

**EUROPE**  
under the  
**TERROR**



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3682

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FASCISM

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**EUROPE**

**under the**

**TERROR**

**BY JOHN L. SPIVAK**



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TO NATCHIE



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EUROPE UNDER THE TERROR





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## *PREFACE*

WITHIN RECENT YEARS new forces have swept over great nations, crashing against the established order and, in some cases, obliterating it. The old forces, which survived the centuries, are struggling desperately to maintain themselves against the tides sweeping in from several different seas.

In country after country, the old form of democratic government has been supplanted by the new order called Fascism. In many countries where Fascism has not been victorious, powerful movements are under way to establish it and equally powerful movements are struggling bitterly to prevent it. Millions of earnest and honest citizens, tired of the disordered state of economic and political affairs, have turned to Fascism as the only obstacle to prevent the disintegration of what we know as civilization and a resultant chaos. Other equally earnest and honest citizens regard this new order as the most intolerable form of government imaginable and are fighting this new force with all the energy they can muster, as in France and in Spain. There the anti-Fascist forces developed tremendous power by uniting with their own political enemies to save themselves and their countries from Fascism.

Where the old order of democracy has been completely obliterated as in Italy and Germany the changes that followed affected the lives of millions and the course of history for many years to come. What these forces which promised to transform disturbed and unhappy lands into regions of peace and contentment actually did for the people is

shrouded in a thick fog of propaganda, both for and against.

Dictators, fearful of their power and ruthless in maintaining it, have perfected the art of suppression on the one hand and propaganda on the other. Over the lands they rule with iron fists there is a thick, almost impenetrable net of silence and fear. None dares to speak but what is officially approved.

Of what actually happens in these lands where Fascism has taken hold only the barest scraps of information manage to leak out. The foreign press correspondents, especially the American, English and French, are among the most capable in the world, but they are restricted in what they can send to their papers. I asked a resident correspondent in Rome, one of the most competent journalists I know, whether he did not see what was happening there and if he did, why he did not write it.

"You can afford to come in here, dig around and go out," he smiled. "You don't have to stay here. If I wrote what the people are saying or how afraid they are to say anything, or went digging into the country's real conditions, I should be politely asked to leave Italy. My paper sent me here to stay—not to be kicked out. Many journalists have been kicked out for writing things which the régime did not like. If I want to stay here all I, or any other resident correspondent, can do is take the official press and propaganda handouts and cable them with a little interpretation."

What this correspondent told me holds true in all European countries saddled with dictatorships. The governments of those countries spend millions of dollars each year for propaganda to present their régimes, and the conditions under them, in a good light to the world to which they go for business and financial credits. So determined are these countries to keep the true state of affairs from becoming known that they enforce a strict censorship not only of news leaving their country, but of news published in their own controlled newspapers. They do not want

their own people to learn what is going on; and so strict is this effort to control information that some nations, like Nazi Germany, make it an offense punishable by imprisonment when even an ordinary citizen tells of conditions which, when published abroad, may be "disadvantageous" to the Nazis.

Since most European countries have such censorship on the one hand and high-pressure ballyhoo telling how grand their régime is on the other, neither the citizens of their countries nor the world at large really know what is going on. What information does come out is either so scanty or so prejudiced that much of it must be discounted. On the other hand there are groups organized in almost every land against these régimes and these, too, are bent definitely upon propaganda.

It is this generally recognized lack of a coherent picture of what happened and is happening to the people in Fascist countries which made my publishers suggest my wandering around Europe to talk to the people of all classes, the people about whom everybody talks and writes. Few outsiders however ever talk to them and get the raw material from which history is molded.

I wandered over Central Europe for a little over five months, through the lands where the new "Messiahs" rule and those where the old are still in power. I went to all classes of people, to financiers and industrialists, labor union leaders and diplomats, landowners and peasants, workers and those who walk the streets ever seeking work and I found a Europe the largest part of which is swept by terror and tyranny, misery and starvation, a Europe where, in the main, opposition to the ruling régime is prohibited by imprisonment or death.

Since the forces to overthrow these dictatorships are playing and will play important rôles in Europe's history I sought information of what these underground movements are doing. In devious ways interviews were arranged with

leaders of the underground revolutionary movements and these men, whose lives would have been the price had they been caught, talked with me with amazing frankness and honesty of what they were doing, of how they were organized and functioned, about their strength and their plans. The world is under the impression that should Hitler fall Communism is next; yet the spokesman for the underground Communist movement in Germany said very frankly that the Communists are not sufficiently strong to attempt to seize the government in the immediate future. In Poland, which I found seething in a pre-revolutionary ferment, the Communist underground movement was weak numerically and also not in a position to attempt the seizure of power. In Austria which had had a powerful labor movement I found its energies and efforts centered on regaining a minute fraction of the trade union liberties it had once enjoyed, with the Nazis as strong as the Socialists and Communists combined.

Though there are Fascist and terroristic tendencies in France and England I decided not to include them in this book. These countries are better off than any that I visited. Unemployment is great, the countries' economic system shows distinct signs of disintegration, but despite all this, the general picture is so far removed from that of the Fascist countries, that they do not belong in any portrait of Europe under the terror.

The picture I came back with is an almost unbelievable one of economic disintegration, of peoples, in some countries, being ground down to living conditions only a step removed from those of coolies. In Fascist countries, I found crushed and oppressed people carefully and cautiously organizing, marking time while the governments frantically sought to find and imprison them. News of the unrest in these countries is suppressed, official figures are juggled in desperate efforts to hide the true state of affairs from the outside world. Even commercial attachés of different world

powers have had to develop pipe lines in all directions to get fairly accurate statistics for their home governments.

And over this almost incredible state of affairs I found the rulers squatting like huge birds of prey, watching with hawk-like sharpness lest their property and power be destroyed by the hungry millions. I talked with these rulers of vast political and financial empires and found them utterly bewildered as to what to do to save their crumbling possessions. They see their control threatened by the growing unrest. They see themselves washed by inexorable economic tides, and these leaders upon whom millions of lives depend, are tragically helpless; and in their helplessness these leaders are stumbling toward an even more frightful war than the last in their despairing efforts to get out of the crisis.

Though I confined this book to those Fascist countries which I studied, I cannot eliminate another terror, equally shocking, which exists in non-Fascist countries as well. This is the terror of hunger. Hunger, like terror, has its gradations. The hunger of the unemployed South Wales miner or the Lancashire textile worker or the French industrial or agricultural worker does not compare with the hunger of even those who work in countries like Italy or Germany or Poland. But I found great hunger, even in so bright an oasis of political liberty, in the heart of a dark Central Europe, as Czechoslovakia, which is more acute than the hunger in even Fascist-ridden lands. The people in the Carpathian-Russ section of Czechoslovakia are literally starving; and since this hunger is already producing a profound effect upon the political life of this country and its relations with other European countries, I included one portrait from Czechoslovakia.

In the chapters on Nazi Germany I have not given the names, addresses, or specific places where conversations took place. Even an average citizen who talked, if that talk

were considered "detrimental" to the Nazis, would be subject to severe punishment when identified.

Personally I had no difficulty in wandering around the Fascist countries. The foreign journalist, unless he persists in writing what he sees and hears while he is still in the country, can wander around pretty much undisturbed.

J.L.S.

# ITALY





## LA MADAMA SMILES

THE BESPECTACLED STOUT GENTLEMAN at the adjoining table in the dining car of the Rome Express watched my difficulties with the waiter.

"May I help?" he offered with a traveling-salesman-like cheerfulness. "Journalist, eh? I've seen lots of you fellows. On your way to Eritrea?"

"No; just looking over conditions in Italy."

He smiled benignly.

"Beautiful country," he said, looking at the mountains through which we were passing.

"Are you familiar with Italy?"

"Lived here twenty-five years," he smiled. "I'm with the Canadian Pacific Railway."

"How are things here?"

We were alone in the dining car, yet he turned around apprehensively.

"Oh, all right, I guess," he said shortly.

The conversation drifted around to the war.

"How do the people feel about it?" I asked.

The good-natured twinkle in his eyes vanished. He kept turning his head, glancing up and down the car.

"Beautiful scenery here," he said pointing to an ancient castle on a mountaintop.

I thought he had not heard me, so I repeated the question.

"I always advise foreigners to drink table water. With the exception of a few cities, the water is not—"

"What's the matter? Don't you want to talk about it?" I laughed.

"Well," he said in a low tone, his glance nervously taking in the empty dining car. "It is better not to talk."

In Rome early one rainy morning when no one but the porter at my hotel was puttering about in the recesses of the dark lobby, the reception clerk joined me in the doorway, apologetic because sunny Italy was having such terrible weather.

"How are things?" I asked after a few minutes' desultory conversation.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Not so good. Italy is very poor. The misery is very great."

"How do the people feel about their misery?"

"What can they do? They hope for a better day," he said with another shrug.

"Are they satisfied with the way the Fascists are running things?"

As though I had touched a spring, his head turned quickly with a nervous glance in all directions.

"I must make out my bills," he said apologetically. "Excuse me, please."

Wherever I went people turned their heads apprehensively the moment the conversation touched on their or the masses' attitude toward conditions and the régime. They were willing to talk of their poverty and their hunger, but the moment the question was on their reaction to these conditions they changed color, stammered, looked about in a fear so genuine that often I took pity on them and changed the subject. When I persisted they found an excuse to leave. Some talked, in the privacy of their homes or at an isolated table in some café, but always turning their heads every few minutes to make sure no one could hear what they were saying.

"The bats are everywhere," bolder spirits would tell me, leaning close so that it was a frightened whisper. "There are

two thousand spies in Rome alone besides the bats, and if you talk, then one day La Madama smiles upon you—”

“Bats? The lady smiles—?” I repeated, puzzled.

“Bats are black—like the blackshirts; and they penetrate into the darkest holes. The people have called them that for years. And La Madama—ah, they always smile when they come to take you. They are always polite with the sweetness of the Borgias.”

I understood. “And what happens when La Madama smiles?”

Again that quick turning of the head.

“Prison. Dungeons. Maybe worse. Here in Rome, people in the street, professors, scientists—La Madama smiled on them. No one knows what happened to them. One day you go for a walk. Your wife waits at home with the macaroni and the veal, but you do not come. She waits all night and in the morning rushes to the police; but the police, ah! they know nothing. No. Nothing. A bat has heard him whisper and—La Madama smiled.”

“Upon how many has La Madama smiled?”

“Only La Madama knows—and her secrets are buried deeper than the deepest dungeons in Civitavecchia.”

I had seen that ancient prison at Civitavecchia where those upon whom La Madama smiled are kept. Facing the Tyrrhenian Sea it is a fortress and a dungeon used by the ancient popes for their enemies. Foreigners, especially journalists, are not permitted to enter its threatening precincts, but the people of Civitavecchia tell tales they have heard of the dampness and the trickling water, of the utter isolation in which prisoners are kept, especially those upon whom La Madama smiled.

“Never can they talk,” say the people of Civitavecchia. “No. Not even to those in the same cell with them. Silence is there. Always silence; and so deep are they that they cannot hear even the waves or the screams of the gulls.

“And if they talk?”

"Then they live alone in darkness and eat only bread and water."

Correspondents cannot see officials unless the Ministry of Press and Propaganda arranges the appointment. Italy wants to know where and to whom the correspondents go. At the Ministry, Signior Bosio, specially placed there by the Foreign Office to see that foreign correspondents have their ways properly smoothed, smiled suavely when I asked him why the people are afraid to talk.

"Nonsense! Look at our Italian people. Smiling. Cheerful, despite the fact that we are a poor country."

"I am told that people are arrested and spirited away. Workers have been arrested for striking—"

"There are no strikes in Italy," he assured me. I had heard that before from the heads of the Confederation of Labor and of industry, as well as from single workers who know only what they read. "It is against the law. Such reports are simply anti-Fascist propaganda."

"I'd like to study your laws, the changes made since Fascism," I said. "Could you arrange an appointment with the Ministry of Justice?"

It was arranged immediately. I telephoned Odon Por, Rome correspondent for *The London Financial News*, and asked whether he would accompany me as translator. Por was delighted. He was close to officials in the Propaganda Ministry, had written a book on Fascism and was quite interested in the welfare of the people. "I am a revolutionist," he said one day. "I used to be a Socialist. I worked with Mussolini in the old days. But now I am a Fascist; I believe in Fascism though I am not a Party member." Por was very kind to me. From the minute Signior Nasti in the Propaganda department had introduced us the first day I appeared, Por neglected his own work to be with me at every possible moment.

"The outside world," he would explain to me repeatedly,

"simply does not understand Italy and has erroneous ideas about Fascism and the way the régime works."

"How about the people living in constant fear?" I would ask.

"That's absurd. I have lived here for years and I haven't seen this fear you talk about."

At the appointed hour we were ushered into a gorgeous chamber where the Minister's secretary sat behind an enormous desk. I was greeted like a millionaire uncle from Australia.

"I will introduce you to Judge Giuseppe Lampis. He is one of the greatest judges in all Italy, a profound man, a scholar, a fearless interpreter of the law—"

Judge Lampis, a bustling though scholarly-looking man close to sixty, came in, stopped in the doorway, clicked his heels and raised a hand high in the Fascist salute. Then we were bowed into his office.

"Presumably," I began, "all opposition to Fascism is illegal. But since no state runs smoothly, I wonder how large is the opposition to the state today?"

Judge Lampis lost his cheerful and friendly smile. A startled look appeared in his eyes.

"I—I—I really can't say," he stuttered.

"There is opposition to the Fascist régime, isn't there?"

His face got a shade paler.

"It—it—well—really—it is something I know nothing about. Really—I—"

"What happened to individuals who opposed Fascism when it first took power?"

The great, profound and fearless interpreter of modern Italy's justice cracked the knuckles of his fingers and turned helplessly to the bronze bust of Mussolini resting on a pedestal on his desk.

"I don't know," he said miserably. "I—I—I'm really not competent to answer."

"You are one of the biggest judges in Italy, one of the

powers in the Ministry of Justice and you do not know the answers to these elementary questions?" I asked a little incredulously.

"Really—I don't know." He squirmed in his chair, motioning helplessly with his hands.

"Surely you know that there are political prisoners in Italy?"

His face went white. He tried to say something but the words simply would not come from his half-open mouth. I really felt sorry for him.

"Very well. You do not know. Can you tell me where I can find out? Who knows about these things?"

"I don't know. Those things are of a political nature. I was told you wanted to learn about how we reorganized the laws, made them more liberal so the people can benefit—"

"I'm learning—rapidly. Doesn't the Ministry of Justice handle the cases of those who violate the laws, especially those dealing with political matters?"

"No," he said with relief. "It is the work of the Special Tribunal."

"And the work of this Special Tribunal has nothing to do with the Ministry of Justice? Doesn't this Ministry have any idea of how just the Tribunal's activities are?"

"No," he said in a low voice.

"All right. Where is this body?"

"I don't know," he said, his eyes avoiding mine.

I turned to Por whose dark face had turned a little pale at my questions. He had not suspected what questions I would ask.

"What's the matter with this man? The Special Tribunal is supposed to be a public body. Why is he so terrified? Better ask him where we can find this mysterious body before this learned pillar of Justice caves in completely."

Por asked, hemming and hawing and apologizing.

"He says he doesn't know."

"Very well. Let's go to the Fascist Party headquarters."

"They are not supposed to talk to you unless you bring them a letter from the Ministry of Press and Propaganda."

"Let's see if they're afraid to talk, too."

At the headquarters of the Fascist Party we were shown in to Professor Ernesto Lama, head of the foreign department of the Party and who, on the side, teaches economics at the University of Rome.

"I should like to find out a few things about the Special Tribunal," I began.

The smile with which he had received me vanished.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because I want to know. It's a public tribunal, isn't it? Then why all this mystery about it? Why does everyone turn pale when I even mention it?"

"There are other things to study," he suggested mildly.

"I've studied other things. Now I should like to study this. If there are any objections, tell me."

"It is a body dealing with enemies of the state," he said grimly.

"That's okay by me. What I want to know is how they deal with them and why people are so scared to breathe its name."

He stared thoughtfully at the ceiling.

"Why didn't you ask the Ministry of Press and Propaganda?"

"Because when I ask questions about matters which they apparently want to hide they sabotage my requests. I have asked for such appointments and they keep postponing and postponing them until it looks like I'll have to stay here for months before those appointments are arranged. The press outside of Italy occasionally carries stories about the doings of this Special Tribunal, stories which might be greatly exaggerated. How can I check on them if I don't go to the head of it and let him either admit or deny them?"

Professor Lama looked at me shrewdly with the trace of a smile on his lips and shook his head.

"If an appointment is not arranged for me immediately," I added slowly, "then I shall be forced to conclude that things are even worse than foreign reports have them."

He turned to the telephone, called a number and talked for a few minutes.

"The President of the Special Tribunal will receive you at six this evening," he said when he finished. He looked at Por and added softly, "You will go with him?"

Por nodded his head uncomfortably.

The headquarters of La Madama Borgia is in a vast building facing the Tiber River. There was one lamp at the corner of the quay shining weakly in the drizzling rain and shrouding the whole area with an air of mystery and darkness. When we showed up and entered the wide gateway four state police silently surrounded us.

"Appointment with Il Presidente," said Por quickly.

The police handed us over to two soldiers and as we walked in the half darkness to an anteroom to write our names on a slip of paper I could see the glitter of gold braid and the glint of swords in dark recesses where more guards stood silent and immobile. La Madama is well guarded.

In a few moments another soldier appeared as if from nowhere and motioned to us without a word. We followed him through dimly lighted corridors, our footsteps muffled by thick rugs. Everywhere we turned we were confronted with soldiers standing silent in little antechambers about the size of small clothes-closets and half hidden by heavy portières. Suddenly we stepped into a large and brilliantly lighted reception room and while our eyes were trying to get used to the bright glare a wraith appeared from nowhere, a handsome youth in the most gorgeous uniform I had yet seen in a land that has more uniforms than a mile-long centipede has legs. The walls seemed to be solid, but you looked and there was this figure, gold braid glistening, his right arm raised in the Fascist salute.



"Please." The wraith spoke and bowed us to another ante-room before which stood four soldiers, still as marble statues. We crossed the threshold and instantly the door closed, there was a sliding of brass rings and thick, heavy drapes came together over the door. This unexpected sound in that spooky silence in which wraiths appeared and disappeared was startling. Both of us turned quickly, but the figure had vanished. The room was as still as a tomb.

Por's swarthy face had turned a slightly greenish hue.

"What the hell is this!" I exclaimed irritably. "A movie scene?"

