

The Listener

Published every Thursday by The British Broadcasting Corporation



Native administrator in Nigeria (see page 227)

In this number:

Lord Forrester, H. D. G. Leveson Gower, R. C. K. Ensor

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Published every Thursday by The British Broadcasting Corporation

Vol. XXXVII No. 943

Thursday 6 February, 1947

REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O.
AS A NEWSPAPER

CONTENTS

	Impressions of Italy (Christopher Serpell) ...	225
	What Full Employment Implies (Lord Forrester) ...	228
	Cricket Scrapbook (H. D. G. Leveson Gower) ...	235
THE WORLD TODAY:		
Germany's Industrial Future (Norman MacDonald) ...	223	
A Feudal Survival in Nigeria (Howard Pedraza) ...	227	
Do Americans Have Class Distinctions? (Alistair Cooke) ...	234	
Totalitarianism and Religion (Aubrey Jones) ...	240	
Resurgent Protectionism in U.S.A. (Clifton Utley) ...	241	
British Foreign Policy (R. C. K. Ensor) ...	244	
THE LISTENER:		
Thoughts on Cricket ...	230	
What They Are Saying (foreign broadcasts) ...	230	
DID YOU HEAR THAT? (microphone miscellany) ...	231	
ART:		
Australian Aboriginal Paintings (Raymond Firth) ...	233	
Hans Holbein: a Revaluation (Margaret Whinney; A. E. Popham; William Coldstream) ...	237	
NEWS DIARY ...	242	
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:		
From Bertrand Russell, R. Bishop, Walter Taplin, W. Baring Pemberton, Peter B. M. Roberts, Harold Binns, Wallace Tavener, John Grey, W. Eric Benton, J. Howson, Edward Woore, Victor Cooley, Montague Fordham, A. W. Carter, Francis J. Field, C. M. Piggott ...	245	
SCIENCE:		
Why Do Birds Migrate? (A. Landsborough Thomson) ...	248	
POEM:		
Winter Solstice (Frances Bellerby) ...	249	
Song (Terence Tiller) ...	252	
PHILOSOPHY:		
Philosophical Movements in France (Etienne Gilson) ...	251	
GARDENING:		
Planning the Vegetable Garden (F. Streeter) ...	252	
LITERATURE:		
The Listener's Book Chronicle ...	253	
New Novels ...	256	
CRITIC ON THE HEARTH:		
Broadcast Drama (Philip Hope-Wallace) ...	259	
The Spoken Word (Martin Armstrong) ...	259	
Broadcast Music (Dyneley Hussey) ...	259	
MUSIC:		
Monteverdi's 'Vespers' (H. F. Redlich) ...	260	
RECIPES FOR THE HOUSEWIFE ...	263	
CROSSWORD NO. 882 ...	263	

Germany's Industrial Future

NORMAN MACDONALD, B.B.C. Correspondent, on British policy and its consequences

IN view of conditions in their country today—nearly two years after the war ended—it is not surprising that the German themselves feel they have no future. Many have told me they want only one thing—to emigrate, and every time it was for that reason. One said to me the other day: 'The thing I admire most about the British Army is their efficient signposting. I wish your politicians would tell us as clearly where we are going'. We talk a lot to the Germans about democracy, justice and tolerance; but they judge more by what they see than by what they hear. They see industrial stagnation, lack of food, bad housing, and—this is important—the muddle we have made of denazification in the British zone. It will take seven years before we have 'screened' all who have aroused our suspicions: more than sixteen in every hundred of the staffs of banks have been dismissed as Nazis, and any German applying for anything like a responsible job must fill up so involved a questionnaire that nobody could answer it unless they had kept a diary of every moment of their lives.

When at Yalta, Britain, Russia and America decided to divide Germany into zones of occupation, they were thinking of military and political necessities; they never meant Germany to be cut up into three or four watertight compartments. But that is what has happened. And to see how serious this has proved, you need only look at the result in the British zone. Only a trickle of food has reached the zone from what used to be its granary in Eastern Europe. Before the war, German farmers got two-thirds of their potash fertilisers from Eastern Germany. The Leuna Synthetic Fuel Plant turned out enough to

produce more than half-a-million tons of grain. Today the British zone imports fertilisers and seeds from the West. Women and children are starved of clothes in our zone, because no wood-pulp comes from the Russian zone. This used to be mixed with Ruhr coal and chemicals to produce synthetic textiles. Half the pit props for the Ruhr mines came from Eastern Germany, and one ton of pit props is needed to produce twenty-eight tons of coal.

