

# THE FAITH OF A PIANIST

FOR half an hour last week I talked with Ignaz Friedman, but we did not talk about music. We talked about the great world in which he, an international figure, moves in the course of his artistic life. I wanted to know whether he felt the present war as Paderewski felt the last, whether all Poles are patriots wherever they happen to live and work, and in particular if he believed as well as hoped that Poland would rise again.

In the middle of our conversation the building began to rock, to rock with some violence, but he went on quite undisturbed. "An earthquake?" he asked. "Oh yes, I have felt them in South America." But his next sentence was about Warsaw. The earthquake had answered my question for me.

There can be no doubt about Polish patriotism. An artist is an artist, he had just told me, and art knows no boundaries. But a Pole is a Pole. To destroy Warsaw it would be necessary to kill everybody there, everybody who had ever been there, and it was too late for the Germans even to try to do that. There was already a little Warsaw in Edinburgh, where the University was training medical students, another in London, which was training lawyers and journalists, and several in America, where the great universities were salvaging the intellectual wealth of Poland and getting it ready for the day of deliverance. No, Germany had been too late.

"But just too late," Mr. Friedman added. "There had been nothing in history more vile, more calculated and more brutish, than the attempt of the Nazis to put out Poland's eyes; to destroy everyone who looked capable of leadership, and everyone capable of carrying on Polish culture."

## "These Stories Are True"

"Then", I asked him, "you accept these abominable stories? These murdered professors and artists and musicians and men of science, are not these stories 75 per cent propaganda?"

It was an unfortunate question. But the cloud passed. "Sir," he said simply, "if you doubt me, go along to my Consul and ask to see a book he has there . . . Yes, I know that books can be faked. I know something about propaganda. But the best actors in the world could not reproduce the expressions on some of the faces. In any case, I don't ask you to believe it all; or half of it. If you accept ten per cent of it you will have a story of horror that, if the world knew it, would turn it sick. But then the Axis powers have committed so many abominations that I am perhaps concentrating too much on my own country's sufferings."

"Besides", he went on a moment later, "we have had a long apprenticeship in suffering. We used to call Poland the Christ among the nations, it had been so often crucified. But we don't claim that honour any longer."

## They Still Believe

"And yet", I said, "you believe in a resurrection? In spite of all the things



**"Poland will rise again," says IGNAZ FRIEDMAN**

that have been done to your country, you still believe that it will rise again? Who will restore its cultural life, for example?"

He smiled.

"Our culture is safe; very safe. It rests with four writers and one musician, and the whole world knows them. Lend me your pencil."

Firmly and very clearly he wrote down these names: Mickiewicz, Norwid, Zeromski, Wyspianski, Chopin. How many did I know?

I confessed to two only—the first and the last—but he was not troubled. "No," he said, "it does not matter, because they are true. They cannot be destroyed. And in these five the soul of Poland lives on. If everything else went, the world would still have Poland."

But it was inconceivable that everything else would go. The Nazis were devils. They had made themselves devils. How else could their conduct be explained—educated men behaving like swine? But not even their devilishness could do much more to Poland than had already been done now, and it was not destruction. Did I know that the life of Poland still went on? That the persecution had united Catholics and Jews? That there were secret meetings, secret radio, secret newspapers, at least sixty of them, all operating under the very noses of the Nazis? Nothing could happen in Warsaw without the knowledge, in a few hours, of the outside world. The Polish boy in Tobruk heard of every abomination; it reached Polish lads in submarines, and other lads in the air. It joined Catholics to Jews, capitalists to socialists, in one common fighting front.

## Neighbours

What then was Poland's attitude to Russia? I asked Mr. Friedman this difficult question: "If Poland does rise again, can it live in peace with its neighbours? You have called it the Maginot Line of Catholicism? Is a defence line no longer necessary?"

He was perfectly frank: "Things are not what they were, and never again will be. The Poles themselves have done many wrong and foolish things

which they will not repeat. So have the Russians, the Czechs and the Swedes. We are all passing through the fires of purification. The Poland of the future will not be the Poland of the past. The Roman Catholics of my country will not spend their time fighting the Greek Catholics of my wife's country. Religion will be religion and not politics. Nor will we spend our time fighting the Czechs and other small nations. There will be a federal union of all these eastern European groups—how close I don't know, but I should think that we will have a common currency, a common customs union, a common gendarmerie, and so on. It will all take time, of course, but it is coming."

## How Long?

"Then how long", I asked, "will it take to restore Poland spiritually?"

"I should think two or three generations," he replied. "We have to create everything over again—schools, universities, art galleries, museums, and, slowest task of all, scholars, and artists, and musicians, and men of science. The Nazis have not only killed our teachers: they have stolen everything that teachers require—all our works of art that could be carried away. We know what we are facing when we say that we shall rise again. But we know the loyalty, the burning fire of patriotism that we all carry in our hearts. Besides, we have seen through all this before. We were partitioned and occupied for generations. But we survived."

—D.R.L.

## Going The Whole Hedgehog

(A little exercise in the terms of military science)

By WHIM-WHAM

*THE Hedgehog in the Bottleneck*  
Was very nearly shattered twice,  
But stoutly pushed the Pincers back  
And drove a Wedge into the Vice;  
While all along the Elbow flew  
Umbrellas fanning from the Rear,  
And forward Elements went through  
To mop up Pockets far and near.

*WHO infiltrated round the Bulge*  
And closed the Sack and stormed  
the Box,  
I am unable to divulge—  
So daring and unorthodox  
This scissors Move, this flanking Prong,  
I wish I had the words to tell  
How Triangles so square and strong  
Were cut off from their Base and fell.

*BETRAYED! Betrayed! the Hedgehog*  
cried,  
While Claws contracted everywhere,  
Then Pincers pounced and Gaps grew  
wide;  
He was encircled fair and square,  
With Hammerblow, with Punch and  
Thrust,  
They crossed his T and stopped his  
Gap;  
They broke his Core and cracked his  
Crust  
And scraped the Remnants off the  
Map!