Por motioned with his hand and I almost jumped, expecting at least some dancing skeleton or a white-sheeted visitor, but my companion was simply trying to say something and couldn't get the words out of his mouth. He looked haggard and looking at him and knowing that he must have heard many more tales about the smiles that La Madama gives, I began to wonder whether I shouldn't have left word at the American Embassy as to where I was going. As things stood, not a soul in the world who might be of help in a pinch knew where I was. Thoughts of people who had vanished kept flashing through my mind; and then, the fact that I, too, was beginning to notice a strange feeling in the pit of my stomach struck me as being very funny and I plumped into a red plush chair with a peal of laughter that must have been heard beyond the thick portières and the door.

My unexpected laugh startled poor Por and he literally jumped.

"Don't," he whispered. "This isn't funny."

"Stop whispering," I snapped. "This place probably has more dictaphones than a jail has bars."

And as suddenly as we had been locked in, the portières slid back, the door opened and the wraith in uniform appeared, its hand again raised in salute. It bowed us to a nearby open door.

"Il Presidente," it said and vanished.

The head of the Special Tribunal for the Defense of the State, to give him his full title, is His Excellency and Member of Parliament, Lieutenant General and Advocate Stringali-Casanova. He rose to greet us from behind a great oak desk upon which rested the always present bust of Mussolini, a fancy blotter and a dozen buttons to summon assistants (or maybe assistance). He is a middle-aged man with a determined jaw and the build and air of a wrestler. As we shook hands our gaze met and his deep, dark eyes were the coldest I had ever seen. What I assumed was supposed to be a pleasant smile of welcome resembled the puckered lips of a toothless old man.

"Please." He motioned to two chairs and spread his hands upon the desk near the push buttons. I had a feeling that the director of the ladies who smile lived in constant fear that some one would smile at him.

"Yes?" He raised his eyebrows questioningly.

"First, what is the Special Tribunal and how does it work?"

A frown spread swiftly over his forehead. He turned to Por.

"It would be better if the questions were left with me. I will answer them and we can discuss the answers tomorrow."

"That would be all right normally," I objected, "but I'm afraid I'll get no answers."

Stringali-Casanova smiled that thin, puckered smile and shrugged his shoulders.

"I would like to see the questions first," he insisted quietly.

It took almost an hour to translate them, during which the head of the ladies who smile did not look at me. As question after question was written he reached for it and as he read the frown on his forehead grew until it resembled a gathering storm. Twice he picked up the paper on which we had written our names, studied it carefully and returned to the questions. When he came to the one stating that news

dispatches smuggled out of Italy reported the arrest of workers for speaking at union meetings against the series of wage cuts instituted in 1930 he puckered his lips sharply and shook his head, calling my attention to it.

"It is not true?"

"No, no," he said emphatically.

"How about workers arrested for striking in the Caltanissetta sulphur mines against conditions and the launching of the Abyssinian war?"

The frown on his forehead became ominous. Por shifted uneasily in his chair.

"Strikes? There are no strikes in Italy," said Il Presidente.

"But your prisons are full—Ventotene, Poggio Reale, Civitavecchia—"

His eyes bored into me. He turned to Por and spoke rapidly in Italian.

"His Excellency wants to know where you get your information."

"From exiles who are in close touch with the underground movement in Italy—"

"Which exiles?"

I looked at him and smiled. Stringali-Casanova bowed his head slightly and puckered his lips.

"His Excellency now wants to know what else you know?"

"I have no objection to telling him. I know that the Special Tribunal sentenced over 2,000 persons to long prison terms between 1927 and 1932; that thousands of others were given smaller sentences by the provincial courts—just how many I do not know. All I know is that the prisons are full. In 1933 the Tribunal sentenced men of note like Professor Luigi Salvatorelli, the artist Carlo Levi and the lawyer Verrati—I have a long list of those sentenced but it is very incomplete. Shall I run off the names that I have and the prisons where they are confined?"

"No. It is not necessary. But these questions I must study before I can answer them."

"That means that they will not be answered. It also means that what are supposed to be public records are in reality secret?"

His Excellency shrugged his shoulders without answering.

"How about the reports I hear every place that people are picked up in the streets and in their homes and spirited away for criticizing the régime or for striking against intolerable conditions?"

"There have been no strikes," Il Presidente insisted. "They are illegal."

He looked calmly at me with his cold eyes and puckered his lips.

"There have been 153 strikes and two lockouts between 1926 when the law forbidding them went into effect and 1933. Since then the record of strikes and peasant rebellions like the recent one around Calabria is guarded more jealously than state secrets."

"You are mistaken," said Il Presidente. "There have been no strikes."

I took a sheet of paper from my pocket.

"In 1926, the year they were outlawed, there were six strikes. In 1927 there were nine; in 1928—twenty-four and one lockout; 1929—twenty-nine strikes and one lockout; 1930—thirty-nine strikes; 1931—thirty strikes; 1932—nine; 1933—seven. These strikes occurred both in industry and agriculture—"

"Where did you get that list?" Il Presidente demanded, his face an angry red.

"It's from the official records at the Confederation of Industry—the union of all industrial employers, as Your Excellency knows."

"Who gave it to you?" The words were now coming with the rapidity of a machine gun.

"Pirelli, the great Italian industrialist and vice-president of the Confederation of Industry, denied the existence of strikes when I saw him. He turned me over to the Confeder-

ation's chief statistician for data I requested. Among my written questions was one on strikes. The chief statistician probably turned my question over to an underling who, not knowing whom the answers were for, gave the exact figures."

I offered Il Presidente the official list of strikes on Confederation of Industry stationery. He studied it, the jawbone muscles clenched.

"May I have this?" he asked.

"Certainly. I have another"—he looked sharply at me—"and a third copy was mailed to America over a week ago."

He looked at me and smiled.

"These questions," he repeated. "I must study them."

Por was silent until we reached the street.

"Why didn't you tell me you had that list?" he asked in a worried voice.

"I didn't think you'd be interested."

We walked along silently.

"I need a drink," he said suddenly. "I am not a drinking man—"

"Yes, I know," I said sympathetically.

We drank our cognac in silence.

"Someone is going to lose his head for that," he said in a low voice.

"Nonsense," I assured him. "Why, you yourself have been telling me repeatedly that there is no fear in this country."

He did not answer. We walked out into the drizzle on the glistening street.

"I shouldn't have gone with you," he said as though talking to himself.

"Why not? Do you think La Madama's going to smile on you for taking me there?"

He shot me a swift glance and walked along glumly.

"I must go," he said abruptly. He shook my hand, tried to smile and walked off, his head deep in the collar of his raincoat.

I stood on the corner staring after him. Everybody is for Fascism in Italy. See the vast demonstrations at the Palazzo Venezia. The people are walking about, laughing, talking. There is no fear in Italy. Yet, men walk out of their homes and vanish in broad daylight. The prisons are filled with those who did not turn their heads when they whispered, and in ancient dungeons men and women are rotting or slowly going mad in the deathly silence. Not a sound comes from those entombed to tell of what happened to them.

Only La Madama knows and her smile is as inscrutable as the Borgia's.

## *THE BEAUTY OF FASCISM*

ON THE FERRY from the island of Murano, to which the great Venetian glass works were moved centuries ago from the nearby mainland, there was a youngster trying to extract something embedded in a finger, with his teeth. The ferry was filled with tired men and women who had just left the factories still belching smoke and sparks from the huge furnaces which melt glass until it flows like water.

"Do you work there, too?" I asked the boy.

He nodded, glancing curiously at me.

"But you are not fourteen?"

"Si, signior, I am; I am not big because we do not eat much," he said casually. When he turned to speak to me I noticed that his skinny little hands, blue with cold, were pitted with gaily colored slivers of glass.

"My mother will have to take this one out," he said finally.

When we got off the ferry I walked with him through winding, crooked streets so narrow that we could not walk abreast until we came to the street marked Viale Gritti. There was no number over the dark entrance of the house where we climbed two flights of stone stairs and though the sun still lacked an hour of setting I had to use my cigarette lighter to see where I was going.

There was only one room to the home, one room and a small kitchen in which this boy, two small sisters, and his father and mother lived. The lone window opened from the kitchen upon the narrow alley so that by leaning out you could almost touch the wall of the house across the street.

There was a large bed for the parents and the smallest of the children in the living room, a mattress on the stone floor for the boy and a bundle of rags for the two girls who ran around barefooted, their feet a reddish blue. The place was damp, chilly.

The boy breathlessly told them that the American with him had given him a five-lira piece and I was greeted with profuse thanks and blessings.

"Don't you ever get any sunshine here?" I asked, shivering from the raw cold.

"The sun? No, there is no room for the sun to come here." The mother pointed to the narrow space between the two buildings.

"How much rent do you pay for this place?"

"Eighty lire," said the father, rubbing his hands together for warmth.

"Do you work?"

"No, no. Not for two years. I worked as a glass blower but then my lungs—" He pointed to his chest.

"You mean this boy is the sole support—nobody helps you?"

"They gave my son work and sometimes the Fascists bring the girls shoes. They do not want the grand people who come from far lands to see girls go barefooted in Venice. It is not good for Venice," he explained in a matter-of-fact tone.

On the wood-burning stove was a pot filled with macaroni.

"The *bambino* earns only eight lire a day and from that he must pay his taxes and we must have clothes and money for rent and a little wood for the cooking," the mother explained. "And this little food we must share with the cat, for without the cat we cannot sleep. These houses are so old"—she motioned with her hands—"so old that no one remembers how old, and the rats come up from the streets and the water, rats so big they eat their way through stone; and without the cat they would run over us and try to eat us



in the night. There is a great hunger in Italy—even among the rats.”

The boy stood near the window while the mother, with a needle, carefully picked at the bits of glass in his hands. The light was bad and once she dug a little too deeply and he pulled his hand away with a cry. They were beautifully colored, those bits of glass, blue and green and a deep, rich red; or maybe, in the waning light, I did not see well and it was the trickle of blood from the boy's hand that colored the glass so red.

“It is every day like this,” she said. “Only on Sundays he does not get glass in his hands.”

“But can't they be given gloves to wear? Why don't you complain to the officials about this?”

The father rubbed his hands rapidly.

“We have no complaints,” he said quickly.

“You mean you do not dare to complain?”

“No, no,” the mother interrupted in a low tone. “We have no complaints.”

“Not even to complain that you are cold and hungry—?”

They shook their heads vigorously and became silent.

“But you cannot go on like this indefinitely.”

“There are many hungry in Venezia,” the father said glumly. “There are many who do not have even this much macaroni, many who eat only once a day—”

“You talk too much,” the wife interrupted sharply.

“And those who hunger? What are they doing?”

“They are awaiting a leader—”

“You talk too much!” his wife again interrupted, this time more sharply.

“He is an American. He is a rich American who wants to know how we live. He will not tell,” he returned with an air of recklessness born of desperation. “Let him go back to America and tell that the poor of Italy are awaiting a leader. We had two leaders here, here in Venezia”—the words came from him in a rush—“a lawyer and a dentist. Two good men

who shared what they had with those who hungered. They worked deeper than the deep waters of the Grand Canal but—even the deep waters have ears.”

“What happened?” I asked in the silence that fell over the room.

“They gave one twenty-five years and the other twenty, I hear. But I do not know. No one knows, for they have vanished. But there are other leaders—”

He paused significantly.

“Working deeper than—”

“Yes. These they have not yet discovered and taken away.”

“But while the people are awaiting a leader, how do they eat, who pays the rent?”

He smiled bitterly and motioned toward the street.

“Every day people are put out there because they have no rent. The furniture—right out on the street. How can a man who has not had work for six months, for a year or more, pay rent when he cannot find money for food?”

“What happens to them?”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“Some neighbor takes them in. Who knows what happens to them? If they cannot pay, if they owe money in the markets then they go to prison—one day for each five lire they owe.”

The mother interrupted again, this time pleadingly and he became quiet, the burst of pent-up bitterness having spent itself. I could not get him to talk any more. The momentary release from the fear he lived in was gone. I tried to stay but their fear of my presence was so apparent, the fear that neighbors had seen me and would talk of the foreigner who had visited them was so great that it would have been cruel to remain.

There is not the faintest hint of this hunger, misery and fear in the Italian press. The Italian people do not know of conditions in their own area, let alone other regions in the

land. The efforts by the Fascist régime to keep the facts of Italy's internal condition from becoming public both at home and abroad, have an air of desperation.

The régime is faced with a problem today far more serious than when it took power in the midst of widespread revolutionary disorders, for then there was Fascism to hold up as a hope; but today Fascism has had its try for fourteen years and failed in the face of economic conditions which it seems unable to remedy.

Italy has always had difficulty feeding its people and since hungry mouths have increased by twenty-five percent in the last thirty-five years there is now even greater difficulty. The standard of living for the people, which had always been low, has now reached almost incredible depths.

With the world financial crisis affecting Italian business, as it affected the rest of the world, manufacturers raised cries for help from the state to keep from foundering. The régime helped by pouring money into them and by reducing the cost of operations by repeated cuts of wages which, even in periods of prosperity, were insufficient to support a worker and his family. Fascist party, "labor union" and industrial union officials say the wage cuts since 1930 averaged about 15 per cent, but I examined the reductions in almost every large industrial and agricultural area and found that they ran between 20 and 40 per cent. When I showed my calculations to "labor's" representatives they just shrugged their shoulders. There was no explanation except that the textile and rayon industries which employ several hundred thousand people, mostly women, would have gone bankrupt if the wages had not been cut 40 per cent.

Out of Italy's total population of 43,000,000, over 32,000,000 are classed as "gainfully employed"—or, almost everybody over the age of ten. Out of these 32,000,000 workers, 16,700,000 are women. This number, more than half of all the workers in the land, is paid from one third to one half less than men for the same kind of work. When

the wage cuts were decreed the income of more than half the workers in Italy was thus reduced to a virtually nominal figure. Since the earnings of women were always needed by a family the poverty in which the workers normally lived reached a new low.

The unrest developed serious proportions. Strikes, though forbidden by law, broke out in widely scattered areas and were promptly and rigorously suppressed. To placate the people rents and retail prices were hurriedly reduced; but it is one thing to reduce prices by decree and another to enforce it. Today, due to the Ethiopian war expenditures, prices which had been only partially controlled at best, have risen considerably and thus reduced the buying power of the people still more.

It was the 1933 period of great unrest that witnessed leaps in the unemployment figures and widespread hunger and strikes. It also saw the launching of the move to conquer Ethiopia.

Internal conditions reached a point where iron control was essential over the people and in April, 1935, the *libretto di lavori* or "workmen's pass" was instituted. A worker cannot get a job without this pass and he who mutters against his non-living wage being cut or conditions under which he works is faced with the threat of being fired and getting no work at all, since he can get a job only through the official Labor Exchange. The *libretto di lavori* simply offers a worker the privilege of starvation wages in exchange for silence. It has served its purpose in reducing the open mutterings but it is hated with a passion that has within itself all the elements of explosive material.

"*Si, si,*" a ship worker in Trieste said to me excitedly. "Here is my card, my picture. Everything! If I want to eat, then I must do what the union leaders say. I must say 'Yes, it is best for my Italy that I eat less.' If I do not agree then I lose my job and can get no other. *Si,* we have an army to

free slaves in a savage land and the *libretto di lavori* to make slaves in Italy."

I asked a resident correspondent in Rome, one of the most competent journalists I know, if he did not see what was going on, and if so why he did not write it.

"If I went digging into conditions which the propaganda department doesn't want known," he said, "I could get away with it two or three times and then I'd be asked to leave Italy. Either my paper would have to send another man who would play the game and be good, or not be covered in Rome which is one of the important news centers of the world, especially now. The London *Daily Mail* was barred. *The Chicago Tribune* was kicked out. There have been protests to *Paris Soir* on its attitude, though their man is still hanging around."

With this situation little seeps out except what the Ministry of Press and Propaganda wants known. Even the diplomatic corps of foreign powers, forming their conclusions from such practical matters as exports, imports and the quantity of available gold, are impressed by the vast enthusiastic Fascist demonstrations in the Palazzo Venezia when Mussolini appears. But Rome isn't Italy. In other cities, even large ones like Milan and Turin, Genoa and Trieste, the drummed-up enthusiasm does not call forth crowds anything like Rome's in proportion to the population. And when you get out of Rome into the agricultural areas you find, instead of enthusiasm, a sullenness in the midst of poverty and misery.

When I began to ask questions of how the people lived and what they thought the Ministry of Press and Propaganda, which had welcomed me with open arms, cooled perceptibly. They fed me propaganda and when I had taken all they offered and still insisted with questions which were uncomfortable for them the coolness turned to sabotage. Officials stopped giving interviews and insisted that I leave written questions: on the morrow I would get the answers;

but the morrow never came. They gave me the feeling that official Italy and especially the Ministry of Press and Propaganda would not be heartbroken if I left the country. That feeling was particularly present on the day four officials from the Ministry of Corporations tried to explain some conclusions I had drawn from their published figures on the cases handled by the much advertised "labor courts."

"I have your figures up to 1933," I said. "Could I get 1934 and 1935?"

"Why do you want them?" they insisted.

"I should like to see whether the conditions that preceded the 1934 wage cuts were marked by an increased number of labor court cases," I said frankly.

The officials exchanged glances.

"We will get them for you—tomorrow."

I had heard that before and the very fact that they would not give me the figures was in itself significant.

"There are some other questions," I continued, without rising when they stood up to signify that the interview was over. "Between 1926 when strikes were outlawed and 1933 there were some 84,000 labor court cases—"

"That only shows the confidence our people have in the labor courts," they explained suavely.

"What interests me is that in the areas where strikes—"

"No strikes," everyone interrupted as though someone had touched a button. "There are no strikes in Italy. They are forbidden by law."

"In those areas," I continued, "your official records show the largest number of labor court cases which never got to the Labor Tribunal—though they were not settled in the lower courts. For instance, in the province of Lecce there were almost 3,000 cases before the labor courts. Of this large number only 160 actually got to the Labor Tribunal and not one reached the Court of Appeal, which is the last word, though your official records show they were not settled. These statistics imply that the labor courts did not

satisfy the complaints of the workers. And it was in Tricaso, in this province, that peasants were arrested and sentenced to prison for revolting against confiscation of their property because they could not pay the taxes."

They looked at one another without answering.

"In Caltanissetta there were about 1,200 cases before the labor courts and not one reached the final courts though they were not all settled; and it was in the Caltanissetta sulphur mines that workers were arrested for striking against working conditions and in protest against the Ethiopian war.

"In Trieste there were almost 3,000 labor cases up to 1933. As I said, I do not have the records for 1934-35 but I do know that there is considerable unrest there and that in the efforts to suppress it the Special Tribunal in May, 1935, sentenced 70 persons to long prison terms.

"I have more such figures and comparisons with the number of strikes—"

"There were no strikes," they repeated, this time a little more sharply.

"I have a list of them—here."