This stagnation of trade between the zones may be traced directly to the fact that Germany is not being treated as an economic unit. Germany's resources have not been put into a common pool to be used as export to pay for essential imports; and because this has not been done, the British taxpayer has had to find eighty million pounds a year, most of it to pay for food for the British zone. Britain has been reluctant to increase this financial burden by paying for raw materials for German industry.

But even raw materials would not solve the industrial crisis in the British zone. The core of this crisis lies in what is known as the German Industry Plan. This plan bans warlike industries altogether and allows the removal as reparations of any industrial plant exceeding what Germany will need to maintain her new standard of living. The plan lays down that by 1949 the German standard of living will be half what it was in 1938: that means about the same as it was in the depression years of the early 'thirties. The British zone, as the most highly industrialised area of Germany, is much more seriously affected by this plan for industry than any of the other zones. The plan sets the future annual steel output of Germany at a quarter

and Belgian as well as in British colonies, from this point of view. He concludes that no crop is inherently better suited either to plantation or to peasant production, though in fact sisal and tea are almost entirely plantation grown. Plantations can provide costly machinery, and can quickly apply the results of research; but their heavy overheads render them very vulnerable to changes in the market. He recognises that labour costs are bound to rise in view of the standards of treatment that public opinion now demands.

Peasant production has increased in those crops which can be marketed without costly processing, and particularly those which, like cotton, need a large supply of labour at certain seasons. Its handicap, of course, is 'technical

and financial backwardness'. Without any instruction on the need, and the way, to preserve the fertility of the soil, the colonial peasant cannot adapt his traditional methods to the requirements of much more intensive cultivation. Without adequately controlled provision of credit, he is bound to fall into debt and lose all incentive to improve his land, if not the land itself. Without technical instruction, given in a form in which he can appreciate it, he will be unable to combat pests and diseases. The most spectacular case of a native crop threatened by the competition of a plantation product is that of Nigerian palm oil, which has been gradually losing the market to that produced in the Belgian Congo, Malaya and the Netherlands Indies.

How can the peasant cultivator be helped to hold his own in the competition? Sir Alan holds that British policy, or lack of it, in this field gives no ground for complacency. Other governments have not done enough either, in his view; but comparison of the different lines of attack is interesting. The French, for example, have credit societies (Sociétés de Prévoyance) of which membership is compulsory. The Dutch provide credit through state institutions. The British have co-operative societies with voluntary membership, which only touch the fringe of the problem, but do teach self-help to a small number. There are many other illuminating comparisons, both between British colonies and with those of other powers.

New Novels

The Age of Reason. By Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Eric Sutton. Hamish Hamilton. 10s.

Pascual Duarte's Family. By Camilo J. Cela. Eyre and Spottiswoode. 7s. 6d.

The Leaping Lad. By Sid Chaplin. Phoenix House. 8s. 6d.

M. SARTRE is primarily a brilliant artist. He is secondarily a philosopher, one of the leaders of a more or less new school of thought. It is therefore a great pity that in England we should have read so much about his philosophical ideas before we have had much chance of reading his stories and plays; and it is probably a further pity that his ideas should for the most part have been first expounded by antagonistic critics. His plays, 'Les Mouches', 'Huis-Clos' and 'La Putain Respectueuse', need nothing in the way of exposition; they make their points unaided, and their points are clear ones. With *The Age of Reason* I feel far less sure; it is the first volume of a trilogy called 'Les Chemins de la Liberté', and though it is a book of quite extraordinary power it cannot be thought of very easily as a work by itself, since at the end of volume one, the reader is likely to be left still baffled by M. Sartre's theme, and by his terminology. The semantic of abstract nouns is almost always so eroded (as Professor Hogben would say) that they need continual re-definition. And I am far from certain what M. Sartre means either by freedom or by reason. I have uneasily assumed from the story itself, and from things I have picked up here and there, that Mathieu, the hero of the book, who is questing for freedom, is out to attain a state of mind and a condition of will where he will be free to act without being influenced by the image he creates in the minds of others. As a child he has vowed to himself: 'I will be free'. At the end of the first volume we find him saying to himself that he has attained the age of reason, and the meaning of this is, so far, even less clear; he means in one sense that his adolescence is over; but one is perplexed by the fact that his attainment of the age of reason, whatever it be, is principally caused by an act performed by someone else. This is brought about as follows.

