

DECEMBER 31, 1942

1943

WE make an attempt to-day to show in what spirit ordinary men and women face the New Year. A dozen men and women encountered by chance are of course not New Zealand, but it is not probable that a hundred dozen answers, if we had been able to print them, would have differed greatly in effect and drift from those for which we have found space. People of importance and people of no importance—we of course, use the terms conventionally—react in much the same way privately to the same set of facts; but although people of importance have the freest access to the facts, they are not as free to say what they think and feel. In any case when a country has been three years at war, and most of that time suffering reverses, it is not always safe to assume that its people are still stoutly confident. We wanted to know what people are thinking and feeling off-guard, and it is heartening to discover that whatever else is passing through their minds they are not surrendering to weakness or despondency. If we were determined to worry about New Zealand we could not find an excuse in the outlook of ordinary people. On the other hand, however determined we were not to worry, we could not shut our eyes to the fact that war never makes it easier for liberal minds to remain liberal. Our New Year messages are stout-hearted and wholesome: if they all seem to be emphasising the same point—that it is one thing to win a battle and another thing to win a war—it can hardly be said that the warning is unnecessary. But the real significance of these messages is their suggestion that ordinary men and women in a free community can be trusted to remain sane and calm if they are given anything like a reasonable chance. They can be corrupted, as every good and clean thing can be if the agents of corruption are given a free hand. Give them the facts, and the alarmist does not get very far.

**LETTERS FROM LISTENERS****"THIS IS WAR."**

Sir,—*This is War* is an effort to stop the ordinary people thinking things out for themselves. Why weren't these famous "stars" and poets, and the huge network of the Broadcasting Companies brought into action for the advancement of the negro race, on behalf of the sharecroppers, penal reform, and on behalf of America's millions of unemployed, who seem only to be useful when war threatens America's shores? Those charming people who believe one should "hate the sin and love the sinner" were not really disposed of by the mad dog analogy. There was One such whom they tried to dispose of two thousand years ago. They didn't succeed even with the aid of His churches. Right and Truth have a curious habit of enduring.

MARGARET BENNETT (St. Clair).

**"LANDFALL"**

Sir,—*"Landfall"*, which was given at 2 p.m. on a recent Sunday should have been a beautiful performance—beautiful music (with some wild primeval note of the wind in it) wedded to beautiful verse. But the voice of the reader marred all. He "elocuted" to such purpose that I did not catch one sentence. The senseless rise and fall of the voice robbed the words of all meaning, and distracted the mind. He may have thought he was speaking with the tongues of angels (a cherubin blast), but he became as sounding brass.

Why must such things be? Surely a reader could be found with a simple, God-given voice?

—E.M.D. (Christchurch).

**MORE BEETHOVEN.**

Sir,—May I add to the pleas for "more Beethoven" (Choral Symphony, Mass in D), which I heartily endorse, a request for the presentation of Beethoven's Opera *Fidelio*. Its shortness makes it particularly apt for broadcasting, and apart from its great music, the story—though no literary masterpiece—with its appeal to freedom versus tyranny is especially moving to-day.

The other day "Marsyas" suggested a ban to be imposed on Gounod's "Ave Maria." Could Rimsky-Korsakov's "Indian Love Song" (Love for India?) suffer the same fate for a few weeks? I have heard it lately eight times within ten days; once from the same station in the morning and the afternoon of the same day.

"MUSICA" (Hawke's Bay).

**ARE MUSICIANS NORMAL?**

Sir,—Is J. C. Beaglehole really serious when he accuses musicians of having so many faults?

Any or all of the aspersions he cast at them could be applied to thousands of people throughout the world who have not a note of music in them, so why pick on the long-suffering musicians?

My own experience is that most musicians are a kindly, good-natured class, somewhat lacking in worldly wisdom, and not caring very much what the rest of the world thinks of them as long as they are left in peace with their music. They are usually ready and willing to give their services for other people's charities and in consequence

are often overworked. Hence it is not to be wondered at if they are sometimes irritable. Human nature generally reacts in much the same way to the same conditions, regardless of nationality, creed, or profession. To denounce any one section of the community as being imbued with all the shortcomings is to take a very narrow view. In any case, the pleasure we all receive from music far outweighs the faults of the musicians.

—C.M.L. (Christchurch).

**HITLERISM AND THE GERMAN PEOPLE.**

Sir,—So E. A. W. Smith thinks it was a sad blunder to quote J. B. Priestley. What sad blunderers the BBC must have been to keep him talking over the air for the past two years and to quote him regularly in *London Calling* and the English *Listener*! But surely Mr. Smith has blundered in quoting a magazine dated as far back as April, 1941, in support of his uncalled-for attack on Priestley. My own quotation was from *London Calling* of August, 1942, which is at least much more recent evidence of Priestley's powers of survival. I might just as easily have quoted other sources about opposition to Nazism within Germany—but that would have deprived Mr. Smith of the chance to avoid the original argument about Hitlerism and the German people and go witch-hunting instead after Mr. Priestley.

As for XXX (Christchurch), I am in complete agreement with his opinion that it is the Russians and not ourselves who are going to have the big say in the future of Germany, but would like to point out that the Russians have frequently stressed the distinction between Hitlerism and the German people.

—AUDAX II. (Wellington).

Sir,—Some of your correspondents have been arguing that after the war Germans should be treated the same way that some (not all) Nazis treat Jews, and for the same reason—namely that the whole race is congenitally evil and a plague-spot in Europe. "XXX", however, reminds us that not our opinions on this matter but Stalin's intentions will probably prevail. And Stalin has, under all provocation, steadily refused to threaten the German people as such. Such threats of vengeance can lose us the War (or at least greatly prolong it), by giving the ordinary Germans—who support Hitler because he led his people out of unemployment and despair, not because he led them into war—no hope of a reasonable existence apart from Hitler's continued rule. And—equally important—they can lose us the Peace, by diverting into endless military occupation and useless emotional outlet the energies that are needed to build a better world. This war has interrupted the economic problems which caused it—not solved them. Its colossal suffering will be justified only if we can, despite war, weariness and war emotion, use the fluid period at its close for a new deal all round.

Nimitz Eisenhower Willkie (Wellington).

**ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS**

"Hearing Set" and "A Sufferer."—Referred to Standards Institute.