They studied it carefully and then returned it with reassuring smiles.

"You are making a great mistake. Those are the union cases—cases between labor unions and employers—which were arbitrated."

They laughed gently, tolerantly, forgivingly.

"These are not the cases that were arbitrated. You published a list of those—a total of 284 cases in both industry and agriculture and several hundred cases that were started but eventually dropped for different reasons."

The settlements of workers' grievances by appeals to the "labor courts" depend upon the political need of the moment and not upon the justification or lack of justification for the complaint. As both industrial and agricultural workers told me:

"First we were told that our grievances would be settled

by the union but the union leaders do nothing; so we point to the law and take it to the courts. Sometimes we get justice."

"You mean that the decisions of the labor courts are motivated not by the issue but by political necessity; that when the Fascist régime wants to curry favor with the employer the decision favors him and when the workers become too restless the decision favors them?"

"Is it not so the world over?" they would smile.

Industrial, labor and political officials admit frankly that it is impossible for one worker to support a family of two or three persons at the present wage scales. The wife, too, must find a job if the family is to have the barest necessities, and this constant struggle to make ends meet adds fuel to the fires of restlessness even among those steadily employed.

The middle class, or what is left of it, is gradually disintegrating under the pounding of Fascism's efforts to balance itself under Italy's natural economic difficulties which are now accentuated due to the world crisis. Mussolini played with the manufacturers and found that it did not help. Now he is trying to placate the workers while developing a small landed gentry to form the rock base of support against any attempt by revolutionists to raise the cry of "Land to the peasants!" With a strong agricultural class the country would be divided against itself should the restless factory workers attempt to seize them as they did in 1919-20. In Mussolini's attempt to build a conservative stronghold in agriculture he has been partly successful especially among the war veterans. He is particularly anxious to settle the restless war veterans on the land, with money advanced by the state for land and stock.

I talked with a number of these veterans who had become threatening in the northern industrial areas. Now they are settled in central and southern Italy, with most of them contented. They have homes and land of their own for the first time in their lives.



"Now that you are settled here," I asked many transplanted veterans in Littoria, "and will pay off the money advanced by the *Combattementi* (Veterans' Organization), what will you do?"

"I'll be a landowner," was the invariable reply with a pleased air.

It is in these men and their families that Mussolini now has his greatest support.

Excluding the veteran, the small property owner in both city and country is being squeezed to the wall by the ever-increasing taxation. The régime has no records of the number of small farm owners, or house owners who lost their land in recent years; in fact, the régime does not even know how to classify these people. In 1935 it decided to consider them as employers.

This juggling of statistics by Fascism produces crazy results. With this new classification of small property owners, Italy now has 7,800,000 employers and 7,150,000 workers. When I pointed out the absurdity of such official figures, people laughed and then shrugged their shoulders.

"Those are the figures," they said, and that seemed to settle it.

"But in other statistics you list 32,000,000 workers."

"That makes it seem funny, doesn't it?" they would grin.

And Professor Ballella, chief statistician for the Confederation of Industry, the union of all employers, also laughed when I showed him the figures.

"That only goes to prove that Communism has no chance in Italy!"

"But the different figures," I persisted.

"These are the figures," he said. More than that I could not get out of him.

Membership in the Fascist Party, however, has increased until today it totals over one and one half millions, including women and youth groups. The régime points with pride to this figure as evidence of popular support but what the

régime does not point out is the number, which it would be impossible to estimate, who joined the Party because Party members get first pick of the jobs and are rarely unemployed.

The big industrialists and landowners are irritable because of the taxation forced on the régime to raise money for huge public works projects in the desperate efforts to give work. They also profoundly resent the havoc caused by the over-valuation of the lira which pretty much ruined exports and thus added to the jobless. This class is not so contented with its own régime but does not know what else to do but follow it blindly through the maze in which the Italian economy is wallowing.

Fascism is still capitalism and capitalism can assuage unrest only by granting concessions. Italian business, however, is in so precarious a condition that it can grant but few more concessions. It is almost bankrupt and for the state to force business to grant more concessions to the restless workers means that the business world will crack. So the régime is faced with the problem of restless workers to whom it must grant concessions if they are to be kept quiet and business which simply cannot grant many more concessions and still be profitable. And unless business produces profits, it is no business. No matter what the government does, one side or the other will crack and whichever goes first will pull the other down. Hence, the only hope Mussolini had of escaping from this dilemma was the desperate one of conquering Ethiopia where he could settle his unemployed and, on the strength of the undeveloped resources there, borrow money from the world's bankers.

Business therefore supports the Ethiopian venture while it runs around in circles trying to keep from being engulfed in a looming tidal wave of hungry and bitter workers and peasants. The days when the workers seized the factories and hoisted the red flag of revolution over them have not been forgotten by business or the régime, and with all the business antagonism to increasing taxation they find com-

fort in Fascism's rule of fear as the amiable Dr. Canova, one of the Fiat officials, shrieked at me above the roar of the machines when he showed me through the great factories in Turin.

"Were you here when the workers seized the factories?" I shouted.

"Yes," he laughed, nodding his head vigorously.

"What happened?"

"Well, they just seized the factories and continued working them but the office force went home with the books and the officials, and the scientists stayed away. The Premier wouldn't use soldiers to recapture the factories because the workers were in a fighting mood. The Premier was wise. He knew that the workers did not have the records and when the material in the plants was used up no one would give them credit. They had no money to buy more goods so the revolution would end. And that is what happened!"

His voice rose to a higher shriek.

"What happened then?"

"The leaders fled to Moscow and the owners took back the factories!" he laughed loudly.

"Are any of those workers still here?"

"Oh, yes. See that man there"—he pointed to a man in his late forties tending three gigantic machines, his arms glistening with oil—"he was one of them."

"I'd like to talk to him," I shouted.

The worker looked at me from under deep-set eyes when I asked him if he had been one of those who had seized the factory in which he now worked.

"Yes," he said shortly.

It was obvious from the first glance he gave me that even if Dr. Canova had not been there, he was not a talking man.

"How do you feel about it now?"

"How do I feel?" he said almost harshly, digging his arms into a trough of oil. "I do not feel. I just work."

"There!" laughed Dr. Canova. "They are contented

now. They just work. That is the thing that I see most in our workers."

"Yes, I see that you see. Let's leave him alone," I suggested, walking away.

"Do the workers ever talk of those days?"

"No. Never! Fascism has stopped all that!"

"There is no radical activity here at all?"

"None whatever. The workers are content. You saw that."

"But last month three workers were arrested in this very plant for carrying on Communist propaganda."

"Ah, yes. That is, I mean that all the activities are very subterranean. Very subterranean," he added, chuckling. The shape of his teeth seemed to force saliva out of his mouth when he shouted and specks of it spattered over me.

"The beauty of Fascism," he began in a high voice, "is that there is no more discussion about things like that. The orders are handed down and that is all. That is the beauty of it!"

"Weren't they restless when they got those repeated wage cuts?"

He roared in high glee. "Yes! They were restless. But what could they do? That is the beauty of Fascism!"

"Everybody's Fascist here now?"

"Well, no." He shook his head with scholarly caution. "I would say that out of every five workers two are for it, two are against, and one is indifferent. But those who are against don't dare to talk. They can go to the union leaders, but those are from the Fascist Party. Understand?"

"Perfectly!" I roared, "I see the beauty of it!"

I wondered when I left him if the Fascist leaders and the industrialists ever think how long it will be under these conditions before the beauty of Fascism becomes an ugly nightmare of revolt to them.

## *IL DUCE'S LABOR RACKET*

THE MOST CHARMING THING about all of Italy's big labor leaders is that every one of them can point to a father or a grandfather who had been a worker. On the other hand, the function of the smaller labor leaders, as far as I was able to figure it out after talking with many of them, is to keep the big leaders informed of the unrest among the workers lest it become too extensive and show itself in overt acts. Trifling matters like wages and working conditions are as far from their worries as the heating system in an Eskimo igloo.

In not one industrial area that I visited did I find an important union leader who had been a worker! They were simply members of the Fascist Party who directed union activities in accordance with orders passed down from above, orders which depended upon the political need of the moment. The welfare of the workers did not even enter into their calculations.

Fascists are proud of the fact that everybody is organized. That, they pointed out, shows what Fascism has done for the workers. But when workers are fired or imprisoned for protesting too loudly against wage cuts and impossible working conditions, the other workers learn that it is healthier not to discuss conditions and wages even in their union meetings. The workers as well as even important labor officials, like those at the head of all labor unions in a province, are equally fearful. So I went to the spacious building across the street from the American Embassy in Rome, where all labor union activities in the land are centered in the headquarters of the Confederation of Labor. Men and women who had

never worked in a factory or a mill in their lives, from there direct the fate of almost 3,000,000 "organized" industrial workers.

The place bustled with activity. Labor officials high and low entered and left offices to the click of heels and hands raised in salute. Not even messengers delivering inter-office memoranda failed to pause in doorways, click heels and salute before tendering the memos. Professors and learned assistants sat around with stacks of papers from which they arrive at figures. I went from office to office trying to arrange an appointment with "Il Presidente" but the head of Italy's labor unions seemed to be harder to get to than the ruler of the realm. They speak of "Il Presidente" in hushed tones, for his job of keeping restless workers under control is one of the most important in the country. When my hopes of seeing him were waning and I was closeted with labor's chief statistician in an effort to get at the bottom of a mass of contradictory figures, I heard a roar outside. The statistician's door burst open and with a loud cry the handsome, heavy-set Presidente, resplendent in his black-shirt uniform, appeared in the doorway, his right hand raised high in the Fascist salute, and his left buttoning his pants.

When he saw a stranger he grew red and muttered an apology.

"That's all right," I laughed. "In America labor leaders are sometimes caught with their pants unbuttoned!"

It was easy to arrange an interview after the general laughter.

Tullio Cianetti, in whose delicate hands with their nicely-manicured fingernails rests the welfare of Italy's industrial workers, leaned back in a chair in his sumptuous office and threw back his shock of black hair like a ham pianist about to start on a difficult composition.

"In America," I began, "our labor leaders come up from the ranks of the workers. I understand that it is not so in Italy—"

He jumped forward with a quick movement and waved his hands excitedly, a mannerism that continued without a let-up throughout the four-hour interview.

"Did you come from the industrial ranks?" I asked.

"I come from a peasant family," he said quickly. "I began to work from almost the first day I could move around. I was just finishing school when Italy entered the World War and I volunteered. When the war was over I worked as a clerk in the local office of the Minister of Justice. It was then that I became interested in the political movement of the day. About 1921 I began to organize industrial and agricultural workers in my province as part of my Fascist activities."

"After that?"

"Well, from 1922 to 1935 I was head of the provincial federation of all unions of farmers and industrialists. I was national secretary of the Glass Workers' Union and national secretary of the Miners' Union until I became president of the Confederation of Labor."

"Have you ever worked as a miner or a glass worker?"

A faint flush spread over his face and he shook his head slowly.

"Had you ever worked in a factory—at any time?"

He jumped forward and began a long speech.

"It is not necessary to be a worker to understand a worker," he said intensely. "It is necessary only to have a heart."

"Did the workers elect you president of the Confederation of Labor?"

"I was appointed. But in reality I was elected. You see, here in Italy labor union delegates submit a list of persons to the Government for the job and the Government appoints from that list."

"Are any of those delegates non-Fascist?"

"Oh, no! They must be members of the Fascist Party before they can hold office in any labor union."

"I had always been under the impression," I said after he had defended the series of wage cuts given the workers, "that one of the chief functions of a labor union is to present a united front of the workers against wage cuts."

"That is right; but under Fascism wages are secondary to the welfare of the state. It was necessary to reduce wages because the agreements made during the prosperity period were higher than the manufacturers could afford. The industrialists demanded it because the world financial crisis and the over-valuation of the lira had cut into their ability to sell their products and, consequently, reduced their incomes. It was essential that the cost of production for the manufacturers be reduced."

"So Fascism's idea of helping the manufacturers is to reduce the wages of the workers?"

"Oh, it was a gradual process," he explained. "And we had prepared the workers for it by discussing it in the unions for months before. We had to carry on an educational propaganda because they objected to it."

"Very inconsiderate," I commented.

"No, no," he rose to their defense. "Workers do not like to have their wages cut."

"Tell me," I said, "did Fascism voluntarily raise the workers' wages when the manufacturers were making big profits during the prosperity period?"

"It was not voluntary. The workers demanded it," he said with an air of surprise that I should even ask such a question.

"Have the workers' representatives any idea of what the profits were of the manufacturers at the time of the wage cuts?"

"Profits?" he said sadly. "There were no profits. The manufacturers were going broke and the state had to step in and reduce wages or they could not have continued in business!"

"Yes, I know. Most Italian business is in a very bad state but do you happen to have the records of incomes, say of the



leading six or eight industrial concerns in Italy during the period that wages were cut?"

"No; that is not within our province. That is at the Confederation of Industry, the union of all manufacturers."

"You mean that the representatives of organized labor have no idea of what the manufacturers earn annually—even their published figures? How can you discuss wage-scale agreements without knowing that?"

"Oh, we ask them. They always tell us. They must tell us."

"Did you ask them or examine their books before you agreed to the wage reductions or find out what their profits were after the reductions went into effect?"

He looked thoughtfully at a bookcase on the other side of the room and shook his head.

"I suppose we did. I do not remember. But the orders to reduce wages came because the manufacturers were going bankrupt."

"Would it surprise you to know that the profits some of these concerns made, after the wage cuts, were about the same or even higher than in the prosperity period? And that other concerns were able to pay normal dividends from the money they saved by cutting the wages of workers?"

"It cannot be," he exclaimed excitedly.

"Did you ever try to find out?"

"No. You do not understand. Such matters belong to the Confederation of Industry."

"I see that they do. Suppose I give you an idea of the profits of some of the leading manufacturers in the prosperity period and after the wage cuts. Here is the official record from the Confederation of Industry. These, mind you, are the sums they say they earned. They do not include enormous sums to build new plants or for expansion in foreign countries, like the Pirelli works, or hidden assets or anything else by which industry hides its profits. It is just a record of their published earnings.

"In 1929 the Fiat works made a profit of over 62 million lire and paid 25 lire per share in dividends. In 1930, when wages were cut because they were going broke, the profit was 41 million lire and the dividends dropped to 18 lire. In 1932 they show no earnings, but managed to pay 10 lire a share dividends, apparently from a reserve fund—which isn't bad for a firm crying for help. In 1934, when another wage cut was decreed, it earned more than 24 million lire and paid a dividend of 10 lire."

Il Presidente stared at the sheet of paper from which I was reading. He had forgotten to jump back and forth in his chair.

"Your cotton textile industry was badly hit, yet Cotonificio Cantoni, where so many women who normally got a wage far below the living standard, had their wages cut drastically, made 8½ million lire profits and paid a dividend of 125 lire per share in 1930 at the time of the wage cuts. In 1932 and 1933, at the height of the world depression, it made profits ranging between 6 and 7 million lire and paid 100 lire in dividends. I do not have the figures for 1934 when another wage cut was instituted.

"The Cotonificio di Angeli Frua, another of the terribly hit cotton textile industries made 18 million lire in 1929 and 15 million lire in 1930 when wages were cut.

"Snia Viscosa, of the rayon industry, made 23½ million lire profit in 1931 and paid a dividend of 12 lire. In 1934, when wages were again cut, its earnings increased to over 26 million lire and its dividends to 16 lire per share.

"Montecatini, handling fertilizer, earned 64 million lire in 1931 and when wages were cut in 1934 because they were going broke, their earnings increased to 67 million lire.

"Società Edison, electric power, earned 114 million lire at the height of prosperity in 1929 and when wages were cut in 1930, the earnings increased to 137 million lire. Dividends remained the same—50 lire per share. In 1934 when wages were again cut the profits rose higher than even in

1930—to almost 138 million lire, or 24 million lire more than it earned at the height of prosperity.

“I have a great many more figures but the Confederation of Labor can get them as easily as I. What I am interested in is whether you think these figures show that the Fascist régime is interested in establishing a higher standard of living for the people or whether it functions chiefly to make profits for business at the expense of the people?”

Cianetti shook his head. He had not uttered a word while I was reading the figures.

“Industry must make a profit or it will take capital out of the country,” he said finally. “It is important to the state that business makes a profit.”

“Have you any idea of what the average wage scale is for the unskilled and the skilled worker?”

He thought for a moment. “I should say about two lire an hour for the unskilled and about three lire for the skilled.”

“And the living cost for an average family per week?”

“Italian families run into large numbers but we estimate that an average family consists of four persons and the living cost for that number is 172 lire per week.”

“Assuming, then, that an unskilled worker puts in a full forty-hour week which he rarely does and a skilled worker the same, the unskilled worker would have a maximum of 80 lire a week and the skilled one 120 while the living cost for their families is 172 lire a week. How can they live?”

He shrugged his shoulders and motioned helplessly with his hands.

“That is the problem. But you must also understand that in Italy there is an average of two and one-half persons who work for each working family of four. The family where only the head works is rare. In Italy everybody works who can find a job. And when two and one-half persons work they can make ends meet.”

"In other words, if they want to live everybody in a family who is capable of working must work."

"That is right."

"And if they cannot find work, like the unemployed today?"

"What happens in America or England or France when they cannot find work? They get help from the state and they go hungry."

"But the state here allows them relief of 3 lire and 80 centimes a day for a three-month period, only if they have been working and paying into the unemployment relief insurance fund. How can they live on that?"

"They can't," he smiled. "That is why we must have Ethiopia."

"You mean that labor became so restless under starvation wages and unemployment that it threatened the stability of the régime?"

"Labor's restlessness has forced us to seek more land," he admitted. "The world has closed its doors to Italian immigration; and even if those doors were open, why should we send our people to foreign lands to increase the wealth and power of those countries? We want that wealth and power for Italy. The Ethiopian expedition has enabled us to send 40,000 workers there to build roads and do other essential work. We plan for them to remain there, to bring their families and to settle on the land we conquer."

I looked at him, a little amazed.

"It is simply a return to the old Roman tradition of conquest and colonization," he added.

"You were driven to conquest by the inability to take care of the unemployed. Couldn't you have taken care of them by reducing the profits of your manufacturers, since the aim of the corporate state is that everybody works for the benefit of the state? The state consists of the majority of the people and that majority happens to be workers and not industrialists."

He shook his head vigorously and drummed on his desk with a forefinger.

"We must give capital a certain margin of profit or it will take its money out of Italy—"

"But the state is superior to capital. That is the Fascist thesis. Why can't you issue a decree prohibiting the removal of capital, just as you issue decrees reducing wages?"

"We do; but we believe in private enterprise," he said lamely. "Anyway, the state has already, through taxation, reduced the income of the manufacturers. The pressure of labor is ever to continue to reduce the income and level out their profits. But we cannot now. It would upset matters."

