

# THREE NEW ZEALANDERS LOOK AT THE WORLD

I HAD the interesting experience last week of talking on three successive days to three New Zealanders who had spent most of the post-war period overseas. Each was a graduate of our University, and each, without ceasing to be a New Zealander, had been working with nationals of other countries on non-national problems. In addition, each was old enough to know that in international contacts words are one thing and purposes often another thing.

I was not therefore asked to believe that what I heard was the full story. Emphasis was laid in each case on the impossibility of getting the full story, partly because of language barriers, partly because of racial, or political, or religious reticence and suspicion.

FIRST I met Dr. W. B. Sutch, who was spending a few weeks in Wellington after a long period in Europe and the Pacific, and who will soon be leaving New Zealand again for the United States. Dr. Sutch is an economist—he acted in Europe as adviser to UNRRA—and if I had been an economist too our conversation might have been about dollars, and sterling, and Bretton Woods, and international banks, and loans. But I don't know enough about those things to ask intelligent questions about them, so I began by asking Dr. Sutch if there was going to be another war.

His answer was that one man's guess was as good as another's—that no one

could say what new lunacy the human animal might develop, but that he knew of no country whose people wanted to fight again, and of none whose government was getting ready to fight. Russia and the United States were certainly watching each other. Each was uneasy about the other, Russia about America's atomic bombs, the United States about Russia's silence, secrecy, and unshakable discipline. But he was not himself alarmed by that situation. The advantages of peace were so overwhelming on both sides that those who expected war were suffering from nerves.

"But there is one thing I do fear," he said suddenly, "and that is the block in the circulation of news. What do you know about Germany to-day? — What non-Europeans want you to know. What do you know about Greece, or Yugoslavia, or Hungary?—So little that you would be better to know nothing at all. All you get is the froth on the surface—'incidents,' arrests, diplomatic Notes, and

so on, while the real story is the advance of millions of people from serfdom to self-respect."

"You see that as the over-all picture?" "Quite clearly. Europe has passed through a peasant revolt, a social revolution if you like, and we who did the same thing a few centuries earlier could well be sympathetic. So we would be if we realised clearly what is happening. But we don't. We get stampeded by labels and slogans, confused by rumours, estranged by lies. The name heard most, and apparently feared most in New Zealand, is Communism. But if we are going to turn our backs on every country that someone calls Communist we are going to turn away from many countries whose people are liberating themselves from serfdom."

"Would you call these movements democratic?"

"Not the democracy we talk about here. But the people are everywhere taking control of their own country and it doesn't matter very much whether we call it Democracy or Communism. It is not the system of Britain and it is not the system of the U.S.S.R., but it is escape from feudalism."

"Do you suggest that Britain and the United States are backing the wrong horses in those countries?"

"That is politics, and I am an economist. In any case I am not sitting in the totalisator taking the bets. But it looks as though some in backing their fancy think it helps them to attack the other horse's name or rider."



THE RUINED CHURCH of St. Alexander, Warsaw—"Though most of the churches have been destroyed, services are held in the crypts and basements"

"You think names don't matter much?"

"I think facts mean more. The central fact in Europe as I see it is that the people are on the march."

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NEXT day I had a long talk with Dr. R. G. Hampton, who is back in New Zealand after a year in Poland. Dr. Hampton's general impressions have already been broadcast. Poland, he felt after working there, is very much misunderstood in New Zealand. If it feels that it must keep step with Russia in foreign affairs it is running its own house at home in every room, and as far as Dr. Hampton could see, was not being asked to do otherwise. No realist, he said in his broadcast, would expect to see the Poles flout the wishes of the Russian Government in important matters directly affecting Russia.

"Geographically and economically they're far too closely bound to Russia. Russia supplies them with food, raw materials, and seeds which are essential to Poland's continued existence. It would be as foolish for Poland to make an enemy of Russia as it would be for Belgium deliberately to antagonise France. But when this has been said it remains all the more creditable that the Polish Government largely conducts its own affairs without reference to Russian wishes. Social Welfare, Education, Industry, Agriculture, War, every Ministry has a Pole at its head and a purely Polish administrative staff. There's no Russian in charge of a single Portfolio, a single Government department, or a single administrative body. The Central Planning Board which determines trading policy, industrial production, agricultural production, and every form of large-scale economic activity is entirely Polish in personnel. In fact, I travelled extensively up and down Poland and saw remarkably few Russians. I saw more R.A.F. men in Warsaw than I saw Russians."

Nor, Dr. Hampton insisted, is Poland Communist on the Russian model. "The peasant owns and farms his own land. Peasants settling in the ex-German territories in the west are helped by the

Government to buy their own land, paying from their production in future years. There are in some areas large State farms, but this is the exception. As a general rule the peasant owns his land and sells his product in any market which pleases him. Certainly he may buy his seeds from a local co-operative self-help society, and borrow a tractor from a local communal tractor station, but this is Communist only in the sense of communal self-help."

The industrialist who operated in a large way, Dr. Hampton explained, has had his plant taken over by the State, but the smaller man is free to conduct his own affairs. "He may produce what he likes, sell where he likes, and spend where and what he likes. The shopkeeper may set up where he likes and sell what he likes. Obviously this is not Communism as we commonly think of it."

It astonished me to hear Dr. Hampton say that the peasants own their land, but he was emphatic that they do.

"They may not have paid for their holdings, but they are in possession, and payment is being made out of each year's production. Of course the holdings are very small—about 12 acres—and since the horse is still their chief source of power, it is a lean and hard life. But it is paradise for them to own and not be owned, and they are free to add to their holdings if they can. Personally I wish they had tractors instead of horses. The horse in Poland is like the cow in India: it keeps everybody hungry and poor."

It still seemed strange to me that people who owned their land and were 99 per cent. Catholic would follow a policy acceptable to Russia. Dr. Hampton admitted that it was strange, but said that the fact was beyond question.

"Then is religion free," I asked him, "or have the worshippers been driven underground?"

"As far as I could judge it is quite free. Nearly everybody is a Catholic. Nearly everybody goes to church. Though most of the churches have been destroyed, services are held in crypts

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Spencer Digby photograph

DR. W. B. SUTCH

"In Europe the people are on the march"