

AUGUST 6, 1943

Italy

ITALY, as we go to press, is still at war with the United Nations, but Mussolini has gone and left no address. It is quite certain, too, that Italy would *not* be at war if a way of escape had presented itself. Whoever now really rules in Rome, the people want peace at almost any price; but it is one thing to be anxious to get out of the mess in which they now find themselves and another thing to discover how. They will not escape as long as Germany can hold them in; in other words until the Germans find it necessary to escape themselves; and no one knows when that point will be reached. We do know that it is approaching. As for the Fascists, they have become as ridiculous already as their fallen leader, who was no sooner dismissed than he was a joke. It is quite fantastic that a figure so obviously stuffed with straw was able for twenty years to rule forty million people and annoy and even alarm a hundred million. But it happened. It is clear now that firm resistance by either Britain or France would have stopped the conquest of Abyssinia. But their resistance was not firm. They gave way before his bluster, not merely because they were unprepared for war, but because they believed that he was both determined and able to sweep them out of his way if they attempted to stop him. He was perhaps half as able to seize the Mediterranean then as he was in 1940 to take Egypt and conquer Greece; yet France did nothing, and Britain, after a feeble attempt to organise a "sanctions" front against him, surrendered to his bluff and moved timidly out of his way. It is now almost ludicrous—a loud ranting and roaring and two great nations in retreat with nothing in pursuit. Unfortunately jokes on an international scale can turn in a flash into tragedy; as that one did. The blusterer got an ally, as intoxicated as himself and many times more powerful and able, and it is only now, after the most appalling struggle in our history, that we are beginning to be sure that the world will be free again. Mussolini is out, his country is almost out, but tens of thousands must fall before Germany follows.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

APPEAL TO WOMEN

Sir,—Like many old soldiers, "Audacious XX" appears to be rather more sentimental than realistic. Anyway, he ignores the fact that I went out of my way to admit that even in wartime the great majority of people do not behave promiscuously. Similarly, "Per Ardua ad Astra" construes my letter as a specific attack on the Air Force, whereas, of course, it was nothing of the sort. I stressed that I had no desire to pick on any one section as against another, and only mentioned "a young Air Force man" by way of example. I might as easily, and with equal impartiality, have mentioned the U.S. Marines, whose esprit de corps includes a tradition that in almost any engagement they must expect a staggering proportion of casualties. Surely such an attitude of mind has some bearing on the subject under discussion. But in case anybody gets me wrong again, let me repeat that my argument applies as much to civilians, men and women, as to fighting men.

Another correspondent, "Sappho," came much nearer the heart of the problem when she pointed out that war and promiscuity are complementary evils. The press, the pulpit, and the politicians cannot go on urging us to do the things that total war makes necessary without inevitably taking the fine edge off the moral sense of many people. When any Government, because of the demands of total war, jettisons its normal standards of civilised conduct to the extent of admitting that not a single enemy survivor of a sea battle this year was allowed to escape machine-gunning by 'planes or "mopping up" by sharks, and when the general public (including the Churches), accept this sort of thing with complacency and even approval—when this happens, it is surely not surprising, though no less deplorable, that other standards of decency should be going overboard as well. A Church which condones war cannot logically expect to make much impression when it condemns adultery.—AUDAX II. (Wellington).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.).

THE OUTLOOK FOR INDIA

Sir,—As one who has lived in India for several years, I was interested in reading your interview with Miss A. Lantis on "India As She Saw It." In it she quoted a noted Moslem leader as having stated that "Moslems and Hindus will work together until we get independence. After that, we shall settle our own differences for ourselves." Such a method would be disastrous to the peace, prosperity and unity of India. At the present time, Hindus and Mohammedans are antagonistic the one to the other, and on certain occasions deadly clashes have occurred, clashes which have exceeded in violence anything ever witnessed in the religious riots which used to characterise the Falls and Shankill areas in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Many people who advocate self-government for India do not take into consideration the fact that India is a vast country with a huge population of 400 millions, with differences in language and religion. It is estimated that there are 14 principal languages, with numerous dialects spoken. The principal religions are Hindu and Mohammedan. The former is governed by a caste system which prevails in the life of the people.

A man must abide in the caste in which he was born, there is no passing from one caste to another, and there is no true social intercourse between the castes. Thus caste has created a marked dividing line.

But in addition to the millions ruled by caste, there is a mighty army numbering 60 millions who are classed as out-castes, or the untouchables. These are not allowed to enter Hindu temples. The great Mahatma Gandhi was unable to help them. But these out-castes are beginning to awake, and to demand their place in the Hindu religion.

Another difficulty in the way of total self-government is the fact that one-third of India is composed of Native States, ruled by Native Rajahs or Princes. These States govern themselves, and have their own laws, courts, police, etc. Britain, by treaty, guarantees them protection. The population of these States is something like 90 millions. Any solution of the future government of India must naturally be subject to the consent of these native Rajahs and their people.

Yet another difficulty is that India is still an illiterate country. Despite great effort by missionaries and the Government, only about 10 per cent of the people can read and write. This illiteracy leaves them open to the wiles of agitators, or interested persons, who seek to sway the unruly ones with Gandhi's parrot-call "Quit India."

The Mohammedans have not forgotten that prior to the advent of British rule, a great part of India was under the rule of Mogul Emperors, whose royal seat was in Delhi, where many magnificent buildings bear witness to the grandeur of that reign. And it is quite possible there may be some who are looking forward to the day when the Moslems will be again supreme, and will be able to lord it over all in India. (Rev.) G. W. BLAIR (Auckland).

DOES HUMAN NATURE CHANGE?

Sir,—I listened-in to Dr. Sutherland's talk from 3YA on July 21. He was very definite that human nature does change. Taking the Bible as a guide to man's nature of 5000 years ago, I notice we still have with us about the same percentage of the greedy, the thieving, the adulterous, the vicious, the brave, the cowardly, the lying, and the honest folk. I trust Dr. Sutherland will explain this at a later date.

He also mentions that man's goodness is constant, but is not goodness an inverted maternal or paternal instinct, and is this just part of human nature?

C. Y. NICKEL (Otago Central).

POINTS FROM LETTERS

W. H. Baynton (New Plymouth), wants to know why we don't call ourselves "the War Cry, or some name that suits us"; finds our articles "often stale and of no interest whatever"; says that "more space should be allotted to programmes and less to war articles"; and wishes us good-night with the remark that it would have been "interesting to have had a chat from, say, Peter Dawson."

(We are afraid that our correspondent slept by day as well as by night when Peter Dawson was in New Zealand, or he would not be asking in July, 1943, for something that appeared in our columns in May, 1942.—Ed.).

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

P.P.H. (Waipukurau) (1). No. Probably a mistake by the announcer. (2). No, again. The change you suggest would not be sufficient for your purpose even if, on other grounds, it were desirable.



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