115 Lambton Quay, Wellington, C.1.

G.P.O. Box 1707,

Wellington, C.1.

Telephone 46-520.

Telegraphic Address: "Listener," Wellington.

Hitler's Last Words

OUR title is rash, but we are not afraid of it. Though Hitler may speak again, he is not likely to say anything that he did not say last week. Nor should what he said be dismissed as airily as most of his speeches have been since the war started. It was not a great speech, but it must have roused millions of Germans to more desperate efforts. That was its primary purpose, and the answer has no doubt been the death of thousands of Allied soldiers who might otherwise have been alive. It is childish, and even indecent, to sneer at words which load and discharge guns and blast bodies and lives. But when we do take Hitler seriously it is not easy to separate the rational from the irrational, or to decide at what point his fanaticism passes over into lunacy. The chief feature of his last speech is the emphasis on his Divine call. God summoned him, an "unheralded and unknown soldier," to save his people, and only God can say when it is time to rest. God saved him when traitors attempted to kill him. God, Who knows his singleness of purpose, will not fail him now. But it is not just blasphemy, and it falls a good deal short of certifiable lunacy. There is craft in him, of course, a cruel and relentless cunning, as there is in so many fanatics. They have to be wise as serpents or they perish untimely. But now when we see him caught in his own trap, blasted from his hiding-places, spiritual and physical, and fighting his last fight in full view of a hostile world, it is time to drop the mountebank story and call him what he is. History will forget him when it has forgotten Attila and Barbarossa and Philip the Second of Spain; but it will not forget him much sooner than that, and it is a poor tribute to ourselves to argue that it took us six years to conquer a clown.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

HERE'S TO LIFE

Sir,—May I protest against your review of that great book by libertarian and humanist Henry J. Hayward. It would appear to be animated throughout by a spirit of carping resentment and cynicism culminating in an insulting gibe which is in very bad taste indeed. The author himself describes his work as "a 'Pot Pourri' of thoughts—jostling one another, without perhaps that continuity which orthodox biographies possess—Well, 'tis just ME," and with dry good humour concludes: "What can you expect from a Freethinking Showman?"

The book is arranged as a lady horticultural enthusiast would display an old English garden—a bit of everything with a brilliance of contrasting colours, yet making a delightful whole. Opened at any page one can become instantly fascinated. I cannot agree that the headlines selected by the reviewer indicate the showmanship of the author, and indeed, knowing Mr. Hayward's simple homely nature, the complete absence of pomposity, his modesty and reserve, I can only assume the reviewer wishes to read such a meaning into them.

Readers who have read the two pages devoted to "Nature Calls and Consoles" will be able to judge for themselves the value of the reviewer's comments. A hasty glance through the account of the author's boyhood "Visit to London" reveals that this city is called by name eight times as against once each as the "Mighty Metropolis," "Busy Metropolis" and "The Great Metropolis."

Not a word is mentioned of the uniqueness of the author's ancestry, his connection with his famous viols and the attempt to steal his valuable Strad. Surely some reference to those musical comrades, "The Brescians," was warranted, with their floating theatre experiment and their communal home island. The book is not intended as an orthodox recording of the author's connection with the theatre.

Outstanding style the author undoubtedly possesses, as has been testified by scores of people of my own acquaintance. One such, after reading his works, expressed to me that he would consider it the greatest of honours to account Mr. Hayward a personal friend. To attempt in a review to belittle the author as purely a showman with all the accepted failings of one of that calling is much to be deprecated, particularly so when it concerns so noble and honourable a character as Mr. Hayward. His name is probably as highly respected as anyone's in this country.

I hope these few words of appreciation of so grand a character will induce your readers to test the soundness of the review. I am sure they will enjoy a literary treat, and equally certain that the reviewer will sincerely regret his hasty rush into print to express prejudices which do not redound to his credit.—CHARITABILITY (Milford).

Our reviewer replies:

"My regard for Henry Hayward the man is too warm and too sincere to permit me to praise Henry Hayward the author. But if I had been guilty of all the sins your correspondent attributes to me, I could not have hurt the author so cruelly as this fatuous letter will."

