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BOOKS

Germans Still Back Hitler but Dislike Him, Harsch Finds; 'Healthy Eroticism' Bared



Harsch pictures a Germany at war

It is now an almost accepted part of the foreign correspondent's job to write a book on returning from his assignment. The spaciousness of a book allows him to expand on his personal observations and to express, away from the censor's nervous shears, those intangibles that can't be compressed into cables.

Currently reporting is Joseph C. Harsch, recently back from Berlin, where he has been filing stories since the beginning of the war for *The Christian Science Monitor*. His book, *PATTERN OF CONQUEST*, goes to the head of the "must" list for its objectivity and its sober ring of truth.

Like William L. Shirer, Harsch declares that the German people are solidly behind their Führer in this war, though not because they like him or his Nazis. They don't, says Harsch; it was difficult for him to find a single sincere Nazi in Berlin, even among the government officials and party functionaries he dealt with. But the people know they either win with Hitler or suffer national bankruptcy and frightful reprisals if he fails.

Harsch says that German morale is "fundamentally unsound," however, and that it took a bad beating when the RAF first bombed Berlin, which Marshal Göring had said would happen only "over his dead body." ("Have you heard the news?" Berliners asked each other, after the first raids. "Göring's dead.")

The mistake that may well cost Hitler victory, the author believes, came when the Nazis failed to live up to their promise of a new deal for the defeated nations. Thousands of discouraged Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Norwegians, and other subject peoples, says Harsch, were thinking like the young Belgian soldier who talked to him in the spring of 1940:

"I fought for Belgium until my king surrendered. I preferred the old freedom . . . But here is something stronger than our army or the Allied armies . . . the German soldiers aren't as bad as I thought they were. Perhaps this German army is the means to what we all want, which is peace and a chance to lead our lives free from the threat of war."

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PATTERN OF CONQUEST

But, in the wake of the studiously "correct" German armies, came the Gestapo, the efficient and methodical looters, the overbearing Nazi big shots. Then the future citizens of Hitler's "new order" could see that it was just a cynical repetition of the same old story—conquest and exploitation.

Today, Harsch writes, the Nazis are doing what they accused the Jews of doing in the inflation of the '20s; buying up property at depressed prices. But this time it is the Nazis who have depressed the prices, and their profiteering is on a continent-wide scale.

An interesting sidelight on wartime life in the Reich is in Harsch's chapter "Gesunde Erotika." This "healthy eroticism," as the Germans call it, is cultivated and officially encouraged by the Nazi party. It takes the form of strip-tease night clubs, of countless magazines featuring nude photographs, and of art salons where the large percentage of pictures and sculptures represent the naked female form. The object of this official salacity, Harsch says, is twofold: to stimulate the sex urge and thus raise the birth rate, and to make pleasanter the German soldiers' off-duty hours. It is an ironical command on the Nazis' famous objective of their revolution, which was clean up the moral sink into which publican Germany had sunk.