

The Powers and the Peace

FOR all that Russia's acceptance of a Four Power conference is so diffuse as to be unacceptable, I think we can expect that in due course a conference will be held. This is why I believe that. If the Kremlin still is following the policy course dictated by Stalin, then international peace talks provide an opportunity for advertising to the more gullible, and to the enslaved peoples of the world, that Russia is ever ready to meet her Western antagonists in sweet reasonableness. If that is the present attitude of Russia, then the talks will, on Russia's side, be nothing more than a sounding board for propaganda, and will get nowhere. They might even then have the, so to speak, negative value to the world of proving that the new Soviet Government is, like the old one, determined—I use a current phrase—to “go it alone.” To know where we stand with Russia would be useful.

If on the other hand, a Four Power conference does emerge from the present exchange of notes, and Russia reveals herself as prepared to make concessions—specifically, to agree to a German settlement on the terms proposed by the West—if that happens, what will it mean? Well, as we know, Mr. Malenkov and his confrères have been having a great deal of trouble in East Germany lately. . . . In fact, there has this year been a stirring in their strait-jackets of subject non-Russian peoples from the Baltic to the Aegean. This doesn't mean—not yet—that Russia's satellites are ready or able to throw off the yoke. It does mean that Mr. Malenkov has plenty to worry about, and to keep him busy. If, then, he agrees to allow Germany freely to unite, freely to choose its form of Government, it could be that it is because he prefers to write off Germany as a satellite state, in order to concentrate upon troubles closer to home. It could be that he believes a free Germany would swim of its own volition within the Soviet orbit, giving Russia a united whole Communist Germany, instead of a rebellious Sovietised East Germany, which is all he has at present. Or it could be that he—or whoever rules Russia—is genuinely desirous of cutting Communism's losses, effecting a live-and-let-live basis of understanding with the non-Communist world, and looking for a lasting world peace.

—JOHN MOFFETT,
August 8, 1953.

ONE item of news which hit the headlines strongly during this past week was the series of earthquakes in the islands of the Greek Ionian Sea. The destruction was very devastating, both because of the apparently severe nature of the quake, and the fact that the houses are stone built. It appears that

Extracts from recent commentaries on the international news, broadcast from the main National Stations of the NZBS

some buildings of modern construction remain undamaged in even the worst hit areas on the island of Cephalonia. Now this is only ordinary news, because severe earthquakes are happening some-

EARTHQUAKE FORECASTS

where in the world every day, and it's only that they don't happen frequently in populated districts that makes them little heard of. The other piece of news concerned the setting up of very delicate measuring apparatus to record the tilts, compressions and changes in the level of the earth. The apparatus is set up in long tunnels in the rocks and it is hoped that before

long such records will be of use in predicting earthquakes. And this is where the news hits New Zealand, for we are a very seismic country. From the Waikato north, the land seems to be stable as far as earthquakes are concerned, as it does from Otago south. In between, in the middle districts, the area's an active mountain-building one. The great blocks of our mountains come under pressure and are de-

formed until finally they yield and great breaks occur like the one which opened up in 1855 when the Rimutakas rose nine feet along a 60-mile rent on the west of the Wairarapa. We have had these severe earthquakes in the past and we'll undoubtedly have them again.

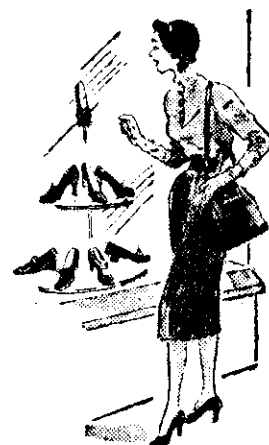
What this news holds out is the possibility of measuring this twisting of the earth's crust before it yields to the strain in the earthquake, so that we might predict the 'quake. Alas, I fear it's a vain hope. Though these distortions have been measured by comparing surveyed points before and after movement in an earthquake, the time factor as to when earth will yield has so many unknown things affecting it that a prediction might only be able to say, “Yes, we will have a quake—mind you, it might be in 50 years or in a hundred years, or perhaps in five minutes.” Not much use. No, we must rely on that other tiny little item in the news—that on Cephalonia with almost the entire towns on the ground in rubble, the modern buildings were still standing. Well-built and braced constructions will stand the heaviest shake, as Napier and Hastings showed. Gutenberg, of California, undoubtedly the world's greatest authority on earthquakes, has recently said that earthquake prediction instead of growing nearer with more knowledge actually seems to be getting further and further away, so that I'm afraid this week's news musn't buoy up our hopes. Our substantial buildings must be our bulwarks.

—D. W. MCKENZIE,
August 15, 1953.

THE SONG OF THE RUN-ASHORE SAILOR

*(ON the breast of the moon
I will swing a long night
And will sing a love song
In the throat of good time.
I will scribble my tune
On the star-stoppered height,
I will drink a deep tune
In the lips of delight.
Though her milk be rime
And she breathe wolf's-bane,
Though her curse be strong
And her pleasure pain,
I will sing my love long
In the throat of good time.*

—Keith Sinclair



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