

THERE'S MORE THAN GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS

THE little-known story of how a small party of men, working in rain and snow in South Westland in 1944-45, helped the war effort and kept New Zealand's radio industry going introduces a new series of talks by W. F. Heinz from 3YA. Mr. Heinz wrote the popular series *Gold Prospecting for Beginners*, first broadcast from 3YA two years ago, and later heard from other stations. This time he starts with two talks about mica mining in New Zealand, and then in four more talks goes on to discuss some of our other mineral wealth—greenstone, oil, radio-active minerals and tungsten. The series—which is read by Pat Smyth—will start on Sunday, May 2, at 3.30 p.m.

Most of us know mica as the clear, glass-like substance used in electric toasters. Because of its high-grade insulating properties, it is used in all types of electrical equipment. Mica is found in a book-like form, from which plates can be lifted page by page; and once mined it is ready for use—it has only to be trimmed and split to a suitable thickness. High-grade mica is rare, and by 1942 it had become for the Allies a top-ranking critical material. Towards the end of the next year it looked as if New Zealand would not be able to supply radio equipment promised for the Pacific and Asian theatres of war simply because there was no mica to make the thousands of condensers needed. That was where Mr. Heinz came into the picture, for in 1944 he made a preliminary survey of two areas of the West Coast of the South Island where mica had been found.

Before the war Jack Sweeney, an old prospector of South Westland, had mined mica from a claim 3600 feet up on the Mataketake Range, between the Paringa and Haast Rivers. He was aged 78 and had gone to Hokitika to retire when Mr. Heinz met him there, saw some of his samples of mica, and decided right away that mining could

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have all taken for granted so long that it is a sobering thought to remember they exist on the same plane in no other capital city of Europe. Without Paris, Europe would be a different and an infinitely poorer place: one feels it should be possible to draw a magic ring around this city on the Seine, to guarantee its survival through the worst that may come in our time. But neutralism and safety first are the negation of all that Paris stands for: more deeply than any other, this city is dedicated to challenge and adventure and revolt. It is right at the centre of the storm—and no still centre, at that. No doubt the waves will break over it again, as they have done so often in the past. And if courage and crisp intelligence can guarantee survival, Paris will survive.

But one danger of being too intelligent is that you see too clearly ahead. Anouilh couldn't bear to make his play on Joan of Arc into a tragedy, so he turned it into a charade. And that, perhaps, is the typical Parisian predicament today. France is the Cassandra of Europe, as eloquent as ever in the face of coming doom; but powerless as any oracle or intellectual to help herself.

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go ahead. How the mining party fared in their camp in the snow that winter Mr. Heinz describes in his first talk.

The story of the discovery of a second quarry in the same area is told in the second talk. "For a start mica used to fall out in every direction when we prised away the loose surface rock," Mr. Heinz says. "We gathered it up pretty quickly, carried it down to the base in our packs for trimming and splitting, and then sent off the sheets to Wellington." When all the loose rock had been mined machine drilling was started. And that's how the radio industry was kept going. Mr. Heinz says the weather was the main drawback. Those years were wet even for Westland—one afternoon in the Spring of 1944 the river near which they were working rose 23 feet and the camp was temporarily evacuated. Mr. Heinz ends with an assessment of our mica resources and a suggestion that the South Westland field might prove to be one of the world's largest.

Most of us have seen greenstone, beautiful, semi-translucent mineral which has been known to the Chinese for thousands of years—though they

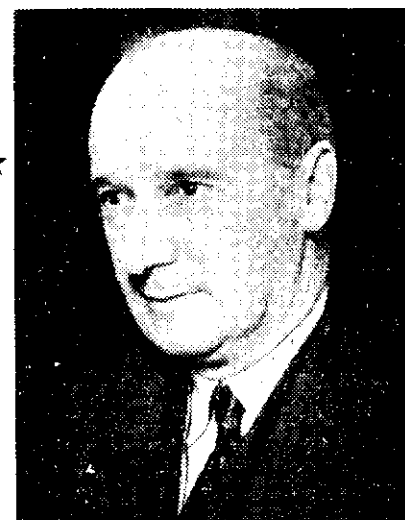
usually call it jade. In his talk on greenstone, Mr. Heinz says that many of the tikis and pendants we see about aren't made from greenstone at all, but from Bowenite, which is much softer and easier to work. In fact, greenstone is pretty hard to find. In the past it was exported to Germany and China (where it passed as Chinese jade), and jewellery made from it would be a valuable source of dollars if high quality stone could be found in quantity. For those who want to look for it the beaches between Hokitika and Westport are probably the best places.

Prospectors have been looking for the source of Taranaki oil for nearly 100 years, and in that time the search for oil has spread to many other parts of the country. Since the Americans spent several million pounds on drilling in New Zealand during the war, some people have concluded that the search is hopeless, but Mr. Heinz quotes authority to show that there are large untested areas of New Zealand which may yet produce oil on a commercial scale.

Radio-active minerals are not hard to find, says Mr. Heinz in his talk on this subject. You'll get them in any place where ancient rocks have



★ MINING mica in the back-country of South Westland. Petrol-driven drilling equipment is shown above and at the foot of the page miners are seen clearing away snow at the 3800-foot level. W. F. Heinz, who took part in this war-time venture, is shown at right ★



pushed through the earth's surface. There are many rocks like that in New Zealand, and Mr. Heinz describes the search made for these minerals at the request of the British Government in 1944, and tells what came of it. This search crossed his own mica mining operations in South Westland, and though it was all secret then he admits he had an idea what was afoot and was not very surprised when the first atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Since the war the demand for tungsten has increased. First, harder steels were needed for gas turbine engines, and now new metals made from tungsten and some of the rarer metals are being developed to withstand the heat of jet and turbo-jet engines. Scheelite ore, which is our main source of tungsten, is mined mainly in Otago, and for young men willing to work hard, for no certain reward but in the hope of making a small fortune overnight, Mr. Heinz suggests: "One young man recovered £3000 worth of scheelite in a few months. Another party is reported to have mined 12 tons—£24,000 worth—in a year. It's almost worth trying, isn't it?"

