

Sirens of the Swastika



~like a page from an international melodrama is this graphic account of the role that Germany's beauties play in the Third Reich

by BELLA FROMM



NAZI GERMANY has not produced any Pompadours or Maintenons. Women are indispensable pawns in the Nazi game, it is true, but they seldom attain spectacular stature.

On the other hand, the Nazis are using women for political purposes to an extent unequalled by any government or political regime in history. But it is not the human value in women that they exploit; it is pure sex degraded to its lowest aspect.

This "sexual materialism" has been developed to a real state machinery, almost as important as propaganda. It is systematically directed by the entire administration and by the highest authorities of the Third Reich.

The role which the Nazis have reserved for women in public life is that of spying. The work is carefully blueprinted and is under the special direction of Ribbentrop and Himmler.

These women spies are called the "Blonde Battalion." Chosen for their physical attractiveness, they are usually between 18 and 22 years of age. Members of the "Blonde Battalion" are admitted to the Gestapo school in Altona, near Hamburg, and after completion of their training, they are sent out to perform their work as efficient machines, with rigid discipline and precision.

While many women have been useful cogs in the Nazi machine, their allegiance to the Nazi cause does not insure them permanent places of esteem in the Nazi dynasty. An example illustrating Nazi gratitude is the ephemeral career of the dancer LaJana. She was ordered to use her charms as a bait for Polish key personalities and thus pave the way for one of the most atrocious crimes in history. After the necessary period of elementary instruction, the lovely young woman served a term of ap-

prenticeship in Germany where she fished in the waters of Polish diplomatic circles. A young member of the Embassy staff in Berlin became her ardent lover. He accompanied her on her frequent stage tours to Poland, which were a pretext for the spying she did in obedience to Berlin.

In the fall and winter of 1939, after Poland had been "blitzed" to pieces, LaJana was sent to Poland to entertain the occupation armies in their hours of leisure. One day, it was reported that the beautiful dancer had suddenly died of pneumonia. "The rough climate killed her after a short illness," commented Heydrich. To a friend he said: "LaJana was a master agent; she knew too much."

For secret service and espionage, the Nazis choose as many elderly and plain women as they assign young and prepossessing girls. There is some work for which the Nazis deem very young girls unsuited, for fear of romantic entanglements which might interfere with the execution of their tasks.

As a matter of fact, it was largely middle-aged women who were used as stepping stones in Hitler's climb to power. They were the ones who introduced him to international and domestic society, and provided money for his campaigns.

Among those who fell for his magic in the earliest stage of his career was Frau Viktoria von Dirksen. This elderly and plain-looking woman became one of Hitler's earliest social mentors. Shortly after the death of Frau Viktoria's husband, the Nazi-struck widow Dirksen presented Hitler and his gang to old court society in the German capital.

Her husband's death in 1928 became the green light for Frau Viktoria to ride ahead on the bandwagon of the new brown mob. Her dignified salons, ablaze in the full light of the chandeliers, became a scene of a great society-farce. Here the big shots of the rapidly growing Nazi party bent over the hands of noble ladies; they clicked their heels smartly when their beaming hostesses introduced them to nobility and royalty.

In Viktoria Dirksen's house, the

Nazis met Siegrid von Laffert, her beautiful niece, an attractive, tall Valkyrie with blond hair wound into heavy braids, who moved in circles of highest and most exclusive society with easy poise. After 1933, she became a useful tool in the hands of the Nazis. They gave her the necessary training before they sent her to Paris as special agent to exercise her charms in the service of the Fatherland. She graduated, so to speak, the night she was put to the test at a soirée on January 30, 1934, in honor of a group of high-ranking French officers at the home of Monsieur et Madame Andre Francois-Poncet.

Blonde Siegrid was surrounded by the handsome young officers resplendent in their multi-colored, gold-braided uniforms. Siegrid made her choice amongst the French representatives and attached a young horseman to the powerful strings of her irresistible charm. Cunningly she induced him to take her to France for a romantic trip. The proud lover was flattered by her eagerness to know and see each nook of his beloved homeland. Tenderly amused by her childish passion for the camera, he helped her find interesting and unusual angles. Between hectic days and romantic evenings, Siegrid gathered a collection of snapshots of fortresses, highways, seashores, airfields—everything that her companion had pointed out to her.

SIEGRID WAS CAPABLE in her work, but even more outstanding in smartness, wit and charm is Edit von Coler. As attractive as she is efficient, her activities as salon agent in Rumania preparatory to its seizure by the Nazis were phenomenally successful.

When the great inflation after the last war wiped out her inheritance, Bella Fromm became social columnist for a Berlin paper, and confidante of the Diplomatic Corps in the German capital. It is from her intimate knowledge of the inner circle in Berlin that she has written this exposé for Coronet. Her new book, Blood and Banquets, gives such an accurate picture of Nazidom that, reports have it, Gestapo agents were sent to this country to kill or kidnap her. Fortunately, the FBI apprehended them first.