"What made you reduce the number of working hours from 48 to 40 in 1934?"

"The growing number of unemployed. The mechanization of plants and the inability to consume, due to unemployment and export difficulties, what we were already producing, resulted in a drop in production and a consequent increase in unemployment—"

"Did the state reduce the working hours or did the employers suggest it under the theory that everybody is working for the best interests of the state?"

He shot a quick look at me and smiled.

"Ever since 1932 the Italian Government has put the question of reducing the number of working hours up to the International Labor Conference in Geneva. For two years it was opposed, especially by employers' groups. So we did it ourselves."

"What I'm trying to get at is whether the reduction was instigated by the leaders acting for the welfare of the workers or was it forced on the state by the growing unrest which compelled the state to placate the workers?"

"I was a delegate, for instance, to the Geneva Conference, and seeing that it had failed to reduce the number of working hours, I saw the necessity to raise this question—" he began again evasively.

"I know. What I want to know is whether what you did was based upon your desire to reduce the number of unemployed or whether you were forced to do it by the restlessness of the workers?"

"Leaders can do nothing else but interpret the desires of the masses," he said with a shrug.

"In other words the corporate state did nothing for the welfare of the millions of workers until the workers themselves forced it?"

"The masses knew that we were considering it—"

"Then the picture we have is that the corporate state officials waited until the unrest became threatening before they did something and did not act because they were actuated by a desire to help the people?"

"When workers demand something, naturally we give it to them."

"That is what I wanted to know. Now, hundreds of thousands of the unemployed have been taken into the army. The making of war products, you estimated a little while ago, gave employment to about 300,000 more. The 40-hour week reduced unemployment by about another 100,000 you said. But you still have 700,000 registered unemployed. That is the official figure, not the actual one which would include the partially unemployed and those living with their families. Would not Italy be able to absorb all of its unemployed if the working hours were to be reduced to, let us say, 30 hours a week?"

"Of course," he agreed readily, "but we cannot do it alone. That problem is tied up with international competition. We cannot cut our own throats by reducing the number of working hours. That would force our manufacturers to raise prices and they could not compete with the rest of the world."

"Would it not help if the child labor minimum-age laws were raised and the work children now do were given to unemployed adults with families?"

"It wouldn't make a great deal of difference," he said casually. "There are not many children employed."

"The number of children working has been increasing steadily in the last five years according to official figures. At present there are 108,000 between the ages of 12 and 15 who are registered as working. That is more than you estimated were put to work by the 40-hour week."

He seemed to receive the figure I had given him as news and looked questioningly at his chief statistician who nodded his head in verification. Cianetti did not say anything.

"What is the minimum working age for children here?"

"Fourteen," he said quickly.

"Fifteen," interrupted the statistician.

"That's right. Fifteen," Cianetti recalled, equally quickly.

"Well, which is it?"

They got a little red book (everybody goes to a book to look up the laws the moment you ask a question) and pointed to the requirements. Yes, fifteen. That is the minimum age."

"When was it enacted?"

"In 1934."

"What was it before that?"

"Twelve."

"The policy of the Fascist régime has been to arrange things for all the people," I began again. "That is the corporate state idea, isn't it? The Fascist régime has been in power fourteen years. During almost half of that period the country has witnessed terrible unemployment, misery and hunger. Why did it wait until last year before it raised the minimum child labor law from 12 to 15?"

"The law was passed in 1925. See, it is here. So. In this book. But all the laws were consolidated last year."

"You mean no children under fifteen worked during the last thirteen years?"

"Well—you see—the Fascist régime is defending not only

the workingman but also the race. It is defending the people's health. That is why the minimum child labor law was passed."

"That's very nice. But did children under fifteen work in the past thirteen years before this law was consolidated, as you put it?"

"Well, they worked. Yes. As apprentices," he said a little irritably.

"I see."

"But you must understand also that in all the 40-hour week agreements there is a clause stating that when the necessity arises women and children are to be supplanted by men."

"That is not the question. However—you say the minimum age for children is 15. Pirelli told me it is 14."

A hubbub arose and Il Presidente pointed vigorously to the little red book.

"No. It is 15. It cannot be 14. It says so in this book."

"Pirelli also had a little book. I saw it. It said 14."

A red flush suffused his face.

"Pirelli doesn't know!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Now you say the children are allowed to work because they must learn a trade as apprentices. Pirelli, however, said very frankly that industry employs children because they are cheaper, because they get even less than women."

"Pirelli had no business saying that! Pirelli talks—talks—talks—" He waved his hands furiously. His statistician, a much calmer man, said something to him in a low voice and he quieted down immediately. It was apparently not seemly for Il Presidente to lose his temper before a foreign journalist.

"Pirelli talks too much," he repeated with a quick smile. "Evidently the Fascist régime has not yet destroyed all desire for gain."

"Pirelli also said," I continued gently, "that the régime thought it was better for the children to go to work at 14



rather than get too much of an education. If they did not go to work they would have to go to school and if they went to school and got too educated Italy would develop a white-collar class with nothing to do—a class which, having a little education and being able to think, might become a danger to the state if it could not find work.”

For a moment I thought Cianetti would explode. The veins stood out on his forehead. A tense silence followed in which no one spoke. He did not look at me.

“That,” he said finally, trying to restrain the fury in his voice, “is what Pirelli said?”

“That is what he said to me yesterday in his office,” I assured him.

“Well.” A grim smile spread over his face. “That only goes to show we have free speech here.”

I had a feeling that Signior Pirelli would hear about this.

“Tell me,” I continued, changing the subject, “if under the corporate state the idea is to help everybody”—he shot me a quick look as though he were just about fed up with my harping on the corporate state idea—“why then, after fourteen years, is the middle class slowly disintegrating and the strata are now rapidly showing a distinct dividing line of the very rich and the very poor, with the latter just seeming to work for the very rich?”

“Big wealth as you understand it in America does not exist,” he began. “Very many of our rich have completely crumpled up since the World War. Why,” he motioned grandly with a hand, “right here in my office I employ the landowner upon whose land my family worked for generations.”

“So? But I still don’t understand the wide divergence—much wider than before Fascism came into power.”

“Our aim is not to take away wealth but to increase wealth for everybody,” he floundered. “Fascism’s war is not against the rich but against poverty.”

“And how do you expect to accomplish that?”

"I don't know," he said helplessly. "We are trying, always trying."

"And in the meantime the very rich are being protected and the poor are having their wages reduced?"

"We have not yet completed our adjustment," he said with a vague motion of his hands.

"Do you think that Fascism has solved the essential differences in the interests between the two classes—the working class and the employing class?"

"Fascism has created a political and legal machine which is working toward the reduction of those differences," he said slowly and then added thoughtfully, "but it will be a difficult thing to abolish the essential differences anywhere."

"You mean that even under Fascism there are bound to be two conflicting interests, the interests of the worker and the interests of the employer and that they must always struggle?"

"Under Fascism we will reduce that struggle to the least possible minimum."

"By prohibiting strikes?"

"And lockouts!" he exclaimed.

"What I'm trying to get at is whether you, as head of all industrial labor unions in Italy and one of the leaders in the Fascist Party, think that the desires and aims of capital and labor must be permanently different and consequently opposed?"

"If I thought that," he said with a harassed air, "I would think this machinery which Fascism has set up is useless. I think the differences between capital and labor can be arbitrated. Fascism has not abolished the class struggle or class distinctions. Only irresponsible people claim that for Fascism."

"Thank you. That is what I wanted to get clearly from you," I said, rising.

He jumped up with an air of relief.

"Are there any other questions?" he asked politely.

"No, thanks. I think you've made Fascism's attitude to the worker very clear."

## “ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS”

PEOPLE WHO ARE TOO curious about an army's morale in time of war have been known to look at the muzzles of rifles when they saw their last dawn. But the Italian papers were filled with stories about the thousands who were rushing to volunteer for the army, of marching soldiers singing as they left for Africa, of a wild enthusiastic support for the Ethiopian venture, so though I had no particular yearning to face a squad on some cheerless morning, I got on a troop train going to Naples.

It was crowded with soldiers and civilians going to see relatives off. There were eight of us in the third-class compartment where soldiers ride and one young girl of eighteen or twenty with a marriage ring on her finger. Her face was white and periodically she blinked her eyes rapidly as though trying to keep back the tears.

“Where are you from?” I asked the soldier nearest the window.

“Milan.”

“Volunteer?”

“No,” he said shortly.

He had worked in a garage there and through good times and bad had somehow managed to get along. Then this war came and here he was in uniform on his way to kill Ethiopians. He had never heard of Ethiopia before.

“Do you like to go there?” I asked.

He shot me a startled look and glanced at the other soldiers and the officers passing in the corridor outside our compartment. He did not answer.

"You are going to Naples, too?" I asked the girl.

She nodded, blinking her eyes rapidly. Suddenly she rose and went outside to the women's room. She had done that twice before, each time returning with her eyes obviously washed.

"She is going to see her husband off," one of the soldiers volunteered. "They have been married only a month."

A young man, resplendent in a neatly-pressed uniform and dangling a dagger from his belt, squeezed into the compartment and sat opposite me. There was a tiny red cross on his brown helmet.

"Red Cross?" I asked.

"Yes," he smiled in a friendly fashion.

"You're going to Ethiopia to save the wounded?"

He nodded cheerfully.

"Do you need a dagger to save them?"

The soldiers looked at him and grinned.

"I might need it to save myself," he said, flushing. "The Ethiopians are savages."

"But I thought the International Red Cross regulations prohibit Red Cross nurses from carrying any sort of arms?"

"I do not know what the regulations prohibit. I know only that we were given daggers." He looked at me and added with a wink: "Maybe we will be given something else in Eritrea."

A lieutenant, looking as if he had just stepped out of a store window, passed by, apparently looking over his men. He paused in the open doorway of the compartment and since I was about to light a cigarette I offered him one.

"Ah, American, eh? Good cigarettes," he said, gladly accepting one.

He was familiar with the region and pointed out the ruins of the ancient Roman water system that flashed by.

"You'll probably wish for even a ruined water system in Africa," I grinned.

"Oh, we shall have water," he said confidently.

He had volunteered, he told me.

"Why?"

"To civilize savages!"

I looked at him in obvious disbelief and he laughed.

"Yes, that is true. Then my country needs me. We must have land. And then again I had no work and I love to sing and be gay. What have I to do at home? In Eritrea I shall get many lire a month. I cannot spend them so when I come back I shall have thousands of lire and then—"

The look that he gave me intimated that then he would paint the town red.

The newspaper stories of volunteers are true, but the papers do not say that most of them had no work and many of them were eating only once a day and in the army they would be fed three times a day. It is true that soldiers leave for the front with some of them singing and since the anti-Fascists do not dare to open their mouths, that makes the enthusiasm apparently unanimous. It is true that there have been wildly enthusiastic demonstrations in Rome in support of the Ethiopian "expedition", as everyone prefers to call the war, but Rome is not Italy. In other cities where I have seen soldiers entrain there was no singing.

There was no real desire for war among the Italian people with whom I talked. The only ones who go about breathing fire from their nostrils are the younger Fascists, those who grew to maturity knowing only what the régime wanted them to know and trained in the faith that anything Mussolini says must be obeyed. Ethiopia to them means nothing except that it is a land of savages which Il Duce wants conquered so that Italy can become as great a power as ancient Rome.

They do not know the world's attitude toward them. Italy is pictured in the controlled press as the lover of peace, the victim of a conspiracy engineered by England, and since they are permitted to read only the officially censored press

there has developed, even among those who do not approve of the war, a genuine hatred of England.

In those tense days when England and Italy were mustering their naval strength in the Mediterranean and it seemed that war might break out at any hour, sentiment perceptibly swung toward support of Italy. The Fascist press campaign harped on England always being colony-hungry and without saying it in so many words gave the impression that England wanted to destroy Fascism in order to seize Italy's African colonies and thus impoverish the land still more.

One middle-aged man with whom I talked stamped his cane furiously. "I myself will go!" he shouted. "Italy shall never be an English colony. They have enough colonies and now they want our Italy! Italy is poor! Italy is hungry. Italy has its woes—oh, so many woes! But it will never submit to being an English colony!"

"Who said England wants Italy for a colony?"

"Why, then, does she seek a war with us?" he demanded.

So the propaganda continues, by press, radio and word-of-mouth to win the people's support. The people know that they are hungry but they do not realize that Mussolini, faced with the imminent collapse of his régime because of the condition of Italian industry, the disintegration of the middle class and the increasing unrest among workers reduced to less than a subsistence level, was virtually compelled to make this gamble for Ethiopia. With that land in his grasp Mussolini would have a place for his unemployed, he would have raw materials which Italy sorely needs and could borrow money from the world's bankers on the conquered country's undeveloped resources. Because the Fascist theory of the corporate state has proved unworkable he has launched a war. Probably he never even heard of the baby the wife of Albino Dal Bo had in Turin or of the old man in Milan whose son had deserted or of the countless similar cases like them.

You climb five stone flights in the dark halls of the building at Via Mazzini, 32, and turn into a still darker corridor to get to the young wife of Albino Dal Bo. Like so many workers' homes, it is spotless. The walls are covered with gay prints. You have to bend low as you enter, for the home is in a garret and the roof slopes so sharply that the only place you can stand upright is in the center, near the lone window. There are only two rooms here, the living room and the bedroom, with a cross over the bed.

There are just herself and her baby, born at the very hour that her husband left Turin for the wastes of Africa. "Eight-thirty the train left and at eight-thirty the little *bambino* was born," she explains. "No, his father has never seen even a picture of him. I have no money for that."

"Did he enlist?"

"No, no, no," she says, shaking her head violently. "They tell him, 'You must go to Africa to fight.' He says, 'But I have just come from Venezia looking for work. There is no work in my Venezia and for two months I hunt for it here every day. Now I have found it. It is not enough for me and my wife and the child that is coming but it is work and so we will live very poor—so, here in this garret. We do not bother anybody. Now I want to stay and work—'"

In her intensity she tried to use her hands and the sleeping baby in her arms awoke and began to cry.

"What happened?"

"They say, 'Il Duce needs you' and so—" She shrugged her shoulders helplessly.

"How do you live?"

"For two months I have a bread card. Now I have found work. I have just got work." There was an almost hysterical happiness in her voice over this fact. "Today, just before you came I have found work. My sister was here taking care of the baby."

"And your husband?"



"I got one letter. He is ill with the fever. I do not know what has happened to him."

Tears rose to her eyes.

"Every morning I pray," she said simply, looking at the cross over her bed.

Since Italy is surrounded on three sides by water the only place from which Italians can desert, outside of Africa, is at the northern frontier. The majority of Italians cannot get there because of police regulations which keep tab on their movements from city to city. But those who are near the border have been deserting ever since the first call to the colors was issued.

At the Ministry of Press and Propaganda, at Fascist Party Headquarters, wherever you go in official Italy they laugh when you ask about the rumors that soldiers are deserting. But if you go to the Brenner Pass which cuts a deep cleft in the Tyrols on the Italian-Austrian border you understood why Italy is desperately trying to suppress news of the stream of desertions.

An Innsbruck garage mechanic who had lived on a farm in the shadow of the Pass most of his life and knew every foot of the country came with me as my guide. He drove me out to a wayside shrine about seven miles from the border. The sun had set hours before and it was cold in the snow-capped mountains.

"They are always cold and hungry when they come," he said when he parked the car under a towering cliff. "They have had a long climb and sometimes they have been in the mountains for two, maybe three days, with only snow to drink, for the streams are watched by the Italians. Yes, it is best that we sit here, for if we are too near the border then we may not see them, for they walk far before they come into the open road to be certain they are in Austria."

We sat there with lights dimmed while he told me of the soldiers in uniform and in civilian clothes who had been straggling over the Pass since early summer.

"There are many," he said in a low tone. "They come from Brennero to Innsbruck, sometimes walking the whole way but often an auto or an ox cart will pick them up and take them as far as they go; and sometimes the farmers have pity and give them hot food, for in the night it is cold. That you can see for yourself."

He looked at me as if he thought I wanted to argue with him about the cold. When he saw that I agreed heartily he continued:

"They come, too, in the east Tyrols where the mountains are sharp like broken glass. There they cross to Sillian and go to Lienz."

A luxurious car with powerful lights purred past. A cheerful yellow light that gleamed in some farm-house window deep in the valley below went out and with that light extinguished, the stillness somehow seemed more profound.

"In Africa the sun is hot," my guide volunteered suddenly, "so hot that the water always boils and only blacks can drink boiling water. The Italians must have it cooled first but there is no ice or snow there. So they die of thirst while water boils all around them."

"Who told you that?"

"Why, everybody knows it," he assured me.

An hour passed and as the stars grew clearer the night grew colder. I had brought a thermos bottle filled with hot coffee, a delicacy to Italians, and some ham sandwiches for whosoever came over the Pass.

"In Innsbruck the papers used to print reports of these deserters, but now it is always the same so they do not print them any more. Every day some appear at the Bundespolizei and the Polizei say they are running away on the French border and to Switzerland and from Trieste. Have you heard?"

"Yes, I have heard. I talked with Dr. Vitus Windhofer, the head of the local Bundespolizei—"

"You talked with him—personally? Journalists talk with

everybody, don't they? Even the head of the Bundespolizei. . . . And what did he tell you?" he asked eagerly.

"Many soldiers have run away. How many they do not know for not all report to the Bundespolizei. Most of them go to Germany and some remain and become Austrians. Of those who fled about one in every twenty was already in uniform. The others had only been called to service."

"There are many in Innsbruck—"

Suddenly he clutched my arm. "See," he whispered a little proudly. "There is one!"

A shadowy figure was approaching slowly, rubbing his hands to keep warm. A drab green cape was thrown over his shoulder like an ancient Roman toga.

"Hello!" my guide shouted.

The soldier started slightly but came forward. He looked half frozen as he came into the radius of the dimmed lights.

"Here," I said, offering him the coffee and sandwiches. "This will make you feel better."

He drank and ate greedily, nodding his head repeatedly in gratitude.

"How far am I from Innsbruck?"

"About an hour by car. We'll drive you in."

"*Grazzitante*," he said, his eyes lighting up.

"Have you any friends coming or are you alone?"

"I am alone. There must be others but I did not see them. I did not see anyone. When I heard a sound I hid. It is two nights since I ran into the mountains."

"How did you ever find your way?"

He turned to a jagged snow-covered peak.

"'There is Austria' we used to say to one another and so I went toward that mountain. The mountains were high and there were many streams to cross."

He was happy at having been met so unexpectedly and with his stomach filled he talked of the dissatisfaction in the ranks, especially among the soldiers who came from south Tyrol.

"What will you do now?"

