

LISTENING-IN IN GERMANY

NEW ZEALAND people listening quietly to the wireless can realise only with difficulty the dangers, which are connected with the possession of a radio set in the present Germany. Empire democracy does not want to restrict the freedom of hearing broad casted messages from all countries. People are allowed to listen to the New Zealand stations just like to the hostile German radio service. The democratic mind of the Empire is sure that the listener would have enough criticism by himself to distinguish the truth from the Nazi lies of propaganda.

Totalitarian Monopoly

The position is quite different in Germany. The Nazi dictatorship having oppressed each freedom of critics takes the biggest care, that people only hear, what the government thinks suitable for them. Thus press, books, and finally each slip of paper stands under the publishing monopoly of the Nazi party being identical with the present German state. News from abroad are seldom and have frequently only the shape of vague rumours. For the government can close the frontiers of its country against all unwanted literature. Though there will be always upright people smuggling in writings spreading out the truth, strict watch over the boundaries will hinder the unwelcome import in a very high degree.

Part of the Wireless

But there is one thing contradicting such conditions—the wireless. Sent unceasingly from abroad, the most powerful dictator is unable to hinder the entrance of truths by the air. Modern radio sets and the very nearness of Allied broad casting stations allow to hear the voice of the opponent so distinctly as if the speaker would stand in the room of the listener. Thus the monopoly of news of the Nazi dictatorship is seriously threatened. Always people are able to learn the events on the theatre of the war, the speeches of the Allied politicians, the war aims of the western powers telling that there is no peace possible with the present German government and other things unpleasant for the Nazis.

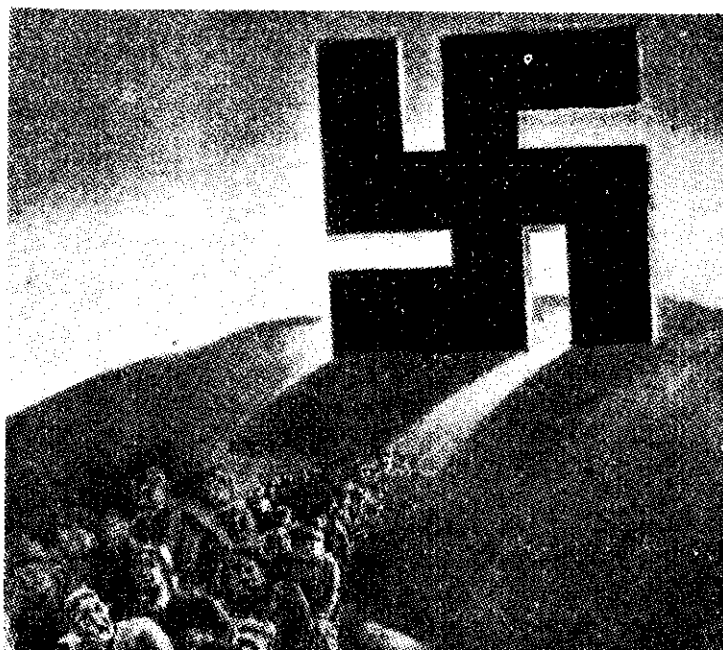
Prohibition to Listen

Facing this situation the German government took a measure very natural to its dictatorial mind. It prohibited to listen to any Allied station and threatened every violation of this order by punishment to death. Probably German people was not surprised about this new ordinance. For it only was an inflicting of the already for years existing position, where every broad cast against the Nazi regime was forbidden to receive and punished

By A Refugee

This article has been supplied to "The Listener" by an Austrian refugee who has been in New Zealand for six months. "You surely will understand," he says in his covering note, "that I hesitate to give my name, because I am a refugee from Austria, who has seen and heard very much. Also my parents are still there." We print the article precisely as he wrote it

by several years of prison. That concerned—to-day it may sound funny—especially the Soviet broad casting station. For often the Soviet wireless sent messages in German language telling successes of Soviet economy



(“Radio Times,” London)

THE SHADOW OF THE SWASTIKA: “. . . People only hear what the Government thinks suitable for them.”

in contrast to the increasing misery of the German people, news about the activity of the prohibited underground opposition, about secret scandals among the highest Nazi leaders, their luxurious life and so on. There too were thrilling commemorations. E.g. many people talked about the Russian broad casting on the 28th February of 1937, when Soviet station celebrated the remembrance of the burning of the Reichstag—the German parliamentary building—by Nazi comparing in a poem Hitler's deed with Nero having burnt Rome. Or in July of 1936, when the world Olympiade took place in Berlin, Soviet wireless made a guidance through Berlin by broad cast describing the main streets of the

town. At the different prisons the guide stopped and told always, which former politician of the Left was held here in detention for years without trial.

Secret Listening

Of course times have changed. To-day, I think, it would be without danger, to listen to the Soviet wireless. But setting aside the Allied broad casting stations there are still the “black stations” telling things to the German people, which the government does not like to hear. Clearly many German people are anxious to learn the news spreading out by the prohibited station. Especially the black stations of the underground opposition always present and never palpable are very attractive for the listeners. But on the other side, to-day listening people risk their life. Nevertheless many people cannot resist the temptation. They listen secretly switching the set so lowly, that the voice only is heard, if the ear is quite near to the apparatus. It is a funny picture to see some people sitting round the broad cast and putting the ear on the wood of the radio. Though you can listen only with the biggest effort—putting aside the interruptions owing to atmospheric disturbances—all, what these people can hear, seems to be them the most beautiful celestial harmonies. Prohibited melodies resound, speeches for peace and freedom can be heard bringing woeful remembrance of times, when all this could be told frankly to everybody. Frequently such meetings are camouflaged by familiar or other celebrations justifying the being together of several people, if police would enter the flat. Thus often the room, where people met show a festive laid table. Here people use the fact, that one of the listeners incidentally has e.g. his anniversary. Or the listener knowing exactly, when the prohibited broad casting take place, lets play his set very loudly the official transmissions during the other part of the day. The purpose is to make believe everybody, that the listener always receives only the allowed station.

Giving Up the Wireless

Clearly, if a man listens to prohibited stations or not, he always has to fear denunciations raising from personnel revenge. It is very difficult for the denounced listener to justify himself. For never you can proof by objective moments, that the informer is wrong and mostly there is statement against statement and it is a matter of the police to decide, who is believed. Under such circumstances it is not surprising, that a lot of people fear to have a wireless at all, and that they prefer to give it up. Especially Jews as people very prosecuted by the authorities do so. Thus the demand of the Government, that people has to listen only to the wireless, which is allowed by the dictatorship, often results in the fact, that people do not listen at all.