In 1938, when Berlin had hinted to a willing Rumanian government that a pro-Nazi minister was desirable, Radu Djuvara was obligingly assigned to the post. Already at that time, Hitler's plans were blueprinted. From the cream of the "Blonde Battalion," golden-blond Edit von Coler was picked to get her well-groomed claws on Rumania. The German chief of protocol hurried to introduce her to the new Rumanian minister. Fasci-



nated by the charming socialite, Radu Djuvara arranged a gala dinner in her honor. Radiant Edit, emanating affability and charm, conquered all male dinner guests in general and a young attaché in particular. Soon he became wax in her hands. Headquarters had taken care to provide Edit von Coler with the alibi of a press agent for her trip to Rumania. As special correspondent of the *D.A.Z.* (*Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*), Edit set out for Bucharest. The young attaché obtained a leave by his Nazi-inclined boss and escorted his mistress.

He introduced the lovely woman to influential people, innocent in his possessive pride. Soon, however, he was rudely awakened from his state of bliss. Edit showed an over-eager interest in Rumania's army officers. She coaxed information from the officers, astonishing them by her inquisitiveness. With the scales suddenly fallen from his eyes, the young attaché rushed to obtain an audience from the Rumanian minister of propaganda. The latter listened to the report, to the self-accusations and urgent warnings—and turned the young man down. He said that the charges were unjustified—that they were prompted by jealousy. Abruptly he dismissed the desperate boy. What the young attaché did not know, of course, was that the minister himself had succumbed to Edit's charms.

But that wasn't the end of the story. The minister was foolish enough to tell the lady of his heart that her young man had become wise to her. Edit, Nazi-trained, acted swiftly. An ur-

gent telegram signed by Minister Djuvara recalled the attaché to Berlin. He never reached his destination.

Yes, Edit was successful in Rumania—as she had been in both Paris and Berlin. She snooped with satisfying results in the salons of Bonnet, Reynaud, Blum and Mandel.

Even the daughter of Italy's quondam "Great Dictator" played into the hands of the Nazis. In fact, Mussolini can to no small extent thank his daughter for his present inglorious position. The Nazis perceived great possibilities in Edda and her husband, the Count and Countess Ciano, so far as Mussolini was concerned. They bent backwards to please them and to cultivate them. Their efforts were rewarded. Ciano and Edda through their influence on Mussolini did their share to bring about the axis between Italy and Germany—which in turn brought about Il Duce's downfall.

The Nazis knew the right approach to Edda and her Count. They made the best of his fondness for blondes. When in Berlin, Ciano spent long hours with Magda Goebbels, who has lovely blonde hair and ice-cold grey eyes. In addition, the prettiest and most alluring representatives of the "Blonde Battalion" were placed at his disposal. Edda was treated to an equally good time. Her weakness was the strong, the masterful, the brutal Nordic men.

Ciano and Edda took each other for better or for worse. Ciano's family, of recent nobility, was not looked upon by the old aristocracy of Italy as genuine. This lack of family lustre fired him with an inordinate ambition for political success and prominence. Edda provided this political position in her father's ministry.

EVEN IN THE northernmost corner of Europe Hitler for many years had a female admirer espousing his cause, Mrs. Bergliot Ibsen. She is the daughter of the Norwegian poet Bjornstjerne Bjornson, and widow of the late Premier of Norway, Sigurd Ibsen, the only son of Henrik Ibsen.

In February and in March of 1933, Mrs. Ibsen gave concerts for the Nazi *Winterhilfe* (Winter Help) in Berlin,

the proceeds of which were known to be used mostly for secret armament purposes. She came to Berlin at the invitation of the Nazis who celebrated her as a great singer. This flattered her vanity, for she no longer enjoys prestige anywhere else. Since the German occupation of Norway, she is back "home"—and a frequent guest at the Nazi Legation in Oslo.

With all the intrigue and espionage for Germany, some of it worked the other way round. Very much to the surprise of the outraged Nazis, it was discovered that three ladies employed in the Berlin War Ministry were indulging in a bit of espionage for the benefit of a country hostile to Germany. It seems all three of them were smitten by a Polish military officer and turned over to him political information, maps and war plans to which they had access. The Polish officer, Jurek von Sosnowski, had approached the three baronesses, Benita von Berg, Renate von Natzmer and Irene von Jena, simultaneously. He succeeded in making all three of these women fall for his eloquent charm.

All went smoothly until one night, following an impish caprice, the Polish officer gave a dinner party, and for the first time the three ladies were invited in a group. Looking their best, each one arrived at a given address. Dinner was announced. The three baronesses had taken their seats. Unfolding their napkins with dainty fingers, a sparkling piece of jewelry had caused delighted gasps. The wine had loosened the last inhibitions of the ladies; the party was in full swing when the doors opened and the horrified baronesses found themselves confronted by a body of the Gestapo. Together with their host they were carted off to prison. The counter-espionage had been at work, waiting in ambush for the dramatic opportunity. Baroness Irene got away with a lifetime penalty. The other two women were not so lucky. One sunny morning, in the courtyard of the War Ministry, the two rivals were put against the high, cold wall. At a command, the firing squad took aim.

The Polish count, after a year spent behind iron bars, was sent back to Poland in exchange for a German spy who had fallen into Polish hands.

Despite the glowing promises he made to the women before he became Dictator, Hitler gave them exactly the opposite of what they had been told to expect. He deprived them of all rights for which they so valiantly fought from 1919 to 1933. Forgotten were the golden promises.

All the goodness in German womanhood has gone down into the filthy sewer of the New Order in Germany. Why the German women suffer all that Hitler despotically forces upon them, without revolting, is a psychological mystery.

What keeps them in this hypnotic trance? What shaking event must occur to stir them out of their stupor?