"Go to Germany. I heard that Germany is taking us and giving us work. We used to talk about it when the black-shirts were not listening. But maybe I will go to jail, for I have no passport."

He shrugged his shoulders and added lightly, "That's better than dying in Africa, eh?"

"You won't have to go to jail," I assured him. "The Bundespolizei will give you a slip of paper which will be as good as a passport and you can stay here or go to Germany. You will find that no one will bother you."

"They won't?"

"No. They are not especially fond of Italy and you will be welcomed like one of their own sons."

Most of the Italian soldiers along the Austrian frontier do not know French or German and though they are unhappy they feel that at least they are not aliens in an alien land. Of the deserters the overwhelming majority come from territory which had once been Austrian. They still feel themselves Austrians and Austrian officials do not try to hide their willingness to welcome these former sons.

"Many," said the deserter, "are afraid to run away because of what might happen to their families left in Italy."

"Is it hard to slip away?"

He grinned and shook his head. "You watch for a guard who is friendly and then you walk into the mountains. When they see you going off some distance they turn their backs."

We left him at the station, a strange figure in the green toga, bowing deeply and repeating: "*Grazzitante! Grazzitante!*"

I do not know what will happen to those whom this soldier left behind in a small village near Bari, but I could not help thinking of the old man with whom I had talked in Milan on the fourteenth anniversary of the Fascist

régime. While all Italy had a legal holiday and black-shirts swaggered through the streets, he was leaning dejectedly against a wall of the railroad station and staring blankly at the people who passed.

“The stores are all closed today?” I asked.

“Yes,” he returned absently.

“Are things very expensive here?”

“Yes. Very.” He looked me over warily.

“How do people live when they earn so little?”

He shrugged his shoulders without answering. I had told him I was an American and abruptly he asked:

“America will not let Italians in any more?”

“I don’t know. Some Italians come to America.”

He shook his head slowly. “Even if they did, I have no money to go.”

“Why? Is it so bad here that you want to leave?”

He looked at me carefully for a moment and then turned around to be sure no one was near.

“It is bad. Very bad. We are hungry,” he said simply.

“What are you doing about it?”

“What can we do?” he returned, looking round again.

“Can’t you protest, ask for food?”

“To whom?” he smiled wearily. “We do not dare even to talk. You are an American so I talk. And it does not matter anyway,” he added. There was a world of hopelessness in his voice.

“You have no work at all?”

“I had work. But now I have nothing. Not me or my wife. Three weeks ago I was called in and told ‘For you there is no work—never again for you will there be work.’ ‘But I have worked here for seventeen years,’ I said. ‘Seventeen years and always a good worker, was I not?’ ‘Yes,’ they said, ‘but for you now there is no more work.’ ‘But why?’ I asked. I could not understand. I had done nothing. ‘Your son is a traitor’ they told me and then I learned that my son

was waiting in Trieste to go to Africa and instead ran away to Yugoslavia."

He shook his head with a puzzled air.

"They came and took him. They told him he must fight savages in Africa, but why should he kill savages or be killed? They never tell me my son has run away. I got no letter from him and nobody comes to tell me. They tell me only 'For you there is no more work.'"

"Have you no relatives to whom you and your wife could go?"

"There is a daughter in Sicily but we are too old to walk that far and how will we eat when we walk? I have been to my wife's sister but they are afraid to take us in lest they feel the heavy displeasure of the Fascists for giving shelter to the father and mother of a traitor. Everyone is afraid."

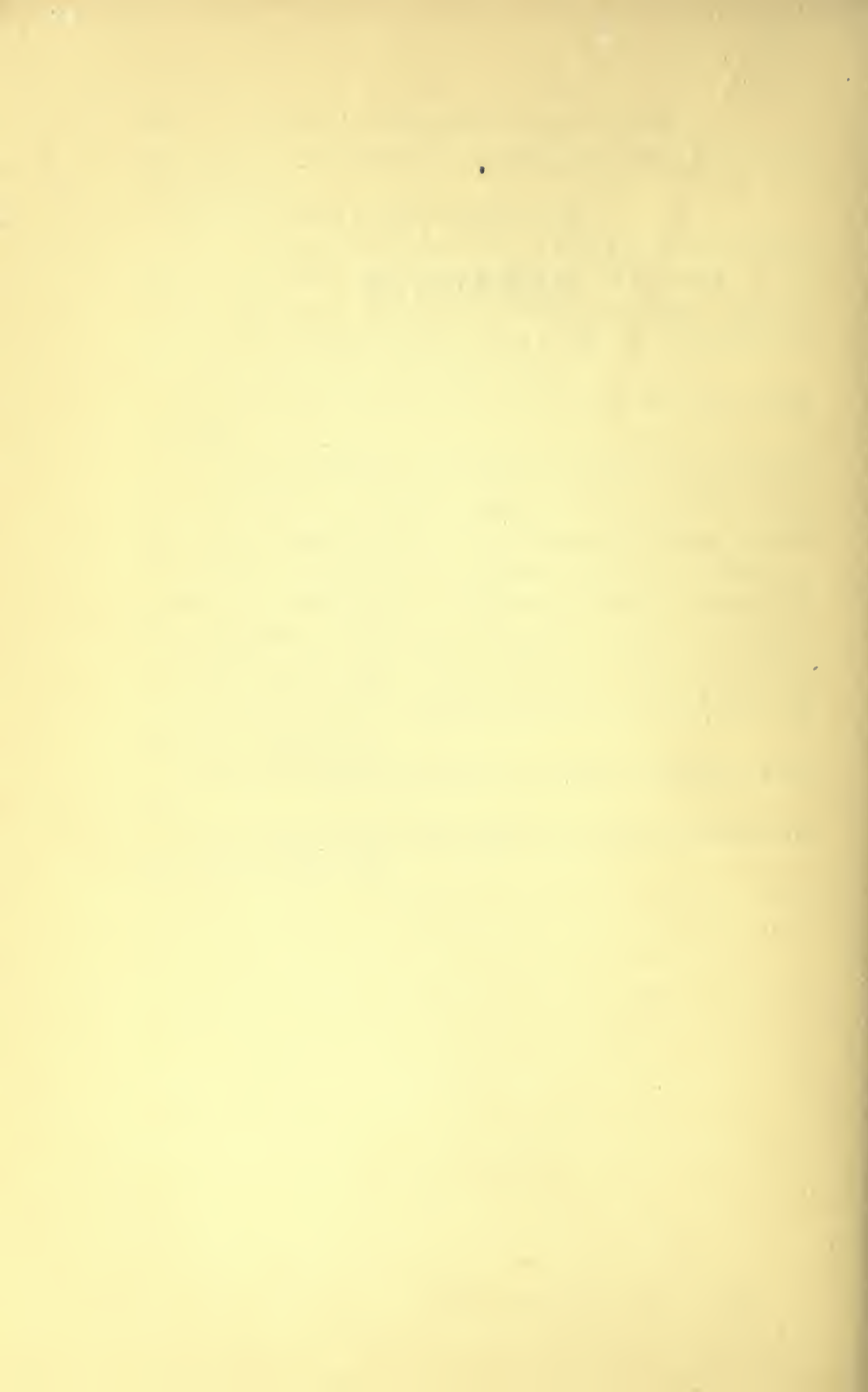
Both of us stared at two celebrating Fascists, bedecked in their uniforms, walking arm in arm singing *Giovanezza*.

"Should I run in the streets and cry my bitterness? That will not help, for when I open my mouth, before even the people have heard me, there will be hands put over my mouth to silence me."

He shook his head and added as though talking to himself:

"If we cannot work and people are afraid to shelter us then we must die, no?"

# GERMANY





## GANGSTERS OVER GERMANY

I CALLED UPON the American representative of an American business in a large city in Germany. Previously, I had called upon Englishmen, Frenchmen, Austrians and Czechs and there was, in the main, scarcely any difference in what those who talked said. I choose the American because what he said is fairly representative of what the others said and because of what I myself saw in his office.

I had come with an excellent introduction and he seemed glad to see me as he ushered me into his private office.

"I want to get a foreign businessman's point of view of conditions in Germany today," I told him when we were seated.

"I don't know what I can tell you," he smiled genially. "Of course there are difficulties in Germany but from all I can see the National Socialists are doing everything possible for the people and are really trying to help maintain the world peace."

He rose from the chair in which he had settled himself comfortably before I had told him what I wanted and said, "Naturally I am most familiar with my own business and before you can understand the situation it would help considerably if you looked over our offices where we have some products that show the really high achievements of German skill—"

He bowed me out of his office, closed the door and smiled wryly.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I really shouldn't talk with you at all, but I'm so sick of these Nazis that I've about got to the

stage where I don't care whether I stay on here or not! Since you are not permanently stationed in Germany as a correspondent, you can tell what is going on and I'd just as soon tell you what I know. But I cannot jeopardize the German branch of the business by talking too openly."

He had walked me to a small, rather cozy reception room and closed the door.

"I think we can talk here," he said.

"'Smatter?" I laughed. "Dictaphone in your office?"

"And a beauty! Stick around for a while and you won't find it a laughing matter. You're not familiar with the past two years or you would not ask. Haven't any of your journalistic colleagues told you?"

"I talked with many people and heard many things," I said evasively.

He laughed heartily. "Good!" he exclaimed. "I think it's all right to talk with you. You have already learned not to say with whom you talked!"

"Tell me about the dictaphone," I said. "Why don't you cut the wires?"

"It's not as simple as that. The ordinary dictaphone as we know it in America is a crude affair. These Germans are quite competent persons, you know, and the installation of ordinary dictaphones is a crude job and easily detected if you look for them. You know, of course, that the Nazis have a tremendous spy system, beautifully organized—"

Much as he obviously disliked the Nazis and the conditions under which he worked, he could not help but voice his admiration for a thorough and competent job even though he hated it. Beautifully organized: the dream of the American business man!

"Shortly after the Nazis took power," he began, offering me a cigar and lighting one for himself, "they installed two types of telephones in the offices and residences of diplomatic representatives of foreign powers, foreign journalists and the more important ones of their own as well as in

important business houses and banks. In one, the moment you took off the receiver a light flashed in the offices of the secret police. There, someone plugged in and took down the conversation. The other, which came a trifle later, presumably because it took such an army of people to listen in, simply started a machine, the moment you took the receiver off the hook, and recorded every word on a platter—like a Victrola disc.

“People soon got wise to it and simply avoided talking over the phone. Even if they didn’t say anything, there was a record of whom they called. However, science and business came to their rescue when people stopped using the phone. Now the Nazis have a dictaphone built into the telephone apparatus so that you cannot see it. It is actually part of the real telephone apparatus, so that if you located the dictaphone and tried to get rid of it you would simply ruin the phone. This new type of dictaphone is connected directly with the secret police. It is not necessary for a person talking to take the receiver off the hook. It works whether you telephone or not. Even the slightest whisper in the room is recorded and the record magnified at the Gestapo headquarters.”

I listened in amazement to his calm recital. I had heard of many things in Nazi Germany, but I had not heard of this dictaphone-telephone and I found it hard to believe at first.

“These new dictaphone-telephones,” he smiled at the look on my face, “are now being manufactured in vast numbers by the Lorenz Co., part of the International Tel. and Tel. Thus we have a picture of an American concern manufacturing dictaphones which are used in spying upon the businesses of Americans in Germany as well, I have no doubt, upon the American diplomatic representatives! The German plant of the I. T. & T. was taken over by the Nazis when they got into power, and Colonel Sosthenes Behn, owner of the German plant, is not even allowed into his

own factory or offices because the Nazis are busy turning out these telephone-dictaphones as well as working on a secret trench-telephone system for the next war."

He puffed at his cigar and waved a hand encouragingly.

"Just stick around. You'll learn a lot about the Nazi secret police before you leave Germany, I have no doubt," he smiled cheerfully. "I'm telling you all this in explanation of my rude rushing you out of the office when I heard what you wanted. Frankly, I'm not sure whether the phone I now have is one of the new dictaphone ones but after you've lived with the Nazis for a few years you simply take no chances; and I'm particularly careful because the phone in my office was installed two months ago under peculiar circumstances. The old phone seemed to have been all right and then it suddenly began to grow weak and buzz until it was impossible to hear anything—even the sort of conversations which are carried on nowadays. Finally I had to complain, so they took the old one out and installed this one, which works swell—maybe just a little too swell! And I hear a lot of people about whose affairs the Nazis are interested, have had the same peculiar trouble with their old phones, which, after complaints, brought them the new ones."

"I have a phone just like it in my room at the hotel," I volunteered, trying to think if I ever talked to myself.

"Oh, all the big hotels where foreigners stay—Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Dresden—in every one of the big cities there are nice new phones. You don't think the Nazis would overlook giving nice new phones to the hotels where journalists, diplomats, businessmen and a host of other persons in whose activities they are interested in, stay?"

I could not help but recollect what had happened when I had talked with resident correspondents of four different countries and when I had called upon diplomatic representatives of half a dozen nations in different cities.

"Don't telephone for an appointment." I had been

warned. "Just drop in to see whomever you want to see. If they are busy, simply try again. They all understand."

The fear that hangs like a pall over the country is simply incredible to those outside of Germany, a fear that is confined not only to Germans. In embassies, legations, consulates—territories of sovereign states, flying the flag of their own country, there was that same apprehension.

"Under no circumstances can you quote me or even say what country I'm from," every one of them had insisted. Some had refused to talk at all, assuring me suavely that for obvious diplomatic reasons they could not discuss German conditions, either economic or political, with me. Others, however, talked.

"But," I would ask incredulously, "how would the Nazis dare to tap the telephone of a diplomatic representative of a foreign power? If that were traced and you protested, the scandal would startle the world. They could not afford such a risk."

"Who says they wouldn't dare?" the diplomats would smile wryly. "We examine our walls and wires—every inch of the embassy and legations and consulates are gone over periodically. Sometimes we trace a wire and cut it. But in a little while there is a new wire. We do not dare to talk even in our own offices or homes."

"But this is incredible!"

"Yes. It is incredible. But there it is."

"Why do you not protest?"

"They will deny it and it will create a very unpleasant situation. So we just suffer along."

"What sort of a Government is this?" I finally exclaimed once when a diplomat had told me details of spying, telephone tapping, bribing, following persons who called to learn their identities and a host of other items.

"It is not a Government," the diplomat explained gently. "In your country you have gangsters like Al Capone, yes? He secured control of Chicago—"

"Just Cicero—a little suburb of Chicago," I said.

"It does not matter. He got control of an area. Here gangsters have got control of a great country and have become a world power to be reckoned with."

"From what I have seen and heard of the Nazis, I don't especially like them," I protested, "but I have never heard them called gangsters. The term implies people who live by extortion, blackmail, thievery—sucking the life-blood of legitimate business under threats of force."

"Precisely. The Nazi régime is what you call in your country a 'racket.' Do not take my word for it. Talk to some of your own countrymen who are doing business in Germany. Maybe they will talk to you; then, perhaps, you will understand what I mean when I say it is a gang of gangsters that the world recognizes as the Government of Germany."

"If they are gangsters, as you say, then why does your country deal with them? You do not deal with the criminal element in your own country? Why do you deal with a criminal element in control of a foreign country?"

"Because the criminal element is the foreign power," he smiled. "They have secured control of a great and powerful nation and are now feverishly arming themselves until they will be a tremendous armed force—gangsters with weapons the equal of any world power. As for dealing with them—we deal with them on the theory that it is not our business what sort of a government a foreign people wants."

"But the people apparently do not want it."

"When a Government is in power other countries assume that the people want it," he laughed. "The group in control may maintain itself by force and terror, but that does not matter."

"But I still don't understand. Surely you have reported to your foreign office that this is not a Government as we consider Governments; that they are rushing headlong into preparations which threaten the peace of the world—"

He waved a delicate hand and shook his head as if in pity at such innocence.

"It is precisely because of that, that we cannot do anything. If we try to choke their arming now, we would start a war and no country wants to start a war now. A war now would be disastrous for the world."

"But when the gangsters, as you yourself call them, have built a powerful army you will be able to do still less. What will happen then?"

"A war," he said quietly. "Our intelligence services, military and commercial attachés expect that when the Nazis reach a pre-World War strength a war will be inevitable. Hitler wants Austria as well as the glory of wrecking the Soviet Union. Those are some of the factors and the driving power; behind the moral aims is Germany's need for expansion. She is cramped and must have more territory. Western Europe is already crowded with people, so she will have to move east. Poland has more people than she can take care of, so Germany has no future there. The only other place in Europe where there is plenty of land is Russia."

"Maybe I'm a little stupid," I said, puzzled, "but you expect a horrible war. Other diplomats with whom I talked expect a horrible war. You know Germany is preparing for it. Then, for heaven's sake, what are you and the rest of the diplomats doing about it? Why do you sit around just watching the gangsters grow stronger and stronger?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he said frankly.

"I can't understand this world politics," I said almost to myself. "Here is your country and other countries watching a lot of gangsters arm themselves and all you do is sit around and wait for them to start the holocaust without anyone doing a thing about it!"

"Oh, yes, we are watching them very carefully to see when they will start," he said cynically. "We can tell by the amount of raw materials piling up, the number of men

trained, the number in the army, the reserves, and so on. We meet with other countries' experts and compare notes as to when the explosion will come. The estimates vary from the latter part of 1937 to the spring of 1938 but not later than 1939 under any circumstances."

"And your country, which will be involved, simply lets its representatives sit around waiting for this?"

"Sounds insane, doesn't it?" he smiled. "But perhaps you have some suggestions? Suppose we try to choke the Nazis at the source by refusing to deal with them. Instantly the businessmen of my country will cause so much difficulty that my Government may fall. Businessmen want business. Stopping all business with the Nazis means upsetting the already upset situation in the world. It means throwing many people out of work who manage to have jobs now. Business wouldn't want it, so we are dealing with the gangsters and supplying them with the means to fight us!"

"But that is insanity!"

"Of course it is," he agreed. "And it is also diplomacy."

So the diplomatic representatives of foreign powers sit around twiddling their thumbs, weighing, measuring, calculating the raw materials the Nazis are storing up, the munitions being turned out, the army being developed, the planes being built. Three diplomats told me that the wide roads now being constructed all over Germany, spacious roads leading to all borders, are not required for the country's automobile traffic even if it quadrupled. The roads, they agreed, are being built for a secret "land battleship" which Germany has and which requires such roads. The diplomats know this. They know that the Nazis have vast numbers of planes, that the Nazis have this and that—and knowing all this and infinitely more, they sit around waiting for the war to start that will make the last holocaust look like child's play.

Everyone in Germany expects a war—from the diplomats to the German people, a war in which the gangsters will



try to muscle in on other territory; and here I was talking to a reputable, hard-headed businessman, who, without any quibbles, called the people who were making these preparations for the next war, a gang of blackmailers and racketeers.

