

REPORT ON THE GERMAN PEOPLE

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RADIOED FROM STOCKHOLM

The specter of 1918 is haunting the Nazi party, as Himmler and his Gestapo are turned loose on the German people in a desperate attempt to hold the home front together



MUNICH WRECKAGE

OUR enemy has become our protector." Thus one German visiting Stockholm reacted when told that Heinrich Himmler had been appointed Reichsminister of the Interior. Even Hitler knows that the white-headed, uncultivated, bespectacled man with the moist, slack handshake is disliked among Germans. Only absolute necessity put this man in the ugly palace on the *Koenigsplatz* in Berlin. About 8,000,000 foreign workers, several million prisoners of war and the rapidly growing millions of évacuées constituted a gravely disquieting problem for the party leaders. Germany's home front has become her second front.

The Gestapo chief became commander in chief of the home front mainly because of the intense fear he inspires at home and in the occupied countries. Each German realizes that henceforth he is working with a revolver muzzle against the nape of his neck. The generals categorically told Hitler "to secure the home front," thereby giving their support to the appointment.

When the bombs rain over Germany's industries, the armament staff tremble, not only for each factory hit but for each worker's dwelling destroyed, for if the workers are bombed out, they don't go to work. Therefore, it is important to provide their families with a new roof. Vital machines are frequently idle even though they haven't been hit.

If a whole working-class quarter is destroyed by bombs, the workers are often collectively billeted in another quarter, with busses provided to take them to work the following morning.

"But they refuse to go with the busses," relates a German industrialist to a Swedish business friend, "until they know what is going to happen to their families. The factories are idle until the families are finally evacuated—there's no telling where."

Austria No Longer a Haven

The workers' output is worth little until they are assured that their families have reached Munich en route to Austria. But the next letter is from Prague. Their destination is now the Ukraine instead of Austria, as the Vienna area has been bombed. Austrian industrial centers, where the Nazis have established the greater part of their aircraft production, are panicked. Everybody who can flee does so, Gestapo threats notwithstanding. Forty-three workers leaving their place of work in Salzburg were sentenced to death.

Since Austria is no longer a haven, évacuées are diverted to the Ukraine. While they are on their way there, a telegram comes from Ukraine *Gauleiter* Koch, announcing that the Ukraine is also closed against évacuées, as it might soon be a theater of war.

Where do the évacuées, dispatched from country to country without money, clothes or bedding, land? Probably in southern Bavaria. For how long? One night a bomb hits their factory. Workers are given two weeks' pay if it is impossible for them to resume work within a fortnight. If work is still impossible then, the Labor Office sends them elsewhere.

Thus Hanoverians land in Upper Silesia nearly 400 miles away; residents of Aachen are moved 700 miles to Posen; miners find themselves one day in Stalino, over 1,000 miles from Bochum in the Ruhr, where they have lived all their lives. Where their relatives are, they don't learn until months later, for (and this is becoming plainer every day) the organization of évacuées is a terrible failure. A new proletariat of the bombed-out is forming in Germany. (Continued on page 48)

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Almost every town now has such a new poor class whom the residents regard not sympathetically but reproachfully. "Why should they come to us?"

Hitler's 1,000-year kingdom, which promised to eliminate classes, now, after ten years, faces a cleft between two classes—those who suffered bombing, and those still awaiting bombs—the proletariat and the haves. I already knew what the evacuated and those remaining in the bombed areas wished for—"Peace . . . irrespective of what kind."

A Stuttgart merchant had no objection to meeting me at the house of some Stockholm friends, where a German banker was also staying. "I never was a real Nazi," he said. "Naturally, I was a party member, but what does that mean?"

The banker merely laughed when asked if he believed Germany would be victorious. "Who does? I hold shares in many companies. What will be left of these if the bombings continue? We will be ruined, our industry and trade shrunk to nothing, our workers unemployed. We must make peace as soon as possible."

The merchant declared that the question of whether Germany or the Allies won didn't interest him. "The problem will be simpler if we can do business after the war is won. If not, we are lost. Everything else is just empty phrases."