Mathieu, a lecturer in philosophy and the central figure of a small group of people in Paris, is told by Marcelle, his mistress, that she is pregnant. He assumes that an abortion is necessary, and he sets out to get the money for it. His efforts to raise four thousand francs are the principal strand in the book. There are other things going on at the same time: they mainly concern two young friends of Mathieu, his pupil Boris Seguiné, and Ivich, who is Boris's sister. There is a no longer young cabaret singer called Lola, who is feverishly in love with Boris. Mathieu himself, rather to his own surprise; at

a particular point during the forty-eight hours covered by the book, falls suddenly and fruitlessly in love with Ivich, whose own sexual appetites are, up to now, uncertainly directed. Mathieu continues his quest for money; within forty hours or so, having exhausted all possible sources, he steals from Lola. She thinks the theft has been committed by Boris, whom she knows to practise theft in a small way from bookshops and the like. By this time we have already seen a good deal of another character, Daniel, a homosexual, and a friend of Marcelle. Marcelle, discovering that Mathieu is no longer in love with her, has told him to go. He has by now discovered that she wants the baby and has offered to marry her. Just as Lola is telling Mathieu that she is charging Boris with theft, Daniel enters Mathieu's apartment and announces that he is going to marry Marcelle. We are left at this point to await the second volume, and, if our curiosity has been aroused, to wonder what will now happen to Lola and Boris, to Ivich, who has failed in her examinations and must return to her hated home in Laon, to the unpromising marriage of Marcelle and Daniel, and to Mathieu and his reasoning, reasoned or reasonable age.

The story may be called sordid, morbid and 'unrepresentative', though M. Sartre does not, I think, make it these things. Extended comment on it can scarcely be made at this stage; but there are some things that immediately occur to one. I do not know how consequent or inconsequent M. Sartre's version of existentialism is; but it appears to provide a most potent atmosphere and background, which would, I believe, be apprehensible even to a reader who had picked up none of the relevant jargon. It is not necessary to have mugged up the subject in order to see the strange new perspectives behind M. Sartre's novel; the ominous background is there, and it is possible to be much moved by it. It reminds me of those floor-board landscapes of Chirico and some of the surrealists: those long parallel lines receding into the distance and ending sharply at a void of empty and ominous sky. Over such a floor and oppressed by the same anguished and thunderous air, the tatty characters of M. Sartre's novel move. It seems to me as acceptable and convincing a *mise-en-scène* as any other, if the human condition is your subject.

The early chapters of the book at once indicate a master, perhaps a great one; certainly an authoritative technician and stylist who also has

his characters, and their actions, extremely well taped. That void on the horizon, towards which his characters painfully glance from time to time, is poetically 'touched in'. The climaxes and turns in the story are brilliantly timed, the folds of the narrative adroitly set. There is a wonderful feeling of suspense about the book. There is also a certain monotony, and at a first reading some of the conversations seem over-long; I wonder also if it is entirely well-judged to set so much of the book in bedrooms and night-clubs. But its monotony seems to me the acceptable monotony of an epic.

Pascual Duarte's Family is a story about a murderer, told by the murderer himself; the book would probably fail if we were not on the murderer's side, for it is superficially a story of fantastic squalor, and at times steps perilously near the point where the unbearable becomes the farcical. But the murderer is a man who strives to be good and his sister's lover and his own mother, both of whom he murders, are irremediably bad. The nets of circumstance close in on him from every side, and there is a tragic inevitability about his disastrous acts; though since the facts of his story are so violent and brutal, the general poetic quality of the story is probably incommunicable by reviewer to reader; the reader may doubt that the character of a matricide (who later, it is hinted, commits a common political murder) can evoke pity. But the priest's verdict on Pascual is true: he 'could be recognised when one probed to the depths of his soul as not other than a poor tame sheep, harassed and terrified by life itself'. Señor Cela's book is subtle and disquieting, and I do not remember that its story has ever been used before.

The Leaping Lad is a collection of short stories, all set in a mining-valley in Durham. This, forgivably but unfortunately, will put most readers off. Those whom it doesn't will find that, despite limitations of theme and setting, Mr. Chaplin's stories usually are stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end; and rarely mere sketches. There is also a vein of gaiety and exhilaration running through a good many of them, which crops up as deliciously as the outbursts of fresh, green countryside in the sombre landscape which is Mr. Chaplin's native heath. 'Rooms', 'The Pigeon-Cree', 'The Shaft' and 'The Unwanted' are particularly good stories; while the story called 'And the Third Day' promises well for the time when Mr. Chaplin sets out on a longer flight.

HENRY REED