"I know your name, Mr. Spivak," he said, "and I have read things that you have written. I was quite impressed with your recent book on America and your desire to be fair and accurate, so I'll tell you how they run the racket so you will understand what I mean when I say they are racketeers."

He looked at his watch. "It is now two-forty. If you will stay here until four o'clock, I will show you something that will be of more importance than anything I say, though I will explain the racket in the meantime. It just happens that I have an appointment at four o'clock."

I readily agreed to stay until then and he began:

"The essence of this so-called Government is no different from the operations of any gangster mob. Mobs are run for the benefit of the mobsters and no one else, the heads taking the biggest cuts, minor officials smaller ones and so on down the line. Whatever those not in the mob get is given as a form of hush money, as gangsters back home pass out hush money to keep certain elements quiet.

"The charming thing about these Nazis is that they are quite impartial as to whom they bleed. They draw no distinction between employer and employee. They get their cut wherever they can and from whomever they can. Every one, big and little, pays tribute to this army of parasites who are now functioning as the Government of a great country."

He spoke without any rancor in his voice, in a matter-of-fact tone as though he were just simply quoting statistics on his firm's output.

"There is an army of petty officials in office now who, before Hitler got into power, were not competent enough even to get a job or hold it if they got one. Today they are

buying villas and expensive automobiles and their salaries are wholly insufficient for such purchases. They get 'smeared' as it is called here. They are members of a very genteel profession which has sprung up since the Nazis got into power. They are walking delegates who collect the graft, extortion money, blackmail or whatever you choose to call it. The only difference between them and the gangsters like Capone and his mob is that the Nazis do not threaten to put a pineapple under the doors of the business man who will not shell out. They do not have to resort to such crude measures. Their scheme is much more efficient. Let me illustrate:

"You are running a business, such as it is nowadays, or a store. It does not matter whether you are a native German or an American, Englishman, Frenchman—a pure Aryan or a Jew. One day a Nazi official drops in on you. He tells you very frankly that he wants a small percentage of your business in return for which you will be given protection. When you assure him that you think the German police quite capable of protecting you against burglars, thieves or any other menace, he waves the objection aside. You need protection, he tells you, not against thieves and burglars, but against Nazis and their sympathizers getting the idea that you are not a good house to do business with. He tells you that there are new laws and regulations constantly being promulgated by the régime; these seriously hamper the flow of business as we are accustomed to it, like the problem of firing someone you do not need or being compelled to hire people whom you do not want. It is difficult for firms in Germany, native or foreign, to fire help once it has been hired or to resist the constant appeals of the Government to put more people to work. That is one of their methods of reducing the unemployed lists.

"For a stated sum, he assures you, you get protection against being compelled to conform to those laws and regulations, as well as against the Nazis and their sympathizers

forming the idea that your house is not a good place to do business."

He paused and I asked the inevitable question: "What if you refuse to pay this graft?"

"The walking delegate tells you frankly that if you do not come across, your place of business will be denounced at their Nazi meetings as being unfriendly to the Nazis, that as a result you will be boycotted. As a businessman you know what that threat means. Even if people know you are being blackmailed, they will not dare to patronize you lest they incur the anger of the Nazis. It means eventual bankruptcy and you know it.

"When you still protest, he offers inducements. In return for paying the regular monthly graft—a reasonable one, I might add, for they do not want to kill the goose with the golden egg—he offers to have your firm or store mentioned favorably at their meetings and to urge Party members and their families and friends to patronize you.

"This is the state of affairs all over the country. This is the racket being worked everywhere, whether in large cities or in small agricultural areas, by an army of chiselers who do nothing all day but make the rounds and collections. Many of them devote their full time to it, collecting for the higher officials, and as in the States, the graft is split in many ways. The country is divided into regular districts and there is no muscling in because the Party leaders are in on it."

"You mean that Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Streicher and others as big get rake-offs on this extortion?"

"I doubt if they get rake-offs on this sort of dough. They don't need it, but they are willing to permit the blackmail among the smaller leaders as a means of keeping their support. It's a racket and the mobsters must be kept content with their share. I don't suppose the biggest of them take a split, though I wouldn't put anything beyond them. The big leaders have their own rackets."

I raised my eyebrows questioningly.

"You think the biggest of them are really fighting for a principle—Aryanism and all that? Well, maybe so, but they're not letting the principles interfere with the graft. Let us take Hitler, the biggest of them all. He was a poor man before he came into power. Recently he gave a villa as a present to the chief of the General Staff of the army, whose favor he is currying. The villa cost the trifling sum of 1,300,000 marks or over half a million dollars; and that's a lot of money in any language! And this is not the only present Hitler gave. The newspapers published all this. Now when a man starts giving away presents worth half a million dollars to just one man besides passing out other valuable gifts, you naturally ask yourself where he got the money. The answer is his newspaper, his book, *Mein Kampf*, and his interests in the publishing house of Franz Eher of Munich. This last is a marvelous little graft. These are the ones I know about. What others he's got his fingers in, I don't know.

"When Hitler came to power his newspaper increased its advertising fifteen times—I mean fifteen times, not fifteen per cent! Circulation did not jump that much, but the advertising rates sure did. If you will examine the ads in his paper you will find that most of them are for products that would not normally be advertised. Many are complimentary ads. Everybody knows that when a firm's ad appears in the *Beobachter* it will be viewed with friendly eyes, so everybody rushes to advertise in the Fuehrer's organ as a sort of peace offering.

"To those who don't, the advertising managers send their solicitors. They walk in pretty arrogantly—I know because I've seen them—and tell the prospective advertiser that the rates have jumped again and they can let him have, as a personal favor, so many inches at the new and higher price. It's what the Capone gang used to do in Chicago when they walked in on a speakeasy and announced that the owner

would take so many barrels of beer—or else. Only here it's advertising.

"I won't go into the racket around the sale of *Mein Kampf* but I will go into the Franz Eher publishing house in Munich. Just how much Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and the others have in it I don't know. I have heard that Hitler has fifty-one per cent; but that may be a little exaggerated. It doesn't matter. The important thing is that the leaders own this firm and it is impossible to publish a textbook for the schools—and you know how much money there is in school textbooks, without the Eher outfit bringing it out. They control the book-publishing business in Germany and when you consider the millions of books bought by the state for the schools, libraries, and so on, there is a young fortune in this racket.

"In the various public projects like buildings, streets, roads, there is either a direct interest in the ownership of the firm doing the work or the contractor pays plenty. I know that, too, because I have talked with men who have paid. And there is no way for anyone to expose this because the papers are Nazi-controlled.

"You don't need more illustrations. Take the Tweed Ring in New York and Tammany at its worst and multiply that a hundred thousand times and you have a portrait of Naziism at work."

"It does begin to look like a swell racket," I commented.

"There is not a business house in Germany, foreign or domestic, which does not pay tribute," he stated flatly. "Most of them are afraid to talk, figuring it is better to pay a reasonable tribute than be forced into bankruptcy. They simply charge it up to running expenses and jack up the price a bit more for the people.

"When you get among the smaller fry the blackmail is so rotten that it turns even a healthy stomach like mine. A person who is not connected with the Nazi Party or who does not pay tribute to some Nazi leader simply cannot get

a job. I, myself, had a young Nazi, only twenty-four years old who used to work for me. I fired him for incompetence over three years ago. For a long time he was unable to get a job. Finally he became a pimp, living off women in the street like their national hero, Horst Wessel. When the Nazis got into power this youngster, with barely enough education to read and write, became a leading official in one of the education departments of the government at a salary of 900 marks a month—equivalent to the salaries of nine average workmen in Germany, workmen with families to support. He lived high, spending most of his income; yet, after two years in office he bought himself a villa and a car for 27,000 marks or around \$12,000. Obviously he did not earn it. It happens that I know the firms from which he collects extortion. He has seventeen on his own list, most of them foreign firms.”

“How about the rural district? There aren’t enough stores there to make it worth their while. Do they collect from the farmers?”

“No. In the country the racket is worked differently. Apparently the big boys have passed word down to lay off the farmers; they are needed to produce the foodstuffs and the young and healthy farm boys are needed for the army and it would not do to irritate the farming element. But so far as small-town storekeepers and the big landowners are concerned, they simply have to chip in a lump sum and buy a present for the local Nazi leader. Just pick up the provincial papers. They are always filled with stories of villas presented to local leaders—villas, automobiles and other expensive presents. The value of the present depends upon the size of the town or village. The underlings of the leaders go around and suggest that everybody chip in—and everybody knows enough to do it. If they don’t their stores become unfriendly places and are boycotted. So far as the big landowners are concerned, they are always fighting the persistent demands of the Nazis to put more people to work

on the farms. Failure to chip in means that they will be saddled with a lot more new farm-hands than they know what to do with.

"But the most sickening thing of this whole nasty business is the women who have to work. They cannot get jobs unless they are okayed by the Nazis or those close to the leaders. I know a German schoolteacher, quite competent, who was unable to get any kind of work—teaching or otherwise—until she was almost frantic. She faced actual hunger. It was then that a Nazi who had been trying to make her told her plainly that if she would become his mistress he would get her a job.

"It's a funny thing what desperation and the fear of hunger will do to even the nicest people. Moralities are forgotten when hunger stares you in the face. The girl became his mistress and two days later she had a job teaching."

He became so angry telling this story that he bit off the end of his cigar and spat it out with a growl of disgust.

"I don't suppose anyone will ever know how rotten they can be. And there is nothing, it seems, that anyone can do about it. Why, I know heads of businesses, foreigners, who have not been approached by these Nazi walking delegates and who have incurred the displeasure of the Nazis. These men actually go to their commercial attachés to ask that they arrange with the leaders to take graft so they can stay in business!"

"But it is incredible to believe that attachés of great powers will descend to anything like that," I said.

"It is the function of representatives here of a foreign country to aid their businessmen and when a businessman pleads to be allowed to pay graft, what can the attaché do—especially when he knows that it's part of the national racket? I know several who went to the English and French commercial attachés and had them arrange contacts with Nazi leaders for that purpose. This has happened to my

knowledge. It has probably happened with the American attaché, too, but if so he is simply too close-mouthed to say anything about it. But other officials, representatives of great powers, talk about it and they are simply sick of the whole thing. If you think I'm exaggerating, ask them!"

"I already have. Some refused to talk. Others admitted that they act as contacts between Nazi leaders and their countrymen doing business in Germany."

"There you are," he laughed. "Then you see I am not exaggerating; and while you're on these racketeering activities of the people who are known as the German Government, why not look into the smuggling of marks for which the Nazi courts are sending Catholic priests and nuns to prison?"

"I've already looked into that, too," I smiled.

I remembered the conversations I had had with officials of several great world powers. They had talked—with rueful smiles. Normally, I gather, they would have kicked out of their offices anyone who came to them with such suggestions, but the people who came were very high Nazi officials, men who held high posts in the Government. These high Nazi officials, the foreign diplomats told me frankly, had come to them offering a high rate of exchange if the diplomats would smuggle out marks in diplomatic pouches.

"Schacht," they explained to the diplomats, "will not give us money for propaganda abroad and we must have it. We will pay three, three and a half times the regular rate of exchange for foreign money."

"We are not at all sure that they wanted this money for propaganda," the diplomats told me, "though that was not the question. Personally, we think these high Nazis, expecting inflation within a year, want to get their extortion money out of the country, where it is banked as dollars, pounds, francs, shillings, zlotys—any foreign money which is stable. Banks in many countries on the continent, espe-



cially in Switzerland, have rented out plenty of safe-deposit boxes.

"The financial stability of the mark has been seriously shaken several times when large blocks of marks—brand new money straight from the treasury printing office, it seems,—appeared in Switzerland, France, Austria. Blocks of half a million, a million, two million marks at a clip. You know that when that much illegal money appears the money market suffers a serious blow. It is much as if counterfeiters making perfect money suddenly flooded a country with it."

"Isn't the appearance of such large blocks of marks in foreign countries evidence that some diplomatic pouches are being used?"

"Maybe. There are countries that would just as soon see the mark stagger; and it is also possible that the Nazis have their own way of getting money out."

"The most amazing part of what you tell me," I said, "is not that they are smuggling out marks but that they have the gall to come to foreign representatives for connivance. Why didn't you kick them out?"

"Because we are diplomats," they smiled. "We feel like it but we just can't. They really do not realize our reaction to their offers. They think everybody is like themselves."

I told the American business man of these conversations and he merely nodded.

"Sure," he said, "just stick around and you'll see and hear more."

A girl secretary appeared and looked significantly at him.

"You have an appointment," she reminded him.

He looked at his wrist watch and rose.

"Well," he laughed, stretching himself. "I've told you a lot of stories. Now come with me into my office and you'll see something. I shall introduce you as an official of my concern over here for a short business trip. All you do is sit quiet and listen."

We walked back into his office. I took a comfortable chair and chewed at a fat cigar that he gave me.

The door opened and a Nazi, not more than twenty-eight or thirty, walked in, clicked his heels, smiled and advanced, extending his hand. The American business man took it and introduced me.

"I asked to see you," said the Nazi, "because I understand that you have been having a little difficulty with our new laws. *Ach!* So many laws," he said, shaking his head dolefully. "I thought maybe I could be of some assistance."

He paused and look questioningly at him.

"I know all about it," my host said carelessly. "I don't think we need go into that. I know all the sales points; I've talked to many of my colleagues. What I want to know is, how much?"

The Nazi smiled and nodded. "Good. Then we can talk business, *nicht?* Americans always like to talk business!" He laughed as if the phrase "talk business" was very funny. "I thought that my services would be worth 1,000 marks a month—"

"Nothing doing," said my host. "That's a lot of money. Do you think—" he turned to me "—that we can afford to pay that much for the services he can give?"

"Can he give them?" I asked.

"*Ja, ja,*" the Nazi smiled assuringly at me. "I have all the connections. It is official. Anything that troubles you will be straightened out immediately. You will have no difficulty: of that I can assure you. Naturally, they will have to be satisfactory or you will stop paying me!"

"Looks like he sells a convincing bill of goods," I laughed. "But I think he wants too much."

"One thousand marks is not much for a business like this." The Nazi was now trying to sell me, apparently under the impression that I had the final say. "You could easily lose twice that amount or much more without my services," he added significantly.

"Two hundred marks," said my host. "That's a lot of money in this country."

"Two hundred marks!" exclaimed the Nazi. "It is not worth troubling about."

"Terrible to have troubled you," said my host.

"I'll tell you," said the Nazi, "business is not so good as it was, I know. I will talk with my superior and try to convince him that he should take seven hundred and fifty. That is the best I can do."

"Since you're so generous, I'll equal it," said the American. "Three hundred and fifty and that's top."

"Six hundred," said the Nazi. "It is easily worth six hundred. You will get more than six hundred marks' worth of advertising from us."

"Three-fifty."

"Five hundred."

"Why don't you make it four and settle the argument," I interrupted, laughing.

The Nazi delegate sighed and looked helplessly at me. "He is worse than a Jew," he commented.

"All right. Four hundred. And I want to see some favorable mention all around."

"Oh, that you will. And," he added in a business-like fashion, "if the first payment—"

"Yes. I know."

He rang for his secretary and instructed her to get four hundred marks and put them in an envelope.

"I will have to have a receipt," he said. "I must put it down on my expenses."

"No receipt," said the Nazi. "You will have to figure out a way of recording it."

"Okay," said my host.

The Nazi rose, put the money in his inside coat pocket, clicked his heels and bowed.

"I am sure you will find my services satisfactory," he said.

My host escorted him to the door, motioning with his

head for me to accompany him. We watched the departing figure saunter out of the building.

"There," said my host, "goes the Government of Germany."

## WHAT PRICE HITLER?

HE WAS LEANING over the rail holding a long bamboo pole with which he was fishing in the Alster, the river that cuts into the heart of Hamburg. His strong, red hands and the sunken cheeks on his ruddy face fascinated me. They were hands engrained with the dirt of years of toil; and though the color on his cheeks was a healthy pink, the flesh was drawn and lined as if from long worry or much hunger.

There were half a dozen fishermen along the quay, leaning against the iron rail or resting their poles on it. I stopped beside the fisherman with the strong red hands and sunken cheeks. Twice his line was yanked by the bite of a fish but each time, when he jerked the unwieldy pole out of the water, the bait was gone. He looked at me with a smile and shook his head.

"They are smarter than I am," he said in a monotone.

Sea gulls wheeled and cried overhead, darting to the water and skimming the surface with their beaks.

"Do you like to fish?" I asked.

"Not especially," he said with a shrug.

"Wouldn't it be cheaper to buy them than spend all this time here?"

"*Ja*," he said in that strange monotone. "If you have the money."

"Oh. You're not working?"

I looked at his rough hands. He noticed my glance and held one up.

"This is from long ago. I have not worked for eight months."

He pulled his black cap with its shiny peaked brim more firmly on his head.

"There is no shipping," he added slowly. "Nobody buys or sells and when that happens there is nothing for dock workers to do."

"Then how do you live? You must eat."

"I got eleven marks a week. Eleven marks," he repeated in that monotone that gave me a peculiar feeling that the voice was lifeless. "That was for the whole week for me and my wife and two children. You are a foreigner; you do not know how little eleven marks a week is until you pay rent and buy food. And this week, on Tuesday at four o'clock, I was told that from now on I shall have only nine marks a week. There are too many without work and they, too, must be fed."

"Can't your wife find some work?"

He jerked the fishing pole viciously.

"*Ja,*" he said, and though an odd light flashed for a moment in his eyes, the monotone in his voice did not change. "She found housework five months ago. She worked two days, and because she had earned eight marks, the officials said one in the family was working and gave us no more relief. I had to plead with them for two weeks, to explain, to bring my wife and my children and witnesses. I told them we were hungry. I asked them if they wanted me to steal, to hit someone over the head with a stone or a piece of iron and take their money away in order to get food for my children. It was only then that they asked among my neighbors and gave us back our eleven marks a week."

The memory of that period had left a profound effect on him. You could feel it—even in the monotonous, dead tone. When he spoke I had the feeling that this man was so crushed that he had no more life left.

"So now we are afraid to find work—even for a day or two, for then we lose everything." He looked at me and adjusted his cap again. "But I cannot stay home. When

you stay home and have nothing to do you get thoughts that are bad. Bad."

"What kind of thoughts? About the Government?"

"*Nein*," he said, with a slow shake of his head. "You sit and you look at your wife and your children and you know they are hungry and you think, maybe you go out and steal. And sometimes you think, maybe it is better if you did not live and the *Kinder* did not live to be hungry. *Ja*," he added, nodding toward the Alster. "There, there is no hunger."

"Yes, I understand," I said.

