

and photographer were entered in an accession register, and finally a card index was prepared. The task of restoration was a highly specialised one, and few institutions had the facilities or expert knowledge to see that this was done.

Would the collection grow much larger? Mr. Heron said he thought there were many thousands more photographs in the country if he only knew where he could lay hands on them.

"You're not going to keep them all in here, are you?" we asked, pointing to the cracks in the plaster of walls and ceiling.

"We are hoping to get the building enlarged one day," he replied, "in which case we will move the photograph collection to a bigger room on the ground floor where its great weight would be less of a danger to the building itself. Eventually, however, we expect to take microfilm prints of all the negatives, and then we can destroy the old plates."



ABOVE: Hau hau prisoners, captured at the Nuku Maru engagement, near Wanganui, in 1867 (from the Harding Collection). AT TOP: "Rangi Chief Mahoenui," a study by W. A. Collis, of New Plymouth

# MIKLOS GAFNI

WHEN the 24-year-old Hungarian tenor Miklos Gafni sang for the first time in New York last year he was reported to have stunned and slightly deafened the critics with some of the most powerful singing heard there for decades, and was acclaimed by one of them as a "Hungarian Caruso." After his successful American debut Gafni made a tour of Australia under the auspices of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and during the next few weeks New Zealand audiences will be able to hear him singing here.

Gafni's sudden rise to fame was one of the singing sensations of the post-war years, and was even more unusual since it came about not through years of hard training but partly as a result of his imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp during the war. He was born the son of a small farmer in a remote Hungarian village, and after studying medicine for a few months he was seized by the Germans when war broke out, and thrown into a concentration camp along with some of his fellow-students.

During his imprisonment he met a former piano teacher named Andreas Havas, who recognised his unusual vocal powers and taught him what he knew about the elementary stages of voice production. Before this Gafni had never sung anything but popular songs for his own amusement.

He was eventually liberated by the Russians and decided to try to walk back to his old home. But the Germans captured him again and put him in a Silesian camp, where the prisoners did not work but were slowly starved to



MIKLOS GAFNI—The Nazis preferred hearing him to hanging him

death. Three former singers happened to be in the camp, and they continued the musical instruction begun by his friend the piano teacher. These three men were later killed, and Gafni was one of the camp's few survivors. He says that three times he was scheduled to be hanged, but that on each occasion the jailers spared him because they preferred to hear him sing.

## Search for Lost Family

While he was in this prison camp his weight dropped from its normal 14 and-a-half stone to 90 pounds, and after being set free he spent six months in an American army hospital regaining his strength. He then made his way back to his home town only to find that his family had disappeared. Enquiries revealed that they had also been imprisoned by the Nazis, and despite months of frantic searching he was unable to discover what had happened to them.

He went to Budapest to try and make his living as a singer, but none of the recognised teachers would see him. At this time his country was in chaos, he says, and what little money he had was practically worthless. But he was able to get along for a while by "singing for his meals," until he finally attracted the attention of one of the city's leading teachers by giving an impromptu recital beneath his window. He was still so poor, however, that for his first concert he had to wear a hired suit and

borrowed shoes and socks. But after this his rise to success was rapid. Soon he had signed a contract to appear with the Budapest Opera, and he followed this up by appearing with the Hungarian State Opera, singing the tenor role of Alfredo in *La Traviata*.

Having established himself as a singer he tried once more to locate his family, but again he had no success, and in the end was forced to the conclusion that they were all dead. He went to Italy and studied for five months under Mario Terni, of Milan, and a former colleague of Caruso named Riccardo Stracciari. The contract which led to his appearance in New York last year was signed as a result of his singing at a reception at the American Embassy in Rome.

## Broadcasting Arrangements

Arrangements have been made with the NZBS for portions of some of Miklos Gafni's New Zealand concerts to be broadcast. The dates of these broadcasts, which will probably be half-an-hour long in each case, are as follows: 2YH, Tuesday, August 10; 2YA, Saturday, August 14; 3YA, Thursday, August 19; 4YA, Thursday, August 26; 1YA, Wednesday, September 1. His programmes will probably include a variety of operatic arias, Hungarian and Neapolitan folk-songs, groups of standard *lieder* and art songs, and some English and Italian songs by Tosti and Leoncavallo.