

Good-Bye, G. I.

Already vessels are taking back the USA detachments of American soldiers, their kitbags bulging with souvenirs, their wallets with photographs, their hearts with anticipation of homecoming. To say that we wish them well, and shall miss them, is their due and ours.

To those vividly remembering the days when Britain stood defiant with but twenty miles of water and ever indomitable heart to sustain her against a brutal foe bestriding a whole continent, the first arrival of American troops, in times perhaps equally grim, when a second opponent of unknown potentiality was pressing hard in Asia, was a heart-stirring event. Those nonchalant, gum-chewing GIS were the symbol and first token of mighty aid from outside, the outriders and shock-troopers of the great Transatlantic democracy.

In India particularly there was piquancy in this impact of the new world on the very old. The modern nation with the highest standard of material life, the least self-consciousness of class, was sending representatives into the timeless backward, poverty-stricken, caste-ridden, yet majestic East. For the first time hundreds of thousands of ordinary Americans, whose expectations of overseas travel before Japan struck at Pearl Harbour had been negligible, were to see the Orient, about which they had vaguely heard but knew so little.

After the preliminary stocktaking on both sides there was naturally criticism. Americans were enervated or enraged by the climate; shocked by the squalor, destitution, disease, callousness and administrative decrepitude which they found around them. Many in India were at times much disconcerted by what seemed a lack of manners, and in particular by sexual blatancy in some few Americans. There was ignorance that in the last defect-in any case not typical of an engaging idealistic people-is in America largely offset by the greater hardihood and self-reliance of co-educated womanhood, who early learn how to deal for themselves with the adolescent louts thrown up by every community.

This newspaper has never supported those shallow generalizers who specially blame our American guests for all sorts of inevitable wartime irritations. We believe however in candour. Some items published by us have caused Americans annoyance. But they believe in candour too-and respect it. The Briton who dislikes some of their doings or manners, and at once frankly say so, they can understand. He resembles themselves in forthrightness. It is the Briton who feels a much more continuous and far-reaching dislike, yet with pained superior airs strives ineffectually to conceal the fact, who they instinctively and rightly detest. Such folk are an international peril, who unwittingly wreak profound.

We remain sturdily pro-American. We have found the great majority of people from that country refreshing, good-hearted, swift to friendship, hospitable to a fault, with an engaging humour and an attractively casual self-reliance. We have liked the enthusiasm and with which the GI traversed the globe, collecting snaps, souvenirs, and impressions everywhere, making pithy comments on all; the spontaneous friendliness with which in a railway carriage, he opens a general conversation and a box of candy, distributing both impartially; the ready pleasure with which he welcomed the recent increase in British soldiers' pay, as reducing an awkward barrier between the two; the comradeship which makes the servants in American billets feel as though they "belong", even though they do not know to what; the cool, effective resolution with which the GI dealt with emergency and danger. He and his kind have been magnificent allies.

We have sympathy with the observation of an American N.C.O. who complained that one American in his cups sufficed to scandalize neighbourhood, creating talk which could never be offset by the twenty much more representative GIS who stayed in their billets writing to their wives, playing chess, drinking abstemious "cokes." It is a pity that exchange of ideas has not been greater between our American visitors and the Indian people. On both sides, there was something to teach, much to learn. For India, in self-respect and material achievement in a virile new democracy which utilizes scientific knowledge to the utmost. The lesson of India for Americans is that some eternal problems exist which cannot be solved with a bulldozer. These however are subsidiary considerations. This article's purpose is to offer friendly farewell. To those of our American allies who may soon be leaving us, we wish Godspeed and happy homecoming.

Mr. Kevin Ozzard

We much regret to announce the death in a Calcutta nursing home yesterday, after a brief illness from poliomyelitis of Mr Kevin Ozzard, an Assistant Editor of The Statesman. Mr Ozzard joined our staff only a few weeks ago, having previously been with the British Ministry of Information, New Delhi. His work showed high promise, and he was much liked by his new colleagues.

We publish today, as our only editorial, one on which he was engaged in collaboration with the Editor, shortly before his illness. Among those attending the funeral were Mr. Ian Stephens and Mr B. J. Kirchner (on behalf of the company); Mr. David Mitchell; Miss R.M. Hodgson; and Mr J. Irwin.

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