"So I run away from the house, from my wife and my children and come here to fish and to look at the water. It is quiet, no? All my life I have worked on the water and I look at it and sometimes I think, maybe I will work again. And if I catch fish, then we have more to eat, and if I do not"—he shrugged his shoulders and shook his head—"I have to watch the line and so I do not think."

"And your wife? She must sit at home and look at the children?"

"*Ach!* Our two rooms have been cleaned so often that they are cleaner than the biggest passenger ship. Everything has been polished, mended—so many times—just for something to do. But for her it is not so bad, for she must take care of the children. It is impossible to live on nine marks a week. But we have been fortunate. We rented a bed."

"Rented a bed? I don't understand."

"He did not want to live in the barracks so we rented him a bed. You have not seen the barracks?"

It is hard to avoid seeing the long, drab barracks built by the state or the city on the outskirts of almost every town. Here, in these wooden makeshifts, live the homeless unemployed, married men and their families, children, single men, in the most abject misery and poverty. The single man who simply cannot afford to pay rent for even the cheapest room, rents a bed in some home. There he

sleeps at night but during the day he must be out of the house.

"What do these men do with themselves?"

"What do I do with myself? Somehow the time passes."

"But you have only two rooms—"

"The children sleep in the same room with him."

"But some people are working," I said. "There"—I nodded to the left where the tall buildings of the business section loomed a few blocks away—"I have been in the stores; people are buying. There must be some business even though it is not so good as many years ago."

"Yes. People are buying. Some people are buying. Party people."

"Nazi Party people?"

"Who then?" Though it was a question his voice did not change its inflection and the monotone gave it the sound of a statement. "The Party people have everything now. If you are not a Party member or know Party members, then you fish. Or you jump into the Alster. Many people jump into the Alster. Once," he said, staring at the distant dull mirror of water, "out there I saw a woman floating. The police came and took her out quickly. It is the only one I saw but there are many."

"Aren't things any better since the Nazis got in power?"

He shrugged his shoulders and stared at the spot where he had once seen a woman floating. He did not answer.

"People are afraid to talk, aren't they?"

He glanced at me from under the peaked brim of his hat and smiled faintly, still without answering.

"But the people seem satisfied with the new régime."

"What else can they do?" He stared at the line for a moment and added, "It was not so bad two years ago but now it is. Everything costs so much more and even if you have money you cannot buy many things. You cannot buy hog-meat or butter or eggs. When we get our nine marks my wife goes to buy a little butter for the children. She



can buy only a quarter of a pound of butter a week and for that she stays in line for two hours."

It is strange how an apparent trifle like inability to get butter, even when you have the money to buy it, so profoundly affects a people. I had seen the lines of women outside the stores in different cities and had heard them talk, openly, shrilly, angrily. Everyone with whom I talked invariably reverted to their inability to get more than a quarter of a pound of butter. The shortage of foodstuffs and the rising prices, though irritating, did not seem to affect them so much as having to stay in line for a little butter. Planes droned overhead, soldiers marched to the terrifying sound of the goose step, munition factories worked full blast and the people talked about it; they did not like it, for they saw in it another war. They accepted it with resignation but the scarcity of butter aroused their loud complaints. The inability to get butter seemed to symbolize for them the entire food shortage.

"If things are getting worse then what will you do about it?"

"What can I do? Nothing."

"Well," I suggested, "maybe after all the Jews are driven out of Germany things will get better. They are responsible for the bad conditions, *nicht wahr?*"

He shook his head slowly.

"No; I don't believe it. It is not the Jews' fault. When they had business we had work."

"But the Jews controlled everything. Isn't that why the Germans hate them?"

"The Germans do not hate the Jews. The only people who hate the Jews are Party people. Nobody else hates them."

"Why do the Party people hate them?"

"Because they want their businesses and their jobs," he said simply. "For the worker it does not matter if the Jew stays in Germany. The worker has no money to buy the

Jews' businesses so it does not matter. Eh!" he suddenly exclaimed, and for the first time the monotonous tone in which he spoke changed to one of disgust. "There is too much talk about the Jews and Catholics. People talk, talk, talk—everybody talks and in the meantime the ships are rotting at anchor and there is no work."

For him, as in so many others with whom I talked, there was obviously no interest in whether "international Jewish bankers" or German Jews controlled the money markets of the world, ruled the country or held good jobs. He did not care whether Jews were a blessing or a curse to Germany; for him it mattered that he had no work, that he and his family had little to eat. There was resentment and bitterness against the Nazis because they had taken to themselves the spoils of the victor and though he avoided talking of political matters (whether he had no interest in them or was afraid to talk, I could not tell), I got the impression that when the Nazis had first gained control of the country, he had been sympathetic to them. Unemployment at that time had been rising steadily until, when Hitler got into power, it had reached a peak of 6,000,000. The whole country was restless, pretty much disorganized. Neither workers nor employers had any feeling of security.

Hitler put almost 3,000,000 to work on re-armament, public works projects, etc. in the first two years of his régime but today, despite the continued employment of men at these jobs, the disintegration of the country's economic life threw others out of work until today Germany has 5½ million unemployed who are extremely restless. This situation is aggravated by the continued drop in earnings of those who do work and the simultaneous rise in prices for essential commodities as well as the scarcity of many foodstuffs.

"What did you earn when you worked?" I asked.

"Twenty-three marks a week."

"And what does it cost you to live?"

"Whatever I make," he smiled. "Sometimes I do not know how we live."

How the workers in Germany, with the régime frowning upon wives who work, manage to make ends meet is really a puzzle. What the Nazi régime did for this worker and the millions of others like him, employed and unemployed, was quite apparent. What it did for the big industrialists is problematic. I tried to get the annual profits, since the advent of Naziism, of the leading firms in Germany. No one seemed to know. The big industrialists suffered severe losses before the Hitler régime and were terrified by the possibility that the Communists would seize the Government. It was to counteract the radical and trade union influences that big business financed the Nazis. But, though I could not get the figures, I did talk with several bankers in different cities, men who had been pro-Hitler in the hope that he would destroy the radicals who threatened their control.

"We built a robot," one smiled, "and now it is strangling us."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"We have no more control over our industries. We make profits—on paper. We are making large profits in our heavy industries, in our armament works but we can draw out only six per cent. The rest goes into government bonds besides all the taxes we have to pay—taxes which are always growing bigger. These paper profits are of no value to industry or to ourselves."

He sighed and added, "The tendency now is for the Nazis to run things and simply pay us to be executives. We are no longer running the Nazis. We cannot fire without the approval of the Nazi cell in our plants and there is always terrific pressure on us to hire more and more workers. It is their way of reducing unemployment numbers but it is upsetting business, both large and small."

"But unless the people are to be driven to blind rebellion

from starvation, isn't it necessary for the Nazis to take these profits to feed them?"

"Yes, it is necessary but we have nothing," he said a little helplessly. "Yet, we are certainly better off than if everything had been confiscated by the Communists."

The two main classes into which Germany is divided are swinging away from Nazi sympathy. The upper middle class, among whom the Nazis had their largest following, total about 15,000,000 persons, of whom some 10,000,000 are employees of the white-collar class. The average income of this group is about 200 marks a month. The other great division, the working class, including many white-collar workers whose earnings are about the same as those of the manual laborer, average about 100 marks a month or less. The great bulk of the German people is in this class. The number of those earning above 200 marks a month is comparatively small.

Both classes were originally quite friendly to the new régime, but the realization by businessmen and the more intelligent members of both classes that the Nazis are simply making a racket out of government, plus the shortage of foodstuffs and rising prices, alienated many.

"Were you a union man?" I asked the fisherman.

"Yes. I am still a union man though I am not paying dues. There are 17,000,000 union men in Germany. Everybody is organized but nobody can say anything."

"Not even when conditions are intolerable?"

"I do not like living on nine marks a week."

"But aren't conditions sometimes so bad that workers are forced to strike to improve them even if there is danger of arrest?"

"No. There are no strikes. Everybody would be arrested."

The control of organized labor and prohibition of mass action were among the chief reasons why the Krupps and the Thyssens financed Hitler. Mass action, like strikes, is now

considered treason by the régime; nevertheless, strikes, which were very rare in the first two years of the régime, are now breaking out all over Germany. No word of them appears in the press and few workers not in the area affected know of them. The strikes are quickly ended either by acceding to the demands of the workers or by arresting the leaders. No strike, of the few I learned about, lasted longer than three days.

The occurrence of these strikes, despite the severe penalties, is a significant symptom of the unrest and bitterness against the oppressive measures of the régime. It was impossible for me to get a complete list of how many strikes had broken out but within the past year strikes have occurred in airplane, machine, munitions, and electric power plants, as in the Saxon Auto Union which makes cars, tanks, and planes and the Junkers plant in Dessau. Strikes among the underpaid workers building the broad highways for the "land battleships," which Germany is building for the next war, have been frequent all over the country; an unusually large one occurred around Brunswick, in northern Germany.

"What will happen?" I asked a businessman who had heard of several of these sporadic strikes. "You yourself say the people are restless. At the same time the financial situation of the country is quite precarious. Your exports dropped tremendously. In 1929 you exported 13 billion marks' worth of goods. In 1935 you exported only 4 billions' worth and out of that the state subsidized industry 25 per cent. That means that the régime paid one billion marks to dump German goods abroad at below cost in order to get money for raw materials. The Government is now living on its capital; not on its income. How long can that last?"

"Less than a year," he said frankly. "Maybe six months."

"Then what?"

"Strict economy and inflation."

"But that means more unemployed, still higher prices

for food products and greater restlessness among the people. What will happen?"

"Nothing much. There will be some difficulties but they will be controlled. But," he added with a smile, "in another year or two, Germany will have marvelous buildings, wonderful roads, a great army and—nothing to eat."

"Then what?"

"Who knows? Things may get so bad that the Fuehrer may resign."

"And who follows him?"

"The Reichswehr. And the Reichswehr looks with favor on the restoration of the Hohenzollerns."

The people remember that when the Kaiser was on the throne there was prosperity and a measure of liberty. Germany was a proud and prosperous nation. Memories are short and old wounds are quickly forgotten. The people are simply tired of being buffeted about, first by vengeful and stupid Allies, then by Socialists, Social Democrats, Communists, Nazis. The German likes order, he likes regimentation, a leader. The radical elements failed to achieve power and the group in power is unsatisfactory and the people are looking about for some safe anchor in their troubled seas.

There are only two groups in Germany today with large followings. The Nazi Party is not one of them, for though its membership reaches into the million, nine out of ten of its members belong because it gives them jobs or graft. The two important groups are those favoring the return of the Hohenzollerns and the Communists. The first group is not organized but it has the Reichswehr and the Reichswehr has the army. The Communists are small in number but efficiently organized and are being viewed sympathetically by an increasing number of workers, including many disillusioned Socialists, particularly the younger element among the old Socialists. The Communists have neither the strength nor the inclination at present to try to seize

the Government which seems to leave the field clear to the Hohenzollerns when things reach the breaking-point under the Nazis.

*“HERE IS YOUR JEW”*

THE JEWS still remaining in Germany, out of the original 560,000 who had been rooted in the soil and the cities, are being rapidly driven to the ghetto. Disfranchised, torn from the normal processes of life to which they had become accustomed, ever greater numbers are fleeing the country—to Palestine, Switzerland, France, Austria, Italy—to any land which will give them shelter.

The Jews who still remain in Germany, either because they do not have the money with which to flee or because they still hope that some not-too-distant future will restore sanity to the unhappy land, have the look of hunted animals when they walk the streets or the muddy roads of the country, the look of men expecting someone to spit on them.

Much has been written of the Jew in Germany and what the Nazis, mad with power and the need of blaming someone for the hunger of a people and the disintegration of an economic system, have done to him. The incredible acts against this people have been chronicled, but I don't think anyone has recorded the story of the Jewish farmer thirty kilometers from the thriving little city of Bamberg in central Germany. There have been millions of words written about the Jews in Germany, but I think this story is worth recording.

I cannot give his name or exactly where he can be found, for he and his family still live in Germany and I visited their home. If you have read all the millions of words written of Nazi terror and persecution you still would not understand the fear of a people lest the Nazis learn that they talked; you



must talk with them in Germany and see their eyes when they plead with you not to say with whom you talked, really to understand.

He is one of the 300,000 Jews who settled on the land, for two out of every three Jews in Germany live in the small rural districts or on the land. He was a Jew who knew nothing of the history or traditions, language or customs of his people, a Jew who had been so absorbed by the German soil he and his ancestors had tilled that he knew only that he was a Jew as people know a legend handed down from generation to generation.

For eighteen years, after the war ended and he had recovered from the wounds received in battle for his Fatherland, he had tilled the soil, never thinking that the woman he had married was a Christian or that the four children she had borne him were “half Jew and half Christian.” His wife was an intelligent, healthy girl of sound peasant stock, simple in her wants, hard-working, frugal—the sort of mate to help build the home and rear the family, and in the years that followed their marriage they had worked the land, the same land his father had worked before him and his father’s father. He lived peacefully and contentedly, a friend to his neighbors and befriended by his neighbors.

He was a poor farmer, like most farmers in Germany, for out of the 5,000,000 farms in the land 3,000,000 consist of less than two hectares (about 5 acres), and he was one of that great class who grew produce which is sold to regular customers in the surrounding villages. There was not enough soil to pasture cattle and sell cows or milk and thus add to his meager income as farmers with a little more land do.

In the disorganized and unhappy years that followed the attempt of the victorious Allies to crush the German people, he heard of the growing anti-Semitism, but dismissed it from his mind. There had always been anti-Semites from the time the Jews first dispersed to the corners of the globe

and the continued development of anti-Semitism just before Hitler got in power left him undisturbed. He was a German, a war veteran; this was Germany, the most civilized country in the world. All this was merely the talk of men playing politics and, like most political talks, was of no consequence to him.

Then the persecutions began. Neighbors with whom he had eaten, with whose children his children played, turned against them; those who had bought from him were now fearful of patronizing a Jew lest they incur the displeasure of the Nazis who by now controlled everything and were becoming vicious in the attacks on Jews. When he brought his produce to the village market they refused to buy except at absurdly low prices. Then the schools were closed to the children. A rising tide isolated him and his family from the community in which they had lived all their lives.

I was passing a store in Bamberg when I first saw this Jew's wife lugging a milk can. I did not know then that she had married a Jew. She was a husky, solidly-built woman in her late thirties with cheeks as red as a healthy baby's and the strong hands of one used to toil. She was carrying the milk can to an old and battered car parked outside the store and since I happened to be passing at the moment I opened the door for her. She smiled a swift, "*Danke, viel mal.*"

"Pretty big load for a woman," I commented cheerfully.

"I am strong," she smiled. "Women who work on farms have to be strong."

I could not tell whether her friendliness was just that of a neighborly country or whether she was actually glad to talk to someone; it was not until after she had accepted my invitation to have coffee in a nearby café that I realized that she was just simply hungry to talk to someone—anyone.

"You are a foreigner," she said when we were seated with the cups before us.

“Yes,” I said and added, “I am a journalist interested in conditions in Germany. I do not know many farmers, so I am doubly glad that you accepted my invitation.”

“What do you want to know?” she laughed. “How to raise greens?”

“I want to know how things are with you farmers, what you earn, how you manage, whether conditions are any better for you now than they were a few years ago.”

“Some farmers are better off and some worse,” she said. “The little farmer has nothing now.”

“And before?”

“Before we used to raise vegetables and sell them. We had regular customers. But now there is a decree that everybody must sell only to the public market—at wholesale prices instead of retail. The only ones who make any money out of that are the big farmers because they are the only ones with any quantity to sell. The little farmer eats up what he’s got and when he sells what little there is left he doesn’t get much.”

“You mean that this new decree works out for the benefit of the big landowner?”

“Yes, and there is another law for his benefit, too. He cannot sell his land. There are many laws and they are all for the big landowners. There is nothing for the small farmer except work and maybe, after a bad harvest, loss of his land.”

“Why is it good for the big farmer if he cannot sell his land? I should imagine that it would be bad because if he has to borrow money, the banks won’t lend it to him, for if you can’t sell the land how will the banks get their money back?”

She nodded. “That is right; that is why the big landowners are unhappy. But—when you have much land you can always manage to borrow money. No, no, this law is meant to build still bigger estates. It is not hard to see what happens. When the small farmer gets nothing for his greens

and has to pay big taxes or has a bad harvest, he will lose his farm. Either the bank takes it for loans or he sells it to the big landowners; and if it goes to the bank it is sold to the big landowner anyway, for the banks are not farmers. The big landowners are growing bigger and the poor farmer is losing his land and just works for the big landowner."

It was not until after this conversation that I checked on her comments. Her shrewd peasant mind had seen very clearly the tendency of the Nazi régime to develop vast feudal estates and the gradual conversion of the small independent farmer to the state of a dependent peasant.

"You are a small farmer, I gather?"

"Very small," she replied. "We have less than two hectares."

I had some farm statistics in my pocket and I pulled them out.

"There are 200,000 farmers in Germany with between 20 and 100 hectares," I said. "There must be some like those around here. Are they affected as badly as you?"

"Are there that many?" she asked with a note of surprise.

"Those are the figures. I think they are fairly reliable."

"I didn't know. But it does not matter. There are farms that size around me, but they are badly off, too, because most of them raised cattle and hogs."

"Why should they be badly off? Prices for meats are rising. I should think they'd be making money."

She shook her head and her eyes twinkled.

"They would be if they didn't kill all their cattle and hogs."

The puzzled look on my face must have been obvious, for she continued: "The Government passed a law prohibiting the importation of fodder. Most farmers have not enough pasture for many milk cows and the land is too valuable to be used only for pasture. It was cheaper to import fodder and when the Government stopped that, the farmers

killed their cattle and hogs. It was better to kill them and sell the meat than see them die of starvation, *nicht?* So now there is not enough meat and not enough milk cows for milk and butter and everybody is unhappy!”

“Then it seems that the farmers are not very satisfied?”

She shook her head vigorously. “And they are scolding also because the Government is making the farmers take the unemployed.”

“I don’t understand.”

“There are many people without work, *nicht?* If they have no work the Government or the city has to give them something to eat, *nicht?* So the Government makes the farmers take some of these workers whether they are needed on the farm or not and the farmer has to pay these workers and so they are very unhappy.”

“I see. Did you have to employ an unemployed man even on your small farm?”

For a moment her face clouded and then she said, “No, we have not been asked.”

“Got influence with the Government, eh?”

Her eyes clouded again. I wondered what caused it and I asked her.

“Oh, nothing!” she said quickly. “Probably some thought about the farm. You journalists see too much!” she concluded laughing.

“Please don’t think I’m just curious, but I’m trying to understand German customs as well. Is it customary around here for the husband to send his wife out to lug large cans of milk instead of going for them himself?”

