

tions of a generation or so ago, which could be found in books about China, probably just as absurd in the eyes of the Chinese? And is not behind these naïve pictures a real understanding of the moral basis of all human society?



FIG. V. Epaminondas sweeping the streets of Athens

THE MAN AT THE MIKE

By RUTH WALL

Before this war, most of the work on the radio was more or less anonymous. In America there were a few such names as Lowell Thomas and Raymond Gram Swing which were known to the public at large. But otherwise the man who broadcast the news was simply "the announcer," and quotations from radio reports were usually headed: "The announcer of the Schenectady station reported early this morning that" or "As was announced by the BBC"

It was only during the early days of this war that the news commentator became an institution throughout the world and that the anonymous voice of the speaker emerged from behind the scenes and became a name and a personality, challenging the public to approve or disapprove of it.

Our author—the name is a pseudonym—has for many years been actively connected with broadcasting in various parts of the world and is personally acquainted with many of today's leading "men at the mike."—K.M.

IN the months before the war, the English public had been having a lively discussion in newspapers and magazines on the qualifications of the ideal radio speaker. In "letters to the editor" opinions surged back and forth as to whether a pronounced Oxford accent were best or a lighter tone, whether the dramatic diction of the American announcer were preferable or whether it were not more suitable for the BBC for the announcer always to show the imperturbable British calm and to read the news without emotion, or whether a

woman's voice should not be chosen like the one which so melodiously read the daily news over the Italian radio.

The answer to this discussion was given during the first month of the war.

LORD HAW HAW

William Joyce had gone to Germany shortly before the outbreak of the war and has since become a German (and this from conviction, as even his enemies had to admit). In Berlin there were at first some doubts regarding Mr. Joyce's ability

as a radio speaker. But he was placed at the microphone. The British public immediately dubbed the unknown voice "Lord Haw Haw" on account of his exaggerated and somewhat haughty-sounding Oxford accent. Lord Haw Haw suddenly became a success.

Was it only his accent which made Lord Haw Haw famous, or his voice? Hardly his voice, for this did not develop until later and never reached the perfection of a deep, sonorous, "beautiful" male voice. But Lord Haw Haw has one gift: he has an incomparable talent for making his text come to life. One senses that his entire personality merges with the text he reads. Whether he is reading a text written by himself or the English translation of a Hitler speech—he fills both with the same power of conviction. In fact, he does not read aloud—he speaks. Not for an instant does he lose the feeling of speaking to a public. By assimilating every text, he gained a wide circle of listeners for the German broadcasts to England and later also to the United States.

Lord Haw Haw's success surpassed that of any other radio speaker in publicity. The clippings of articles from all over the world about Lord Haw Haw soon filled many volumes. Reports that the most sophisticated London audiences were enjoying a parody of Lord Haw Haw in a revue, down to stories which were beginning to turn him into a legend, showed the effect which he had on all circles of the English population. To give just one example of the latter: at one time the English were telling each other that Lord Haw Haw in one of his evening broadcasts had informed the inhabitants of a little English country town that their church clock was ten minutes slow. And when on the following morning the citizens looked up at their clock—lo and behold, it was actually ten minutes slow.

Lord Haw Haw's popularity in England went so far that the Gallup Institute claimed that Lord Haw Haw was heard

during the winter 1939/40 as much as the news announcer—the *anonymous* news announcer—of the BBC. Whether this is correct or not, there is no doubt as to the effect of his talks, an effect which was so far-reaching that the English authorities, contrary to their publicly pronounced policy, requested the newspapers not to mention the name "Lord Haw Haw" any more, as this appellation, in its characterization and formulation, had done much to make him famous. As a result, the discussions about him in the press suddenly stopped in 1940, and instead the English press directed its polemics against a colorless abstract, the "enemy broadcast."

THE FRENCH TUNE IN

In a similar way, the French announcer of the German transmitter in Stuttgart, Paul Ferdonnet, became famous at the beginning of the war. Ferdonnet, who had had a good reputation in France as an author, had gone over to the German side before the war. The French Government recognized the dangerous effect of the popular nickname given to Lord Haw Haw and tried to stamp Paul Ferdonnet as "*le traître de Stuttgart*."

However, the result did not come up to expectations; on the contrary, the attention of the French public was directed towards Ferdonnet. His writings were much in demand in France after the outbreak of the war and had to be banned. "*Le traître de Stuttgart*" issued a pamphlet under that title which contained a number of his most effective commentaries and which was widely read in France. The Gallic characteristic of discussing every event and of considering all arguments which could be brought forward for and against it, was a fertile soil for Ferdonnet's talks. The fact that Germany did not start broadcasting to France until the outbreak of the war, so that these broadcasts had the added attraction of novelty, was especially favorable for the reception of the broadcasts on the part of the French, whose Celtic ancestors had already been called by *Cæsar rerum novarum cupidi*.

When the French authorities saw that it was impossible to force the people not to listen to the news from Stuttgart, they tried to jam the German transmitter. But even that attempt was only partially successful, and the German broadcast continued to be listened to, especially by the French troops at the front, who proved particularly receptive to Ferdonnet's arguments.

