

JUNE 14, 1946

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Atomic Anarchy

IT was pointed out by someone the other day that although Greek, French, and Italian elections get the headlines, the atomic bomb is still the big news. If we don't talk about it, we brood over it, and we would talk about it if we knew what to say. We don't know what to say because we don't know what the possessors of bombs are going to do, but we may know in a month or two. The full text of the American State Department's plan for the control of atomic energy has now been circulated, and the *Manchester Guardian's* summary raises some hopes. First it is encouraging that America has laid its cards on the table. The *Guardian* thinks it has done so because its scientists have laid theirs on the table too—confessed that atomic bombs are destructive beyond all possibility of defence and that no country has a chance of monopolising them. This may be the case, and if it is, it is encouraging, since it means that the breach between science and politics has been narrowed. It may also have been a factor that atomic anarchy was seen as a bigger menace to a democracy than to a totalitarian state. But whatever brought the State Department to such a decision, it did two months ago propose that all "dangerous" atomic developments should be withdrawn from national control and placed under the authority of the United Nations. By what means this should be done, when a beginning should be made, and how fast national control should be surrendered, have not yet been seriously discussed, since the proposal comes very near to asking all nations for individual disarmament. In the meantime that is asking for the impossible, but the fact that it is the strongest nation in the world that has taken the initiative silences the cynics and the sneerers.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, JUNE 14

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

THE NATION-STATE

Sir.—The BBC talk by Mr. Middleton Murry (*Listener*, May 24), is stale news indeed. It admits in fact that the whole rambling lecture was delivered because "individualism has got to be eradicated." That great idea was a quarter-of-a-century old when Mussolini and Hitler began carrying it into practice. Socialism got hold of the world, and the miserable individuals began to turn into worms, half-a-century before Mr. M.M. discovered the astonishing fact that today "one's centre of gravity is outside oneself." Now Mr. M.M. tells us that the Human Mind, or rather the Mind of the Nation-State, has to jump. The athletics are necessary because a Mr. Adams said so in 1905, and because you and I and all the individuals are not real, are but illusions, and have no power. Only as members of a Nation-State can they expect to share (?) the power. The majority of men did not desire or will the two shattering world wars. Yet the two wars took place. If in these wars the individuals did not count at all, who was it exactly who made these wars? The Nation-State alone, which Mr. M.M. extols so greatly? In the last case the Socialist Nation-State never asked the individuals if they "want these wars" or if they "didn't want these wars." The coercive socialist organisation obtained plenary power, imposed planned economy, killed competition, and made away with all the individual abilities to act independently. It cut off also all the information.

The initiative in men is no longer tolerated by his Nation-State, and capons a la Middleton Murry are carefully substituted for democratic cocks. The rights and *magna chartae* have got to be rooted out in order that Karl Marx's stupid argument about "the complex of social relations" would better penetrate unopposed, the *tabula rasa* of listeners' attentions. It is a pity that Mr. M.M. forgot to mention that the obsolete Nation-State he talks about is the Nation-State of Hitler's Germany, which we, incidentally, just happened to destroy. It was there that "the individual person was a kind of illusion" and "the reality was the Nation-State." It was there that the National Socialism made all the "mental revolutions" Mr. M.M. recommends. And it was certainly there that the Mind of the Socialist Nation-State had got to jump. Into the Bottomless Pit it duly jumped, once and for ever, as the individualists so very sincerely hope.

A.S.T. (Mareketu).

WELLINGTON CATHEDRAL

Sir,—I shared the experience of your correspondent "8676" in Italy. I also saw lovely churches and cathedrals surrounded by revolting slums and squalor; there were lovely mosques in Cairo with the same dirty background. Slums are hateful to all decent people, but surely the social and religious make-up of Egypt and Italy is a shade different from our own.

Would "8676" condemn the lovely little stone church in Maadi township or that beautiful Cathedral on the banks of the Nile in Cairo where so many New Zealanders found quiet and peace and spiritual strength? Surely the 20th

Regiment was wise in holding a service in Christchurch Cathedral, just about a week ago, after their great re-union; and that Cathedral was only just big enough for the congregation. One day I hope the Wellington units — the 19th Regiment, the 22nd, and the 25th Battalions—may have a church big enough to hold them.

Although this is a rich country there are few good church buildings in Wellington. I know there are many other pressing needs in addition to a Cathedral, but the bottle-neck is not so much a shortage of money as a shortage of generosity. I think Christianity has

More letters from listeners will be found on pages 22 and 23

always taught that you should worship God first and help your neighbour second, on the basis that if you don't do the first you are not likely to succeed with the second. There is a great temptation to-day to leave the King idea out of the Kingdom of God.