PORTRAIT OF COMMUNISM

Sir,—The contributor to the *Observer* to whom you pay the compliment of reprinting his remarks is guaranteed neither by his name nor by any stated qualifications to speak on his subject, of which he knows very little. Evidently he commenced with the delusion that the Communist movement was founded on a few cast-iron dogmas and directed by a handful of clever dictators, at whose word all the other Communists hopped along the lines of the blue-prints. The promoters of this curious theory have never tried to explain the phenomenon that literally millions of men and women, including some of the world's leading writers, artists and scientists, have joined and made sacrifices for this supposed monstrosity of a Party. Communism HAS principles, which are broad and based on a scientific investigation of social development; but it has NO dogmas. The diversity of the activities of Communists at various times and places is logically derived from the great changes which in our time occur with startling rapidity, and from the obvious differences in conditions from one country to another. Your writer is supremely innocent of this, just as your editorial is innocent of any appreciation of the Communist attitude to the "common man" and the "multitude"; hence the contradictions bulge here, there, and everywhere out of these breezy attempts to simplify the complicated politics of to-day. Alas, my space will be brief; suffice it to say that neither Communism, which is nowhere yet attained, nor socialism, its transition period, nor the policies which Communists advocate while capitalism remains, can possibly be attained without the overwhelming and active support of what you call "the multitude."

ELSIE LOCKE (Christchurch).

[It was nowhere suggested in the *Observer* article, or in our own, that the Communists can attain their ends without "The Multitude." Our suggestion was that they do not trust the people; not that they do not use them.—Ed.]

Sir,—The article from the *Observer* states generalities without basing them on historical evidence and uses certain "tactical tricks" to put across its attack on Communism. It plays upon certain attitudes and prejudices which the author knows will be fairly common:

- (1) That the Communist movement is directed from Moscow.
- (2) That Communism had an equivocal attitude towards Nazism.
- (3) That "patriotic ardour" is new to Communism, and that in Poland Communists "have openly clashed with the national interests of their country."
- (4) That Communism has no set principles, merely using "tactical tricks" to gull the people.
- (5) That Communism is "irresponsible and up to a point indifferent towards the real needs of social progress beyond Russia."

In the second place, on the stylistic side, the author uses emotive and coloured language which, on the one hand, drives home his attacks by its appeals to prejudice and emotion, and, on the other, damns even when it appears to praise.

Your editorial of January 12—"Report and Facts"—attacks the "purveyors of pap" and the correspondent who has "no guide but his exuberant

imagination." "We don't pause to analyse absurdities," you say. Apparently not. For anyone who had read that editorial would have expected you to treat the article on Communism with reserve, to warn readers that it contained half-truths, errors, and prejudiced statements. But no. Not only do you give the article your blessing in a paragraph introducing it, but you write an editorial in which you draw for your readers the very implications, calculated to develop prejudice and misunderstanding, which the author no doubt hoped would be drawn. Your references to the "plotting, mistrust, fear of liberty, equality and democracy," your statements that the Left aims to keep power out of the hands of the multitude, and that the Left believes that the people must lose their liberty to gain it, indeed the whole tone of your editorial, show that forsaking of sound judgment and critical standards which I had believed *The Listener* stood for.

Finally, you apologise to readers for not at the same time giving them, in fairness, a picture of Reaction. Surely the fair thing to do was to ask someone who knew something about Communism to write an article in answer to the *Observer* one. Truly, the people should know what games are being played in their name.

JASON (Palmerston North).

[Our correspondent has misread the *Observer* article, misquoted it, and misinterpreted it. That we understand. We do not understand why he should have made the picture so much more unkind to Communism than it was originally.—Ed.]

RACE BROADCASTS.

Sir,—I would like to ask why so many Race Broadcasts are interrupted for other broadcasts such as War News. Such can be received by those who desire from any station, but the Race Broadcasts are of interest all over the country, and if not sent out from the Main Station cannot be received much further afield than the town where the races are being run. Why can't the National Broadcasting Service alter for the largest proportion of its listeners, for I feel sure that over 75% of Saturday's radio listeners are race broadcast patrons. Racing is so popular that parties are arranged in most homes and public places, not in the town where the races are held, but from one end of the country to the other, and when the first, second, and third races are sent out from minor stations where they can be heard only a few miles away, the large army of listeners express their opinions of the station management rather forcibly.—T.C. (Gisborne).

EVERY NIGHT AT NINE

Sir,—Every night at nine my wife threatens to go to the studio and shoot the announcer on duty. No doubt she is only one of hundreds who also want to shoot the awful man who interrupts the beautiful recording of "On Wings of Song" to inform us that all stations are standing by for the period of silent prayer during the chiming of Big Ben. We respectfully suggest that sufficient time should be allowed to play the full recording. We might then be in the mood for silent prayer, instead of in a mood for murder. The objectionable practice reminds me very much of the Naval custom on Sunday morning of working the ratings into a state of rebellion before marching them to church.

MATELOT (Auckland).