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And Now Russia

THE sensation of Russia's enforced entry into the war was not the treachery of the German attack, since that is no longer a sensation, but the frank acceptance of the new situation by the free democracies. The democracies were certainly given a brilliant lead by Mr. Churchill, whose speech a few hours after the event was a masterpiece of good sense and honest opportunism. But it is a long way from Washington to Moscow; a long way from Sydney, Capetown and Wellington; the longest way of all perhaps from Queen Wilhelmina's temporary home in England. And yet from all these places the journey was made in a few hours.

It was made openly, sensibly, and unblushingly. No democracy suddenly discovered a secret admiration for Communism. It was nowhere suggested officially or unofficially that Stalin was a democrat. More than one democratic leader went out of his way to reaffirm his dislike of the Russian system. But with little more than a moment's pause the democracies ranged themselves on the side of the Russian Government and welcomed it as an ally in the fight against Germany. So well had Hitler succeeded in branding himself as an international outlaw.

And now the battle is joined in the East as well as in the West. The most powerful army the world has ever seen is attacking the biggest army the modern world has seen and no one knows what the issue will be. No one can know. The hosts of Russia are untried, and it would be foolish to assume that they are fully equipped and trained. But they are fighting for their existence politically and economically against an enemy who has never known pity. They can lose battles and lose ground without losing their war, and if they hold out for three months they will find a powerful ally in the Russian winter. We must hope for them what we hope for ourselves—that, although they must have been caught unprepared, they will find the determination and the strength to fight on wherever the tide of battle carries them.

And for ourselves the duty is plain. We are a democracy. We stand for liberty. We are fighting and dying for liberty. But our fight is with Germany, and every nation and every individual is an ally whose efforts make that fight easier.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible, and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send in their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

HYDROPONICS

Sir,—Little has been heard lately about hydroponics. Was it a nine days' wonder? Has the cult or craze died a natural death, or have the enthusiasts gone before? If there are any left in New Zealand, please lead me to them. After nearly twelve months' inquiry and experiment, I am coming to the conclusion that what is known, at least in this country, is quite harmless. I made an experiment in a small way that included eight varieties of vegetables, but my difficulty was to maintain the vitality in the plant after a minimum of beans, peas, tomatoes or marrows were produced. A few details might illustrate my point.

Tomato plants about 4in. high, although they didn't droop, were very slow, and in five weeks had only added at most 2in.; in the same position, a warm, sheltered corner, the same seedlings in soil beat them out of sight. Not one of ten plants produced more than two clusters, and I had no need to remove laterals as there were none. The fruit ripened in due course and was of good flavour. Runner beans were the same; they kept pace with soil growth and produced a good crop. They were sown on November 18 and by January 9, two beans were picked; on January 30 they were at their maximum. By February 9 they were finished and showed no sign of blooming any more. In the soil they went on until well into April. A marrow plant in coarse sand produced one marrow and could not be persuaded to try again. Cabbages were a complete failure after eight weeks' trial. With lettuces, out of 12 seedlings only two hearted in eight weeks; all others went to seed. In soil the same seedlings did very well.

Cucumbers would not grow for me. Lettuce, radish, carrot and onion, sown on December 16, showed no sign by January 1 (in soil they were all well up), never did any good, and I gave them up. Peas sown on January 1 gave quite a good crop by March 30, and a second picking a week later. On the other hand, they were no good at all in soil at the same date.

I am trying hydroponics out just now inside a small glasshouse. Radish seed sown on June 1 is well up on the 10th.

If by any chance this letter appears in your paper, I should be glad to get any tips from any reader who may have had better luck.

—A. OCKENDEN (Scarborough Hill, Sumner).