The secret of Ferdonnet's success, if one wants to put it in a nutshell, was his good knowledge of the French psychology, the polished style of the French man of letters, and—last but not least—his conviction that he was fighting on the right side.

WHAT THE GERMANS LIKED

Another great radio hit was the announcer of the German request programs for soldiers, Heinz Goedecke, although his name is hardly known outside of the German public. While Lord Haw Haw and Paul Ferdonnet gained their reputations as the representatives of a political *Weltanschauung*, Heinz Goedecke's rise to fame can only be explained in connection with the program which he announced. This request program for soldiers was meant to create a close contact between the front and the people at home, chiefly during the first winter of the war, and its variety program was held together by the announcer. Goedecke did this in a smooth, easy manner, especially attractive to the German public.

Right after the first request program he received thousands of letters. Later a book was written about the request program and about him which has now also been translated into Japanese; and a very successful film in which he appeared was made about these programs. Last October this film was shown in Japan and aroused the desire in the Japanese public to try out the transmission of an exchange request program from Germany. This desire has meanwhile been fulfilled.

WHAT'S IN A VOICE?

What was the secret of his success? First of all, it may be found in the skillful

composition of his text, but then also—as has constantly been pointed out by his listeners—in his voice, which, like Lord Haw Haw's, is by no means a "beautiful" voice. By "beautiful voice" we mean that deep, sonorous, resounding baritone so much sought after by the American radio and known to every listener there. But, on the other hand, Goedecke has a voice which can be recognized among thousands. This is what made Lord Haw Haw famous, and this is probably one of the reasons for Carroll Alcott's fame in Shanghai. One knew, when one heard that voice over the radio, then it *was* Lord Haw Haw, it *was* Carroll Alcott, and it *was* Heinz Goedecke. One immediately connected this voice with a chain of feelings and thoughts, with the image one had made of this man.

With the radio speaker as with the movie hero, the secret of success is not always beauty. Will Rogers was no beauty. Goedecke's success was in the flexibility of his voice, and also the timbre, which was particularly attractive to women. Perhaps it was something which, from a distance, communicated the erotic charm of the voice, something that, with the male voice, is not by any means always a soft, caressing quality but, on the contrary, sometimes hardness and brittleness.

THE SIREN OF ROME

When women announce, the situation is quite different. In their case the public demands a "beautiful" voice. A woman announcer of the Rome transmitter made herself and her station famous by her siren's voice, with which she enchanted hundreds of thousands of people, and not only Italians. All over Europe there were people who tuned in to the news from Rome without understanding a word of Italian, just in order to listen to the harmony and melody of her voice. Moreover, the owner of this voice, who was often mentioned in the newspapers, was surrounded by mystery. She received many proposals of marriage and requests for rendezvous from her hot-blooded

admirers but refused them all. Rumor had it that this was because she had disappointed every man she had ever met—for she weighed 250 pounds.

PERSONALITY—THE CLUE

We have just looked at a small number of European radio speakers and—to be honest—we have not found the "secret" of their success. But they all had one thing: a personality which spoke through the voice, which gave the listener the feeling that the man at the microphone was not just "the announcer" but a man one could imagine, whose voice one could recognize. It was a voice which may sometimes have been imperfect in its pronunciation or with a rhythm all its own, with a capacity for increasing or diminishing the volume, with a lack or abundance of pathos, a voice which was liked by one nation, disliked by another, which aroused sympathy or antipathy—but in any case not the colorless "beautiful" voice (except, of course, in the case of women).

The development of broadcasting during this war produced, in place of the anonymous announcer, the commentator, whose name and voice became equally important as or even more so than those of his station. A commentator like Lord Haw Haw was at times for Great Britain something like a spokesman of the German Government, whose views on the events of the world were eagerly awaited.

Even radio reporters, who were a rarity before the war and known only to listeners of the CBS and NBS (the two great American broadcasting companies), men

such as Paul Winterton in Moscow and Edward Murrow in London are now names known to millions of radio listeners, as are T. Howe of the BBC, Rear Admiral Lützow (the naval commentator of the German radio), or William Winter of American broadcasts. Today these names are mentioned in the same breath with such of their colleagues of the press as Karl Megerle, Virginio Gayda, Carl von Wiegand, H. Knickerbocker, Madame Tabouis, and Ward Price.

The broadcasting companies now have their own reporters at the main centers of political and military activity. Listeners of the German short-wave transmitter in Berlin have an opportunity every day to listen to eyewitness accounts, the first of which may be relayed from Africa, the second from the Coliseum in Rome, the third from Paris, and the fourth from Tokyo. These accounts, which are transmitted one after another within the short space of half an hour, each show the individuality of their speakers—the one halting and slow, the other thoughtful, hesitating, this one dramatic and forceful, that one flowing and smooth, or full of pathos and emotion.

All in all, this shows a departure from the monotony of "the announcer" towards personality, a development which no longer tries to suppress the individuality of the speaker but gives it free rein and encourages it. Indeed, it even allows certain defects in the manner of speaking—as far as they do not interfere with intelligibility—if they correspond to the personality of the announcer and to the rhythm of his diction.

