

INDIA FROM THE INSIDE

IAN STEPHENS, who wrote the article we print on the opposite page, has been the editor since 1942 of *The Statesman*, the largest newspaper in India, which is published at Calcutta and New Delhi. In his article, Mr. Stephens writes of New Zealand as he has seen it. During an interview, we asked him to tell us something about himself, and at the same time about his views on Indian affairs.

Mr. Stephens is 43, and was educated at Winchester and Cambridge, where he was a scholar and won a "Double First." He went to India 16 years ago to be Deputy Director of the Indian Government's Bureau of Public Information, a job which involved editing and producing the country's annual official history. After two years he became Director. When his contract ended, he took a job as leader-writer on *The Statesman* and became its editor in 1942.

Although he described life there as "satisfying rather than pleasant," he confesses to a love for India, doesn't want to leave, and discredits the idea that Englishmen can only endure the climate for a few years at a time:

"There's a lot of bosh talked about it," he said. "The old idea used to be that an Englishman needed to go home every three years or so, but until I arrived here I had had no overseas holiday of much duration since 1937 and..."

We ourselves remarked then that he did look very fit. We asked if it was exercise that did it:

"I take a lot of exercise. I do these Indian exercises before breakfast—very spectacular and great fun. And then, during the war, I gave up my car and bought a racing bike, and I go to the office in the morning on that, as fast as I can bat. And then I take a long walk every evening."



GANDHI
Still well in the picture

We confessed that we had never seen a copy of Mr. Stephens's paper. It is a daily, printed simultaneously in two capital cities, 800 miles apart (three editions in New Delhi and five in Calcutta every 24 hours), and is read from Karachi to Rangoon—giving it a geographical spread of nearly 2,000 miles, which is probably unique.

"It's a liberal paper by tradition," Mr. Stephens said, "which sometimes surprises those who look on India as full of Blimps and very Poona-Poona people. And it's the only paper in India now that is wholly British-owned."

"Are you at all embarrassed by the situation in India now?"

"We don't feel so. In some ways, being that rare thing in India, an independent, non-party paper, is an advantage. And I think India and New Zealand have this in common, that they are both very serious, politically conscious countries. (We don't fill our papers with sensational news.) The strong party man will always buy the paper of his own party, but in India he'll jolly well buy *The Statesman* too, to see what it says."

"If your readers are largely Indians, are there large numbers of non-party Indians?"

"No, not large numbers; but the partisan ones, as I say, are often keenly interested to read an unattached newspaper's comments and news."

The Statesman has chiefly an Indian staff, Mr. Stephens told us—operators, composers, reporters, and sub-editors. Most of the sub-editors have had a university education in India. But English is the language they think in, and only occasionally do Indianisms of speech creep into their work.

It is distributed as any other newspaper is—largely by newsboys and contract delivery, but in comparatively small quantities over a uniquely wide area. Distribution by air is developing (Mr. Stephens says India is one of the most obvious countries of the world for this use of aircraft) and Rangoon and Karachi have their *Statesmans* delivered by air.

India's Unrest

When we asked Mr. Stephens about India's eventful recent history, he said that he had permitted himself this present holi-



IAN STEPHENS
Indian exercises before breakfast

day on the supposition that the climax of internal trouble had been reached last November—and so far felt he had been right.

"In the summer and autumn we had unprecedented riots, and in three areas there was complete administrative breakdown; we had a posts and telegraphs strike; the prolonged tension over the Cabinet Ministers' plan for India, and sharp disagreements between the Moslem League and the Congress Party about the interim central government, and about arrangements for the new constitution. It was a pretty rough year. But during the riots, many influential Indians were so shocked by the tragic horror of it all that they seemed bent on preventing further outbreaks, if possible."

"Was that political ferment confined to the cities?"

"Unfortunately not. In at least two Provinces it spread to the rural areas, and it was as violent there as anywhere."

"And is Gandhi still a real force?"

"Yes. During the summer he made two curious political mistakes which rather annoyed his colleagues, but he's still well in the picture."

We asked Mr. Stephens whether radio played an important part in Indian life.

"It does, and would do so more but for a language difficulty," he said. "They have difficulty in agreeing whether Hindustani is one language or two. And that's a paralysing influence. Also, the broadcasting service is a Government department, which is rather paralysing too."

Finally we asked him what brought him to this part of the world. One of his main reasons for coming was that he entertained many Australian and New Zealand airmen on leave in Calcutta, and so made a wide circle of new friends:

"My flat was a sort of open house for British and Anzac flying lads," he said.

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