In case other returned men have the same opinion as "8676" I would like to point out that the Wellington R.S.A. and the 2nd N.Z.E.F. Association are actively helping the Appeal for Wellington Cathedral, of which I am the organising secretary.

MICHAEL UNDERHILL

(Wellington).

TRIBUTE TO NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—Enclosed is a very interesting article which I recently found in an English journal, and I thought many New Zealanders might also like to read the kind words of appreciation written by this English writer on behalf of his fellow countrymen and women, for what we, in this little country have tried, and are still trying, to do for our Mother Country, after all her many years of courage and toil.

K. MONCK

(Gisborne).

(The article, which carries the caption "Thank You, New Zealand," is too long to quote in full, but begins and ends with these two paragraphs:

"She was last in the bus queue. The conductor heaved her aboard with a weary 'Come along, Ma!' and the bus lurched forward into the greasy gloom of a wet evening. As she stumbled down the bus something rock-like steadied her into a seat and a kind voice with the unmistakable Kiwi twang, said, 'Guess you're tired, mother!' She looked up into a face as fresh as an orange pippin, smiling under the tilted khaki brim. 'I certainly am, son!' she said. And then, as the bus lurched once more and the soldier melted into the crush of standing room only, she smiled apologetically at her neighbour. 'Seem more like our own, don't they?' she said.

"That's the way we feel, New Zealand, about your sons. The bone and spirit of their fathers, settlers mostly from our own island, have bred a race which slips into our hearts and our national life as easily as stream slips into river. But behind that easy acceptance and liking, there is a deeper emotion, an emotion we may not often put into words but which is none the less felt.

"What has been the effect of these years of joint effort? Have they made any difference to the feeling between our peoples? And what of the future?

"The answer is brief. The years of war have strengthened the links between us and left us determined to cultivate the flower of friendship which thrust out new roots in the harsh soil of war. We shall ask more of you, New Zealand—let's be frank about that. To you falls the task of forging a link in the partnership of the British Empire and the United States, a partnership which must stand for world security in the years to come. We know

you will not fail us in peace, as you did not fail us in war. For that grand effort, for all the help of your strong right arm, New Zealand, the people of Britain to-day send you a message of gratitude.

"Thank you, clobber—you're a corker!"

A NEW ZEALAND COMPOSITION

Sir,—On Tuesday, May 14, listeners were privileged to hear, from Station 2YA, the premier broadcast of an original work by a New Zealand composer, Miss Bessie Pollard. As your observers have not commented on this work, I venture to submit my impressions.

The composition, "Theme and Variations for Two Pianos" is, in my opinion, one of the milestones in New Zealand composition as it marks a departure from the sugary and commonplace, to something strikingly original in workmanship and style. With the notable exception of Douglas Lilburn, whose "Sinfonia for Strings," "Landfall in Unknown Seas," Violin Sonatas and other compositions have made a remarkable impression both at home and abroad, this striking originality in New Zealand works is something new. Perhaps we are about to experience the birth of a school of New Zealand composition.

That New Zealanders can compose is most evident in this particular composition. An examination of the score will show that the composer has an unusual command of resources available. Striking features such as the upward leaps of a 5th and 10th against a strong descending bass progression mark the individual style of this composer, while the use of such academic resources as augmentation, diminution, interpolation, and inversion exploited to the full with combinations of masterly rhythmic variants show the thorough grounding in technic. I had the opportunity of examining the score, and in particular the two movements that took my fancy during the broadcast, namely, the 8th variation (A Pastorale) and the Finale. In the former, some of the finest writing is to be found while, in the latter, the unusual is met with in that the development section, the 2nd and 3rd episodes, were based on rhythmic similarities rather than notation. The repetition of the subject in inversion leading into a stretto and extended tonic pedal is the work of an expert. However, I thought the sacrifice of melodic interest for the spectacular in Technical and Harmonic treatment a weakness.

But, in comparison with most other New Zealand works, the Theme and Variations stands far above them all in workmanship, originality of style, and application of harmonic and accepted academic devices. A. D. HEENAN

(Wellington).

"DEGENERATE" CARTOONS

Sir,—"A sense of humour has always been one of my pet aversions," wrote John Strachey. "But I have been afraid to say so, for fear that people would say that that was only natural in an economist and political theorist." I do not read the flip magazines, but I shall be surprised if they have not started to publish cartoons on that climax of our civilisation, the dropping of an Atomic Bomb on the Bikini Atoll. It is not accident that we have made a children's fairy tale out of what many critics believe to be the most bitter satire ever written on humanity. Humour is the opium of the people.

HUMANITARIAN (Auckland).