No One Exempt

Nobody escapes war service in Germany. Children serve in air-raid squads; women work very hard. Here is a typical day of a 20-year-old Berlin woman: At 4:30 she gets up and washes the previous night's dishes, then breakfasts; from 6:30 to 1:30 she works in an electrical-instrument factory. Then home, where she prepares a sandwich for herself and her invalid, bedridden mother, in order to get out quicker and get a good place in line to do her shopping. Shopping, however, takes at least three hours. Then home to cook a hurried evening meal at 7; then a little gossip, and at 8:30 to bed, dog-tired. No social life or recreation; she is too tired.

Not everybody works so hard. A bank clerk, conscripted for work in a factory, arrives there and asks the foreman, "What am I supposed to do?"

"I don't know," replies the foreman.

So the bank clerk stands around. The foreman, when he gets tired of the clerk's questions, points to an iron bar. "Take that to the next workshop." This the clerk does.

"What the devil will I do with that? Go to blazes!" shouts the foreman in the next workshop. So the clerk takes the bar back. Gradually he realizes that workmen don't want newcomers to do anything useful, for if one is found capable of replacing a workman, the workman is sent to the front, which all wish to avoid. Not only Socialists and Communists but all are agreed not to die for a pack of Nazis, and therefore are glad to see foreign laborers working badly. Everywhere newly mobilized workers are idling their time away, as nobody is organizing the work. It is impossible to augment production that way. Total mobilization? Yes, total mobilization illusions. The illusion that more hands means more output, even if those hands are unskilled and unwilling.

Rations are generally obtainable, but the black market flourishes everywhere. Even in the darkest days of the first World

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Even in the darkest days of the first World War, such corruption did not exist. More fats are required, as are also fruits and vegetables, for the people's strength is declining. A report I have seen of Health Minister Conti shows that the mortality rate for some diseases rose 49 per cent in 1941-1942!

It is impossible to buy clothes, which are only for the bombed-out. Since August 24th, it has been impossible to purchase a hat, cap, suit, shirt, pajamas, underpants, collar, tie, stockings, socks, scarf, gloves, handkerchiefs, raincoat, overcoat, suspenders, umbrella, pullover or overalls of any kind, while women cannot buy blouses, underclothes or aprons. However, anyone knowing Herr Bruennel at the Berlin Gestapo, in charge of distribution of clothing-ration cards, can get such a card for 5,000 marks. What clothing cards are available without Bruennel's help? Only those for knitting wool!

Usable toilet articles are unobtainable, and tooth paste is so treacly that most people prefer to use salt. Even the indispensable things are impossible to procure. One illuminating advertisement in a German newspaper reads "Exchange Meissner service for artificial manure." Mourning garments, however, are always available—and they are necessary.

The willingness of Germans to sacrifice the lives of their dearest ones on the altar of the Fatherland has entirely disappeared. Death notices such as "Gave his life for the Fuehrer and for the future of Greater Germany" are now seldom seen. "Hard fate has taken even our third and last son" is more frequent. No matter what German propaganda shouts, people have ceased to believe that "elastic warfare requires the shortening of our lines."

The Germans are aware what that means. Stalingrad was the first big shock; Mussolini the second. How many more can they stand? Common sense tells them it is clearer, each passing day, that the game is lost. The armor of belief has burst from Hamburg to Danzig, Stettin to Klagenfurt. There are no longer illusions, merely despair, in the heavily bombed regions; dread in the regions not yet heavily bombed.

The Youth of Germany

"The whole youth of Germany is on the battlefield, while at home are the party leaders, the aged, the very young, eight million hostile foreign laborers, and millions of enemy prisoners of war who are our mortal enemies. Was that the object of this war?" Thus they talk openly on the streets of Berlin.

If the war is already lost, everybody reasons, why must my son die for nothing? Thousands of mothers write to their sons at the front, not, as formerly, "I'm proud you're serving the Fatherland," but, "If only you were home!"

Theodor Korselt of Rostock wrote the following to his son on the Eastern front: "I hope God will prevent that it will be necessary to sacrifice you, too."

This is where Himmler comes in. What are things coming to if soldiers are getting the impression that the people at home no longer believe? Ruthless terror will make it clear that those unwilling to sacrifice their sons must be destroyed. So Himmler's first measure as Minister of the Interior was to have 52-year-old Theodor Korselt executed.

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Henceforth, letters to the front have had a more cautious tone. But it is no longer possible to alter the attitude of the Germans.

