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THE B.B.C. YEAR BOOK.

The B.B.C. Year Book for 1945, just published at 2/6, will appeal to every radio listener; it supplies the key to a good many curious surprises that are conveyed to us nightly by the unseen wires. The book contains about thirty highly instructive articles from well-known authorities, not necessarily members of the vast B.B.C. staff, which will keep us usefully occupied and interested whenever we have half-an-hour to spare. What appeals to us more than the text—we apologize to the Editor—are the remarkable illustrations, all half-tones which, without exception, insist on captivating the onlooker with an inspiring message. We would give first prize to the picture of the two editors of the Belgian service, in which the portly woolly-bearded Prof. Geersens has evidently told his colleague, slim clean-shaven Victor de Laveleye (now Minister of Education) a knotty tale and is waiting for dawn to settle upon his face. Another plate shows the likenesses of those we listen to every night in the loudspeaker; one or two seem to be studying their script with trepidation, probably on account of the foreign place-names, but the other look at us cheerfully with a suppressed smile; the good news they have been telling us in 1945 has no doubt also affected their physiognomy. Here is an extract from an article contributed by Mr. Wickham Steed, a former editor of "The Times," who for over five years has been fighting what at times seemed a personal battle with Dr. Goebbels:

"From the standpoint of German aggression, contemplated and actual, I was an 'assassin.' My victim was German propaganda. Once, I remember, Ribbentrop accused Neville Chamberlain of having deliberately worked up a war situation with the intention of attacking Germany. This was, of course, a whopping big lie. As I had opposed Ribbentrop publicly while he was Nazi Ambassador in London, and had also criticized Neville Chamberlain for 'appeasement,' I was able to give Ribbentrop the lie direct an hour or two after he had spoken. I said in so many words: 'Ribbentrop is a liar. He knows he is a liar; and he knows that I know that he is a liar.' We heard no more of that particular German argument.

We were then battling against the full tide of German propaganda. Our potential audience included not only influential and well-informed opinion, but many listeners whom distance from Europe prevented from understanding the quality and the extent of German falsehoods. It was not long before 'fan mail' began to show that my simple stuff had gone home in a good many parts of the world. Now and then lighter touches came in. One day a man from the Gold Coast in West Africa turned up at Broadcasting House. He said that the villagers always sat in a ring round a loudspeaker to hear my talks though they didn't understand a word of them. Somebody was appointed to take them down as best he could and to translate them on the spot. But was betide him if he failed to reproduce the 'important voice' which I was supposed to possess. Then there was trouble, because the villagers thought they were being humbugged!

With the war came the black-out, and presently the 'blitz' and the anti-aircraft guns. It wasn't always easy to get to Broadcasting House; nor in

1940 and 1941 was it quite safe. Special talks had sometimes to be given late at night or in the early hours of the morning. So I had to drive through the dark streets in my car, and trust to luck. Miss Wace was always there, sometimes weary, ever imperturbable. She won the admiration of all who worked with her; and she used to 'pull my leg' by saying that if I should fail to turn up with a cheerful script, however dark the outlook might be, she would think we had lost the war.

There was no particular merit in being cheerful. What I said merely reflected the temper of our people. So I was on safe ground, even during the worst of the blitz period, in telling listeners overseas that the people of Britain were not only able to 'take it,' but meant to repay the Germans a hundred-fold. Once, in 1940, I said: 'In course of time we shall sally forth from our fortress in ways and in a strength that will give Hitler and Mussolini food for reflection. We are not going to be beaten; and in their heart of hearts they know we are not.' I may have been lucky in not having my forecasts, or the confidence I really felt, upset by the course of events. So my listeners got a notion that what I might say would probably turn out to be right, and gave me credit for knowing a good deal more than I really knew.

Physically, too, I was very lucky. No bomb or shell splinter touched me, though several bombs did rock my house, and one of them blew me into bed and shook me out again. More than once I put on an

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old tin hat, gathered at the front in the last great war, and turned up in it at Broadcasting House. At length, as was to be expected, Broadcasting House itself was hit. The spacious and comfortable studios on the upper floors were knocked out, and one had to sit before an improvised microphone, in a kind of cubby-hole, well below the level of the street and to imagine that what one said was really being heard in the uttermost parts of the earth. Then came a migration to other underground dungeons, still lower down, 'somewhere in London.' I never ceased to marvel at the smoothness of these adaptations, or at the courage and cheerfulness of the hard-worked BBC staff whose members shepherded and watched over me.

