

Written for "The Listener"
by "INFANTEER"

crowds gazing with admiration at the splendid machine which came and went in a veritable flash.

I RETURNED to work but somehow that question kept on returning "What do I think?" "Why was this demonstration being given?" I went on to ask myself. Probably there are a variety of reasons to explain why the Meteor was sent out to New Zealand. People here still realise insufficiently what Britain and the Empire owe to those fighter pilots who did so much in the Battle of Britain. Surely this demonstration would cause at least a few to thank God for "the few" who had manned the fighter planes which had saved the day in 1940; and one could not think of them alone without recalling the contributions made by all air-men, whether fighter or bomber crews, by those in the Fleet Air Arm, by those in the Navy and in the Army, and by all those who by their efforts in industry, in administration, and in production in a number of fields had made victory possible.

I could not tell whether Squadron Leader McKay and his crew had put their plane through, in its many evolutions, what the troops described as "the Victory roll"—the gesture of triumph which the Spitfires used to make to the accompaniment of cheers from the dry throats of those who had seen the Messerschmitt or more often the Stuka shot down in Libya. In any case, the present occasion, coming almost exactly a year after V.E. Day, seemed to be one for taking renewed pride in the victory won, in the part played in the winning of that victory by British men, arms and equipment . . . pride mingled with determination that the problems of the peace could be faced and solved by the same spirit.

Depressing news items concerning the failure of the Allied Foreign Ministers to agree, the opposition to the British loan in the American Senate, and the antagonism aroused by the Anglo-American Committee's Report on Palestine were coming in daily but here, as we lifted our eyes to watch an almost out-of-date model of the fastest aircraft in the world, was a reminder to lift up our hearts: we had come through tougher days, we had proved ourselves to have the courage and the ability to see the war through to a victorious conclusion, we could go on to play our part in the equally difficult days of peace.

THAT graceful flashing thing did not at once inspire thoughts of a materialist character, but later in the day I found myself repeating an old advertising slogan—"British Is Best—Buy British." The superiority of British fighter planes, the fact that the air speed record of something like 606 miles per hour stood to the credit of Britain, and that the land speed record of 368.85 miles per hour was also held by Britain, were obvious recommendations for British industry, and for their products,

especially in these fields where such marked superiority had been demonstrated. Industries able to build planes and cars which could stand up to the stresses and strains imposed by the successful breaking of world speed records could surely be trusted to go on producing goods better than those produced by comparable industries elsewhere.

At any rate, the publicity value from the point of view of British mechanical industries of the exhibition given by the Gloster Meteor was enormous. Nothing in print or in any form of normal commercial advertising could have brought home to the watchers so completely as did that splendid aircraft that "Britain can deliver the goods." It showed that in design, in materials, in direction, and in workmanship, Britain could produce the world's best. This does not necessarily mean that a system of Imperial preference excluding the products of other countries should be embarked upon, but it does mean that in the system of international co-operation which must be worked out on the economic side as well as on the political, Britain is able to make a contribution in keeping with her past traditions.

THE possibilities of achieving a solid basis for world peace are only limited by the unwillingness of both individuals and nations to make sacrifices for the common good of humanity. The sight of an aircraft with a speed that amazes is both an inspiration and a sobering reminder that the moral progress of our age has lagged far behind its mechanical progress. The future depends not so much on the breaking of speed or other records but on the development of a sense of proportion and a moral code of values adequate both to the needs of the day and to the responsibilities placed in the hands of men who control more potent means of destruction than the world has ever known before. This in turn will almost certainly mean a remodelling of social and political institutions, especially in the international sphere; this is necessary because technological change has been extraordinarily rapid, while political and other institutions have remained relatively static. It is a trite remark to say that science with its growing control over atomic energy and over the natural elements can be used either in the service of humanity or for the destruction of modern civilisation; but so long as millions persist in folly the facts must be re-emphasised.

The conclusion to this line of thought is that the future, like the past, holds its share of hard work, sweat and, if there are not enough men who are willing to work hard for principles and ideals, tears. There is no need for depression; there is need for clear thinking and hard work. "And does the road wind uphill all the way? Yes. Right to the very end."

The conclusion of his work, *The Reconstruction of World Trade*, by Professor J. B. Condliffe, formerly professor of economics in New Zealand, seems to fit the bill here: "Peace and prosperity, it must be repeated over and over, cannot be achieved by a formula. More than word-magic and idealistic wishful-thinking is needed. If peace and prosperity are ever to be restored to an unhappy world, they must, like freedom, 'be re-created year by year.'"

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