My talk with one German made a deep impression on me: "What's our life like? Look at us! Worn out, pale, emaciated. Don't think we are unaware of what is happening. Italy is lost. Hungary and Finland are on the point of giving up. It is impossible to check the Russians, yet we keep sending thousands of men to useless death. Of 108 called up in Rosenbad, North Bohemia, 97 were killed. But the Nazis won't yield until everything falls to pieces about their heads. We Germans don't dread any one army of occupation more than another. No matter what happened, we could not be any worse off than we are now. Having experienced the first World War and the Polish campaign of this war, I know what war is. I am an officer, and no coward, but I will do everything I can to save my life. I will not return to the front."

Of an infantry regiment which lay at Velikie Luki, only about a dozen men remained. One of them told me that the Russians were good soldiers, and their endurance was wonderful. "We never thought the thing would take such a long time. When we heard our communiqué announce we had made a successful counterthrust, we knew it was untrue, because we were there. But we thought they were lying to deceive the enemy."

Soldiers, he said, received daily half a loaf of bread, an ounce and a half of butter, five ounces of sausage or a little cheese, a quart of coffee, six cigarettes, a quart of hot, thick soup containing potatoes and, once a week, a pint of schnapps. Never vegetables or fruit.

"Often we were hungry," he added. "Then we made bread soup in the evening. The soldiers often thought it would be impossible to win the war. But then what would happen to Germany? It will be worse than in 1918. Can't it be prevented or, at least, postponed? So we kept on fighting, because we thought the folks at home were all right."

Then home to Hamburg, on leave, only a couple of days before the week of its destruction. "That was hell. Even without bombs, things were worse for them than they were for us. One understands everything better from behind the lines. God knows how things would go if soldier had more leaves!"

German soldiers in the occupied countries understand even better. Every day, Germans attempt to desert, while others commit serious acts of sabotage against their own war machine. In Warsaw, German soldiers were allowed to go about only by threes. From the frequent attacks on German soldiers, "it is easy to observe they are hated indeed."

Austrian soldiers going home on leave seldom return to the front. Many flee to the Alps. The Yugoslavs assert that there are numerous Austrian deserters among Yugoslav guerrillas. The home front has an enlightening effect on the soldiers; the despair and anxiety of their parents at home dissolve what remains of their beliefs. When the German generals are faced with this fact, they grow irate.

Himmler and the Home Front

During a conference with Hitler, Generals Mannstein, Ruoff and Halder de-

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manded that Himmler's present headquarters be abolished, that the Waffen SS be subordinated to GHQ and that all military decisions be left to the militarists. Himmler's friends Jodl, Zeitzler and Jesschonnek protested that this would mean the end of the party's influence in the military plan. A sweating Hitler protested feebly. Thereupon Goering smilingly suggested a compromise: Himmler was needed in Berlin to deal with the home front. General Halder agreed with this. Hitler hesitated. But who else could master the home country's problem if not Himmler? So Himmler became Minister of the Interior, losing all military power. Thus Goering slyly won a great victory for the generals. Their plan is: Germany loses the war, but it will be like 1918. The home front cracks, while the German army saves its honor for posterity.

Himmler has promised the home front that traitors would be liquidated. Shortly after the Allied raid on the secret experimental station at Peenemunde, Goering's friend Major General Chamier was found dead, with a bullet hole in his head. The battle for power between Himmler and Goering was never more acute: Jesschonnek dying of a "gastric ulcer"; Goering clearing the Luftwaffe of Himmler's men.

Goering has lost favor with the populace but not with the army. "Our Badooglio," is the senior officers' nickname for the many-uniformed opportunist, Hermann. Now he is seen only among the generals; he knows the party has lost the game and he is trying to rescue the army's prestige.

Himmler, on the other hand, is anxious to save the party's prestige. "There will be no repetition of 1918! I keep up the people's morale."

Hitler, at Berchtesgaden, is a pitiful figure in the eyes of the generals and the party bigwigs, and the German people are desperate, knowing they will meet the same fate they calmly watched other nations meet—the terror of the Gestapo.

Under a dictator we can't expect a general strike in Germany. But if the Allied armies make a show of overwhelming strength on the Continent, the German people will become Nazism's fifth column. Goebbels is right; there will be no 1918—it will be worse.

THE END

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