The work itself was always interesting, and the echoes of it that came in made it seem more and more worth while. It was pleasant to hear from faithful listeners in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Canada, India, the West Indies, the United States, Peru, the Argentine, and from the captains and crews of ships at sea that one had helped them not to lose faith in final victory. Hardly less pleasant was it to be cursed as a malefactor by Dr. Goebbels and his henchmen. They honoured me with a fine selection of epithets, such as 'One of the worst British warmongers,' 'A poisoner of the public mind about Germany,' 'A first-class intellectual escapist,' 'A tight-rope walker,' 'A miserable hireling, bribed and bought,' and 'The old fox of British journalism.' I felt that I had really got under the hides of those villains.

If the work was pleasant it was never quite easy. Events were moving fast, and one had to deal with them so as not to be slapped in the face by them when they took a new turn. A weekly broadcast in wartime needs constant thought, day after day, even if it is written only a few hours before it is delivered and lasts barely fifteen minutes. Yet I have loved the work and have felt it a privilege to be allowed to do it. When I reflect that each talk goes out in five separate transmissions, so as to reach different parts of the world at convenient times, and that my voice is supported by more than thirty short wavelengths, I still feel a bit startled. Then I realize that I have been a very privileged fellow."

† FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, 12/4/45.

The President is dead. — Can it be true
Of him, whose vision in the throes of war
Kindled a beacon light which, from afar,
Shone on the world, that righteousness win through?

With ev'ry term your fame and stature grew,
The millions hitched their waggon to your star;
Heedless of race or creed or colour bar,
They centred their most ardent hopes in you.

You loved mankind; whose lot was ev'rything
To you — and how your gen'rous heart did plan
Their uplift, comfort and security!

Now you've passed on.—O death where is thy sting?
Let us thank God He gave us such a man,
Saviour of Freedom and Democracy.

LONDON, April 14th 1945.

"GALLUS".

GENERAL MEETING OF SWISS CATHOLICS.

After the usual "Easter Service" at St. Peter's Church, Westminster, S.W.1, at which Father Lanfranchi preached and Father Würms gave Benediction, the Swiss Catholics met in good numbers at a General Meeting in the Westminster Cathedral Hall on Sunday afternoon, April 15th.

In opening the meeting the Hon. President, Colonel Bon, referred to the critical and dangerous times we have passed through since the last meeting; referred to the serious economic difficulties which are confronting our homeland now and will do so in the near future, and expressed the hope that the long desired peace bells would before long ring and bring the time nearer when we could again go amongst our lovely mountains, towns and our own folks at home.

Mr. C. Schumacher in his report dealt with the activities of the Committee since September 1943, particularly referring to the meeting with His Grace the new Archbishop of Westminster at the Christmas party of 1944 at which both the Archbishop and the Swiss Minister, Mr. P. Ruegger, were present. He dealt too with the finances and appealed to all to continue and even to extend their support for the maintenance of our Chaplain.

Father Lanfranchi reported on his manifold activities during the year and expressed regret that he could not visit every one separately or more often, but that he considered his main mission to be the visiting of the physically and morally sick and poor. He also referred to the excellent harmony and co-operation existing between the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Eglise Suisse and ourselves.

Colonel Bon thanked both Mr. Schumacher and Father Lanfranchi for the report, he also thanked the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. A. Steinmann, and the Hon. Secretary, Mr. Boos, for the work done during the past years, to which the assembly gave full accord and applause.

Mr. J. Huber then proposed and Miss Bohrer seconded that the existing Committee members be re-elected and Miss C. Abate, Mr. O. Grob and Mr. J. Regamy be also elected members of the Committee, which proposal was agreed.

Before the close of the meeting, Colonel Bon called on Mr. Mordasini the new Vice-Consul and Chancellor of the Legation, who in our three national languages expressed his pleasure to be among so many of his Swiss compatriots, in particular his Ticinesi and to find such excellent christian and patriotic spirit amongst the Swiss in London.

At the following very successful social evening the mixed choir, which under the able leadership of Mr. Hyde also sang at the Church service, rendered Swiss songs and yodels, accompanied at the piano by Miss Uden. It was past nine o'clock when the party came to a close.

J.J.B.

