

"IT'S a revolt against modern times—and any kind of success is barred," said the bearded, jersey-clad Irishman who, single-brained, every week writes Britain's zany radio series—*The Goon Show*.

"The show's been described as 'taking a situation to its illogical conclusion,' but I'd rather call it an adventure into futility," said 38-year-old Terence Alan Patrick Sean Milligan—Spike to you and me—when I caught him in the theatre canteen during rehearsals. "It's not that I'm a patriot," he assured me, sipping a cup of good English tea, "it's just that five years ago I wanted to write a real British radio show—the only one of its kind."

On the table was his 150th *Goon Show* script—one that, through the BBC Transcription Service, New Zealand listeners could join in along with addicts in Great Britain. Maybe that's why he was glad when the radio critic of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Boston, said the show was "Socker," and told his readers that here was a British programme "not fraught with reserve."

"All the same, I got the impression he was looking for a meaning," smiled Spike. That's fatal, but one thing Milligan sees to is that his humorous revolution never has a plot ending in success. "If men set out to rob a bank, they find, when the safe's cracked open, there is only enough money in it to pay the fare home."

The Goons have an all-British flavour which even the inspired Spike didn't write into the script. Though this Irishman plays the part of Eccles, Moriarty and any number of Jap characters, his co-Goons are Welshman Harry Secombe—"I've got a straight rôle, more or less, as little Neddy Seagoon"—and English mimic Peter Sellers, who pops up as Major Bloodnok, Henry Crun and Bluebottle. And producer Pat Dixon is a Scot.

Few humorists treat their subject more seriously than Milligan, and his



office above a greengrocer's shop near London's West End is suitably quiet and overlooks a green surrounded by trees.

"On a sunny day I feel I'm working in the country—which isn't a bad atmosphere when you've got to turn out a Goon script from Monday to Friday—8.0 a.m. to 7.0 p.m.

It's like writing a three-act play in less than a week, but what gives me confidence is that the boys never query the script. Most comics would want to slip in a few old gags of their own—I know, because I've

tried writing for them."

Harry and Peter don't see the script until the show is recorded each Sunday in an old theatre in North London, now used as a BBC studio. When you see the boys rehearsing your first impression is two pairs of spectacles talking to a beard, for while the others wear glasses to study the script, Spike's beard jogs up and down as he talks to Pat Dixon.

A journalist before going into radio, Pat gives the script its first run-through, soon after lunch. Then comes the job of fitting in the all-important sound effects—and few radio shows raid the BBC's effects larder as does *The Goon Show*.

Several spots in the script are pre-recorded, with Goon voices being added to the queer sounds often required, and the whole item dubbed into the finished show.

A pink-faced, tubby man in smart grey suit rested in the front row as the musicians rehearsed. This was the announcer, Wallace Greenslade. Music for the Goons comes from two sources—Wally Stott and his Orchestra, and the surefire American-type Ray Ellington Quartet. Ray, son of a St. Louis father and a Russian mother, is more than a musician. He sings, writes songs, and adds comedy to any situation. Harmonica player Max Geldray is a Dutch-



★ HARRY SECOMBE, caught in the act. TOP OF PAGE: Peter Sellers, caught napping



SPIKE MILLIGAN—inaction away from the mike



MAX GELDRAY—in action at the mike

BBC photographs

man who has played a lot in Europe, notably with the Ray Ventura Orchestra.

As the full-scale rehearsal gets under way it's the Secombe smile that catches your eye—for hilarious Harry can see comedy in every situation, and there's another side to him that listeners to the Goons don't hear. Behind those high-

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