BRITISH AND DOMINION TROOPS

Sir,—The letter that you published this week (June 13), and your editorial on it, show there is a danger of a mistake of last war being repeated in this war—the making of invidious comparisons between troops from Britain and troops from the Dominions. Some New Zealanders are apt to overlook the fact that their men and the Australians naturally get more space than British troops in New Zealand news because they are the local product, and local interest in them is the greater. From some of the messages we had about the fighting in Greece at the time, one might have thought that there were hardly any soldiers there from the British Isles. In the last war, and afterwards, it was necessary to point out, what every Anzac knew, that the feat of the 29th Division of Regulars in landing at Cape Helles was at least equal to that of the Australians and New Zealanders. I am not taking away one jot from the reputation of my countrymen and our Australian cousins when I say that by many people overseas the achievements of the English soldier were insufficiently appreciated. The Retreat from Mons and the First Battle of Ypres had been fought before the New Zealanders and Australians entered the

fray. I write "English" of purpose, because there has always been a sort of special glamour about Scottish and Irish regiments. I am not unmindful of the fact that regiments from all parts of the British Isles shared in the glories I mention, but I do think it is profitable at this stage to emphasise the importance of the English soldier in the British Army. The greater part of the fighting in Britain's wars has always been done by the English line regiments. Of the men who broke the Hindenburg Line in 1918 some 70 per cent were English—English, not British, and the percentage of casualties was about the same. In his statement in the Commons this week, Mr. Churchill has put in its right proportion the shares of the sections of the Imperial Army, and the peoples of the Empire, in the campaigns, and his figures should not be ignored. For goodness sake don't let us play the enemy's game by squabbling over the most vital and tragic of contributions to the common cause.—IRISH-NEW ZEALANDER (Wellington).

BEETHOVEN OR BOOKS?

Sir,—The beautiful, inspiring and masterly Symphony No. 1 by Beethoven was permitted to be on the air for the short period of four minutes from 4YA on Friday night. This composition was then interrupted for a gentleman to talk about books. I strongly protest.

—NOT A BING BOY (Tolaga Bay).

WITH THE BOYS OVERSEAS

Sir,—A word of appreciation for the Sunday morning feature "With the Boys Overseas." I am sure this item is eagerly awaited by all listeners, but could not the sports talk be abbreviated? Last Sunday morning I listened to a monologue about football competitions that occupied nearly 15 minutes of this otherwise splendid programme. Details of the personnel of football committees and teams and descriptions of matches between the "A's" and "B's" can surely have only a limited appeal. Apparently, there is only a certain time available for the whole broadcast, and yet each Sunday, listeners are regaled with accounts of sporting items that take a large portion of this time. My point is that the time so used could be instead devoted to additional messages from the boys themselves, or by interesting talks such as the ones recently given by the soldiers who had seen service in Greece. With the close of the Cretan campaign, there will no doubt be those who are willing to relate their experiences, and surely that is more to the point than vivid descriptions of sporting events.—MEDEN AGAN (Auckland).

TWO BOUQUETS

Sir,—May I be permitted a little space in your paper to heave a couple of bouquets? The first is to the editor of that feature in this week's issue, "Quiz for Readers." I had a lot of fun solving it, and sincerely hope we will get some more.

The second bouquet is to the CBS for a very enjoyable programme—the life story of my favourite—Bing Crosby. I am sure all other Crosby fans liked it as well as I did.—P. A. FAGAN (Oxford).

"FOREVER FREEDOM"

Sir,—In reviewing this work in your issue of May 30, you say "the only extracts not originally written in English are from the Bible"; and go on to quote the Great Charter. "Nulli vendemus, nulli negabimus aut differemus rectum vel iusticiam." So goes the original text, sealed by King John, and re-issued by his successors. Call that English?

And talking of English, I wish it were possible to replace by an Australasian or British writer your cinema critic; who, in the same issue, talks of something "plugged hard in the publicity," and "cheering from the campus," and gratuitously insults the Dominion of Canada by saying "America" when the context shows he means "United States." Waal, I'll say, stranger!—C'RECT CARD (Wellington).

(Struth! Two birds with one brick! But whom does our pedant insult in turn with "Australasian"?—Ed.).