

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

Every Friday Price Threepence

FEBRUARY 27, 1942.

Since Singapore

WE are not simple enough to suppose that the feature story printed on Pages 8 and 9 of this issue is in itself very important. At the most we spoke to thirty or forty people and at the best those who answered our questions answered them without forethought. It is obvious too that it is never possible to frame questions in a hurry that will infallibly uncover casual minds.

But if our story is not important the subject of it is. New Zealand is either getting ready to defend itself since Singapore or it is drifting lazily to destruction. The peril is very real and may be very near, for we cannot assume that the last place to be attacked will be the place farthest away from the enemy's country. The first place attacked in the Pacific was four thousand miles from that country, and two thousand from its nearest base, and if anyone pretends to know where the next blow will fall he should be put in a concentration camp. He is a gambler and a fool, and should be put where fools are least dangerous. But since we are all fools some of the time, the purpose of this hasty investigation by our staff was to discover, if we could, whether the credulous and the complacent are still numerous enough among us to frustrate the efforts of those who now know what the facts are—not enough ships or planes or guns or men to make invasion either impossible or improbable. We wanted to know how many people had grasped those facts, and of those who had grasped them how many were facing them with calm courage.

And of course we still don't know, but we know a little more than we did. Some of those we approached laughed at us, some gave frivolous answers, and one or two tried pathetically to be funny. But most answered earnestly, and very few had failed to realise that the peace and comfort we still enjoy in New Zealand may disappear any day or any night. Just as definitely very few were foolishly alarmed. We found impatience, anxiety about plans, irritation that so much had been talked about and so little (apparently) done. But there was as little panic as would be found on an ocean liner in a violent storm, and as clear an indication that orders will be obeyed calmly if the extremity becomes suddenly worse.

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.

IS GANDHI CRAFTY?

Sir,—Is Gandhi crafty as well as courageous? I would add to that, for reasons that I hope will become apparent, "Can a leopard change his spots?" You suggest that those who deny Gandhi's craftiness to-day are either simple or, like Nelson at Copenhagen I presume, deliberately blind.

Books on Gandhi and the East are popular at the moment, so though I have searched library shelves I can't find the book presented to the Mahatma on his 70th birthday, containing Essays and Reflections from the pens of 70 or more celebrities, concerning the meaning and message of his life to them. Not all are complimentary, but I fancy they would swell *The Listener's* list of Simpletons or Nelsons to the number of about 70 souls, which include General Smuts, Romain Rolland, Sir Herbert Samuel, Stephen Hobhouse, Rabindranath Tagore, Edward Thompson, and C. F. Andrews. Maude Royden's Essay is almost after the nature of a prayer to India and to Gandhi not to fail in their ideals. C. E. M. Joad's short tribute is perhaps the most impressive in the book. Those writers who are least sympathetic towards Gandhi's ideas acknowledge most directly his transparent sincerity, if I remember rightly.

It may be argued that these people might change their opinion in the light of present-day happenings. But I have already asked "Can the leopard change his spots?"

John Gunther, telling of "Inside Asia," admits that Gandhi is a "slippery fellow." But then so is a baby in its bath. It shares that quality with the serpent, and somewhere we have been told to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." The words of this analogy are mine, because I can't find a

Gunther left on the shelves either, but I think the spirit of it is in keeping with the slipperiness implied by him.

Finally, as a sort of consolation prize for the books I couldn't find, I came quite by accident upon Count Keyserling's *Creative Understanding*, and as if a Voice from Heaven spoke I copied out these words: "It is only with inferior persons that idealism and Machiavellism are incompatible. In the case of the superior man they are interdependent."

That leaves us with a third question. Is Gandhi a superior man, or is Mahatma, The Great Soul, applied to him, merely a spurious title? I don't know. I am among those not qualified to judge, because I have to acknowledge that love may be blind like Nelson. Some people believe it makes the world go round all the same.

E. P. DAWSON (Wellington).

(If our correspondent means that these "70 or more celebrities" would not have contributed to the birthday tribute if they had thought Gandhi "crafty as well as courageous," she has a poor opinion of celebrities. If she does not mean that, we can't imagine why she throws them at us.—Ed.)

INDIA NOW

Sir,—Your leader on non-violence appears very logical if one considers the diverse mentality of different nations. The letter written by "Remember Amritsar" is also interesting, as the pen name appears to place him in the category of those who use the Amritsar incident as a political whipping post, while General Dwyer, not being a visionary, had to choose the lesser of two evils. Circumstances often occur where there is no right way and, of course, as far as one knows, there has never been a perfect human being on earth. It is exceedingly doubtful if non-violence only has ever succeeded. Would "Remember Amritsar" tell us what he thinks would be the result if Britain withdrew altogether from India? Would the 50,000,000 untouchables and the 70,000,000 Mohammedans be happier under the rule of orthodox Hindus? Some believe that Mohammedans create incidents to keep the British in India. Whether that is true or not I don't know. But the freedom that pacifists and conscientious objectors enjoy in British countries helped Germany and Japan to carry out their plans.—"REMEMBER ROTTERDAM AND HAWAII" (Carterton).

A "DISTINGUISHED" CONDUCTOR

Sir,—I heard an orchestra announced last night as "under the distinguished conductorship of Mr. Andersen Tyrer." I wonder what Mr. Tyrer himself thinks of such toadyism. If he is distinguished, the world knows. If he is not, no announcer can make him so. And what about the other conductors? Are they to be publicly humiliated to lift another man up? Such vulgarities are unworthy of the National Broadcasting Service, and should be abolished.

N.A. (Hutt Valley).

ORGAN MUSIC FOR THE NORTH ISLAND

Sir,—Dr. Bradshaw's 3YA organ recital last Friday when "For Unto Us" (Handel), "March of the Magi Kings" (Dubois), and other masterpieces, were so splendidly played greatly thrilled many listeners. As South Island stations are often mushy of reception in the North, could evening organ recitals be arranged for broadcasting in Auckland by 1YA particularly, as Auckland has some splendid resident organists? Further, is it not a great pity that the beautiful instrument with its four manuals in the Town Hall is so rarely heard? We organ lovers away from town would appreciate good organ music a little more when we listen in.

W. ERIC COCKS (Hauraki Plains).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

R. D. ESDALE (Ohura).—You have our sympathy, but shooting the pianist is against our national tradition.

Tears For Todt

(By WHIM-WHAM)

[Hitler, according to cable messages, wept copiously at the funeral of Fritz Todt, the Nazi transport expert, who was one of his closest collaborators.]

*HITLER, although a Man of Steel,
Is prone to Tantrums, I have heard:
His Voice becomes a strident Squeal,
A Whistle rather than a Word,
And all that Nordic Organism
One paranoiac Paroxysm.*

*CAN such a Man as Adolf mourn
In any ordinary way?
And can he feel bereaved, forlorn?
And if he can, does he display
His Spirit's Craving for Relief
In simple human Signs of Grief?*

*THESE Tears they say the Fuhrer shed
When Todt was given to the Earth—
Were they real Sorrow for the Dead?
Or were they Stage Effects, and worth
No more than those deceitful Wiles
Attributed to Crocodiles?*

*OR were they of a double kind,
Half for the Passing of a Friend,
And Half because it brought to Mind
His own inevitable End?
When Death will come for all that Gang,
Not with a Whimper, but a Bang!*