She did not answer for a moment; then she shook her head slightly and said:

“My husband is ill, so I went for the milk.”

“Oh! Is your farm on the outskirts of the city?”

Again that strange look flashed in her eyes. She shook her head slowly.

“No. It is thirty kilometers from here.”

"You can get a better price for your produce in the city instead of the village?"

"I came for the milk," she said in a peculiar tone.

"All the milk cows slaughtered for that many kilometers around here! The situation must be worse than I thought!"

"There are quite a few farms with milk cows left," she said a little grimly.

"I don't understand," I said, frankly puzzled. "Why, then, do you drive sixty kilometers to get milk when you can get it near your farm?"

She shook her head with a faint smile.

"You are an American journalist, eh? You can tell it to the Americans. I drive sixty kilometers to get milk because I married a Jew."

She said it with a note of defiance in her voice and a sharp glance at me as though to see my reaction to her announcement.

"You mean that because you married a Jew the farmers in your neighborhood will not sell you milk—milk needed for your children?"

"Yes," she said in a rather tense voice. "They would sell milk to us, but they are afraid of the Party people, so I have to go far from home to get it—some place where I am not known."

I had heard that Aryan farmers would not sell milk to Jews but I had been told that this was chiefly true in East Prussia where the Aryans were trying to drive out Jewish farmers and storekeepers, offering them about 15 per cent of what their business or land was worth. I told her what I had heard.

"This is Bamberg," she said. "It is not far from Nuremberg."

Nuremberg and Munich, centers of the anti-Jewish manifestations, where hate against this race was so great that children ran after known Jews and spat at them while their elders stood about laughing and egging them on, were

apparently as bad if not worse than East Prussia. In these areas Jews have been forced into an isolation that is a ghetto without the name. Aryans, even those whose innate decency and humaneness have revolted against the persistent persecution, dare not have anything to do with the outcast race lest they themselves come under the ban of the Nazi leaders and Party members.

In Munich, I knew, Nazis tried to keep physicians from attending sick Jews but with only one or two exceptions the doctors refused to be bullied, threatening that if such pressure persisted then they would refuse to attend sick Aryans. The doctors were left alone after that, but druggists will not fill prescriptions for Jews.

I asked her if these things were true in her neighborhood and she nodded slowly.

“What do Jews do when they can’t get medicines?”

“They go to a distant city where they are not known. If they have no car, a neighbor goes for them. The Jews have been driven much closer together,” she added. “Many did not know it before, but now they know they are Jews.”

“Do they trouble you for having married a Jew?”

“Not now,” she said in a low tone. “They use to threaten me and the children. The children with whom my children played used to run after me and shout that I was a whore, that I slept with a Jew—” She shrugged her shoulders and stopped in the middle of the sentence.

“Are there many Jews in your neighborhood?”

“Not so many. Many have run away—the younger ones. The older ones have no place to go. They are too old to change or they have no money to go away.”

People who leave Germany are allowed to take ten marks with them—just about enough for a night’s lodging and food, but Jews who have sold their business or land can take one-fourth of their money out—after they have paid the government a “flight tax.” A Jew with a 100,000 mark business who wants to leave Germany can, if he is lucky, rescue

about 3,500 marks from it. The Jew who gets 20 per cent for his business gets a very good price. Out of these 20,000 marks the government promptly takes one-fourth as the flight tax. To take the remaining 15,000 marks out of the country he has to exchange them into "immigrant marks"—money he can get beyond the German borders. And he gets only one-fourth of the value in foreign money for his marks—or about 3,500 marks for a 100,000 mark business.

The loss is enormous. For the Jew in Germany it means giving up everything that he has built in his lifetime and many are giving up everything for a feeling of security again, if not for themselves, for their children. Those who cannot raise enough to transport themselves and their families simply walk about with that hunted air so evident on their faces, waiting with a fatalistic resignation for more decrees, more laws which will drive them from poverty into the ghetto from which they thought they had escaped centuries ago.

"But the German people are not savages," I said, thinking of the many kindly and gentle souls I had met. "Why should they have become so?"

"They have not. We know that some people are still friendly. They do not like this hate, but they are helpless. Party people have them terrified. I know that some neighbors are sorry for us. But—maybe that is because my husband is ill, but I don't think so. It is not the German people; it is the Party people."

"Why don't you sell and leave?—you and your husband are young enough—"

She shook her head. "We could not get enough money for our two hectares to pay our fare any place and what will I do in a strange land where I know no one, cannot speak the language? How will we find work when there is no work in all lands? No, we must stay here. At least from the land we get something to eat.

"No," she added thoughtfully, "I am used to it now and



my husband—he does not mind either. But it is hard on the children—to be punished so because their mother married a Jew—”

I noticed her looking at a clock on the wall and I said:

“I should like to talk with your husband. Would you mind if I went out with you?”

She looked at me strangely and then nodded her head. A peculiar smile played about her lips as if she were thinking of something funny.

“You want to come to our farm? You want to see what happened to a Jew who married an Aryan so you can tell about it in the papers in America? Yes, there are things to tell. I will take you but you must not say—”

“I have learned enough in Germany not to say with whom I talked. You need not fear.”

“I do not fear for myself or my husband,” she said quickly. “It is the children—”

With the milk can safely tied so as not to shake too much, we drove along the winding roads southwest of Bamberg until we came to her small farm. Two chickens were stepping about gingerly in the mud. A boy of about eight with blond, short-cropped hair was drawing water from the well in the center of the yard. A little girl of not more than three, with a running nose that formed bubbles on her nostrils when she breathed, ran out of the house and paused on the top of the two worn wooden steps leading to the entrance door and smiled broadly and happily at her mother. I did not see the other children.

“My husband is probably in the kitchen,” she said.

She opened the door for me. A strong, healthy-looking man of about forty sat on a stool in a corner of the room near a high white-tiled stove. He looked up as we came in and smiled, a friendly little smile that seemed to hide something very funny and something that was deep in his thoughts. His eyes were bright, good-natured, laughing.

He rose and shook hands with me, bowing low.

"You are a Jew?" he asked, his bright eyes filled with eager interrogation and before I could answer he poked his chest with a forefinger: "I am a Jew!" He announced it with a gay little laugh that sent a chill down my spine. "I am a Jew!" he repeated, "and my wife is a Jew and my children are Jews!"

A sense of horror and pity swept over me as I realized what had happened to this man.

"Yes," his wife nodded, with that strange little smile that had played over her lips in the café, in answer to my unformed question. "It is more than half a year now that he took the littlest one in his arms and walked into the village. I heard later what happened. He had walked the streets, carrying the littlest one in his arms and crying loudly, 'I am a Jew! I am a war veteran. I fought for the Fatherland! See! Here is my youngest and she cannot get milk because I am a Jew!'

"The police came and took him off the streets. They knew who he was and they brought him and the littlest one home to me saying, 'Here is your Jew'."

## *THE UNDERGROUND SPEAKS*

THREE STRONG MUSCLE-MEN were throwing one another about in what I immediately suspected was a funny act when I walked into the smoke-laden Alkazar cabaret on Reeperbahn in the St. Pauli district in Hamburg and found a vacant table at a corner of the dance floor. The place was crowded with men and women, some in evening clothes, and a good sprinkling of Nazis in black and brown and the greenish gray of the air forces despite the Nazi Party prohibition against men in uniform frequenting night clubs.

It was ten-thirty and though I had been told to be there at eleven o'clock, I arrived a little earlier lest all the corner tables be taken. I ordered a liqueur and sat sipping it and wondering whether I was on a wild goose chase. Two months before in Paris I had met some Communist refugees who had fled Germany when heads began to roll and I had expressed a desire to be put in touch with the Communist underground movement. I knew I was making a dangerous request, dangerous not so much to me but to the Communist who would meet me, should I be followed. But, everyone expects the Communists to seize control of Germany when Hitler collapses, yet few, even among the best-informed refugee circles, know the actual Communist strength and what they are thinking of doing in such an event. The activities of the underground movement are so befogged with rumors and patently exaggerated assertions that some real information from an official source seemed to me worth the risk.

So far as I was concerned, should we be caught, I should

either be ordered out of the country or given a taste of a Nazi prison, but for the Communist it meant years in prison and possibly death. So I was not surprised when I was told that I would be given an answer to my request on the morrow.

On the next day I was asked when I expected to be in Germany.

"I don't know but approximately within two months."

"Very well, then. First, we want a good clear photograph of you. Then (giving a date) you be at the Alkazar cabaret in Hamburg at eleven o'clock. Take a corner table if one is vacant or as near to a corner table as possible if they are all taken, and wait there. You smoke American cigarettes. Please have a pack of these on the table—just additional identification should it be necessary. A comrade will get in touch with you."

"A cabaret!" I said, a little surprised.

"Yes; it is better than for a stranger to go to a home or for someone to call on him at his hotel. For one meeting of this nature it is best. There is music and that drowns the sound of voices and then people are more interested in their partners and the performers to pay much attention to others at the tables. There are many reasons why a cabaret is best for a meeting like this."

"You're running the show," I agreed. "How long do I wait? I'm not much good at this Edgar Wallace stuff."

They did not smile at my lightheartedness. "Wait two hours," they said seriously. "If no one gets in touch with you then be there again on the following night, same time, and again the night after. It is best to allow three days. We don't know what difficulties the person who will get in touch with you may have to get there at a specific time."

So here I sat in this sumptuously furnished cabaret heavy with the scent of wines and perfumes and expensive tobacco, uncertain whether to feel like a conspirator or a fool. An appointment made two months ago to meet a person I

did not know and who did not know me sounded a little silly, but it had the thrill of mystery, so I sat there smoking and sipping the liqueur and wondering whether anyone would really show up.

"Just be sure you are not followed," they had impressed on me in Paris and I made so sure, by walking, driving along deserted streets and changing taxis for two solid hours that the thought of going through that procedure again for possibly two more nights was very disturbing.

Pleasure seekers kept strolling in with Aryan women on their arms. There were very few women with dark hair, I noticed. The place was pretty well filled and I looked at my watch, feeling a little foolish, for it was eleven-thirty and no one had appeared. Six beefy girls, with the whole dance floor to themselves, were raising tired legs in what I assumed was a dance. At an adjoining table was an S. A. man, an officer of high rank who was having a grand time flirting with a really gorgeous blond of the tea-and-cabaret type. They had taken their table about a half hour earlier and their proximity caused me a bit of uneasiness for if whoever was to get in touch with me saw him there, the chances of his identifying himself would be slim. I had agreed to be there for three successive nights and I gave myself up to brooding over the whole matter when the Nazi officer, after searching his pockets for a match, turned to me and politely asked if I had one.

"The waiter is not around," he explained apologetically.

I offered him my cigarette-lighter and he lit the blond's and his own gold-tipped cigarettes.

"You are a foreigner?" he asked, returning the lighter with profuse thanks. "English?"

"No. American."

"A wonderful country," he smiled. "One day I should like to go there to see it for myself."

He was apparently trying to be pleasant to a foreigner alone at a neighboring table, but all he succeeded in doing

was to make me uncomfortable. Hope that my appointment might be kept went glimmering, for if the Communist saw me talking with the Nazi officer he would certainly not make himself known.

"You are waiting for some one?"

"No," I said casually. "I had nothing to do tonight so I thought I'd spend a little time here."

"*Ach, so!* Well, why not join us?" he invited me cheerfully.

He wouldn't listen to my protests. He rose, clicked his heels and introduced himself and the beautiful blond.

"My name's Spivak," I muttered.

The waiter brought a bottle of wine. The music played a soft waltz and couples strolled out on to the floor.

"To the new Germany," said my host, clinking his glass against mine.

We drank to the new Germany. I decided that I might just as well salvage something from the evening by talking with him since my appointment for that evening at least was now ruined, when I was startled by a voice saying in English:

"I believe we have an appointment here?"

It took me a moment or two to realize that it was the Nazi officer who was talking. Luckily the lights had been dimmed for the dance. I don't know what my expression was, but the beautiful Aryan lady of the perfect tea-and-cabaret type laughed in a soft, well-modulated voice and the Nazi officer grinned boyishly.

"I beg pardon?" I said.

"An appointment for eleven o'clock tonight at the Al-kazar, arranged by some friends in Paris?"

I looked at him again. He nodded slowly, his boyish grin growing more pronounced.

"You want to know something about the underground movement in Germany?" he asked quietly, leaning toward me a trifle. "What do you wish to know?"

"But—" I stared at the rank on his uniform.

"There are many of us in Nazi uniforms," he smiled.

He raised his glass again.

"Shall we drink to the new Germany?" he asked, and this time I understood.

So, while the band played and couples glided gracefully about on the highly-waxed floor, while the clink of wine glasses mingled with laughter, this man whose head would have been the price had he been discovered, answered my questions about the underground movement.

"The Communists in Germany were so strong," I began. "What has happened to the Party during the period since Hitler is in power?"

"Some of the facts you probably already know," he smiled, toying with his glass. "We had a far more difficult time after the Nazis got control than the world realizes. Much of it was due to our own carelessness, for when it looked as though Hitler might come into office there was a tremendous increase in Communist Party membership. We had about 250,000 members. I am not considering sympathizers at present. Some new recruits were spies. Apparently Hitler, anticipating attaining power, deliberately sent them into the Party so as to discover who the Communists were.

"Fortunately the spies had not penetrated to the upper ranks of the leadership so a great many of them escaped notice. The Party, of course, went underground immediately. Eventually, of course, we were forced to become a closely-knit body and that is an important achievement. Today we have around 50,000 members, most of them left from the original Party."

While he talked he toyed with the long stem of his wine glass, smiling in that boyish manner as though he were telling naughty stories and I, too, listening had to keep reminding myself to smile and nod appreciatively while the blond Aryan of the tea-and-cabaret type (I hope, should she ever read this, that she realizes I mean this as a very

high compliment) kept her eyes constantly on people approaching or passing our table the while she occasionally nodded her head as though somewhat amused by the funny stories.

"Are many of the Communists in the Nazi Party now?"

"No. Some of us are—a very few. Party members are in the labor front—among the industrial and agricultural workers. We want to carry on propaganda among the Nazis but more important are the workers and the farmers. Of course, it is necessary for some of us to be in the Nazi Party—so we are. Before Hitler got in power we had between five and six million Communist sympathizers. That is history. After the Nazis got the Government many of those sympathizers were won away from us. Hitler made serious inroads among some workers who were swayed by propaganda and actually thought that a form of socialism would be effected. However, as time went on and instead of socialism they discovered it was one of the worst forms of Fascism, the left wing of the Nazi Party became active. They and the people talked of a "new revolution" to achieve socialism. It was then that the Blood Purge came on June 30. The left wing was shattered and the S. A., which had been powerful, lost its importance.

"The Blood Purge had a very beneficial effect. It showed the workers precisely where Hitler stood and ended their dream of a new revolution. Workers whom Hitler had won were greatly disappointed and swerved away from the Nazis though, of course, they dare not show it too openly.

"During this entire period, Communists were still being arrested due to the host of spies still in the underground movement. When one least expected it, some active Communist was whisked away to a concentration camp.

"When we went underground we had organized into cells of five so as to reduce the possibility of spies knowing more than four members; but despite this precaution, whole cells were arrested time after time until we realized that



even a cell of five was too big. Today we have tightened up; our cells consist of only three members and these three work with people who do not in the least suspect that the three are Communists. Of these three only one has contact with the Communist Party representative. The other two even do not know who the contact is. That is how careful the dance is so similar to cabarets you find in almost all port centers—”

Without the slightest change in intonation or sign on his face he had abruptly switched from the English he had been speaking to German. A waiter had approached behind him to place a newly arrived couple at a nearby table and though my host's back was to the waiter the switch in language and subject occurred when the waiter was still five feet away. The beautiful Aryan, whose smile never once left her pretty lips, had obviously signalled him, probably by a pressure of the foot or the knee under the table—a procedure that continued throughout the whole interview whenever someone approached our table.

“How do you meet—if you can tell me?”

“Of course. I am here to tell—as much as I can,” he laughed. “The cells meet at regular intervals at places decided on beforehand. Should anyone walk in on one of these meetings he would find only a normal, friendly gathering at a person's home. We have dinner, a little wine or beer on the table, the radio plays—everyone is cheerful as friends gathered together should be. At other times we take walks in the country—we Germans are very fond of walking, you know. We meet in any of the innumerable ways that everyday people normally meet. At these cell meetings we discuss our work, lay plans for other work, the one in touch with the Party transmits instructions received and so on. We lay plans for our propaganda which is now carried on in the most careful manner possible. We have lost too many men and women because of carelessness.”

“Are Communists still being picked up despite your tightening the cells?”

"Oh, yes! Lots of them! In some areas as around Hesse there are seven to ten trials every day of those arrested for carrying on Communist propaganda. In Thuringia the average is about the same. In industrial centers the average is somewhat smaller—"

"That is strange, isn't it, since you have the greatest concentration of Party members in the industrial centers?"

"In a big city everyone does not know everyone else, whereas in rural areas where we are very active now, it is extremely difficult to work and that is the chief reason for the continued arrests. In a small country area your activity becomes known almost immediately. But—" and he laughed again boyishly as he touched his glass to mine—"we have learned from Ford. We have established a Belt System, isn't that what you call it? As soon as one is arrested, another is ready to step in his place at a moment's notice."

"How extensive is your propaganda and how effective?"

"Our best propagandists are Hitler and his Nazis," he smiled. "Hitler is doing a great deal to develop Communist sympathizers. So far as our own work is concerned, you know, of course, about the literature that's smuggled in, like books, pamphlets, etc. The circulation of these smuggled papers is quite small and its effectiveness is difficult to gauge. They are probably not very effective in themselves, but we cannot judge by the effectiveness of one means. They are all little rivulets which eventually add up to a stream."

"Then we have our own mimeographed newspapers which come out at irregular intervals. Here in Hamburg we have three. In Berlin we have eight. The number varies according to the size of the center. The circulation of these papers, too, is very small, but in their own way they are quite effective. Then there are other propaganda methods which, necessarily, are constantly being changed. At present, for instance, we are scattering round bits of paper and cardboard which look exactly like money when on the ground. We see to it that they are scattered particularly in places where

women have to stand in line for their quarter of a pound of butter, for instance. These women are already irritable and are voicing their displeasure at the food shortage quite openly. When they see what seems to be a coin they pick it up only to find a legend on it like 'Demand food instead of armies' and so on. No one dares to hold on to the paper, so they drop it again where it lies ready for the next person to pick it up. A trifle, of course. But when a people is irritable, suggestions pounded in day in and day out produce a profound effect in the long run. Our best work, of course, is being done in the industrial centers where, despite the inroads made by the Nazis among the workers, the nucleus of the Party remained pretty much intact. The groups are smaller, of course, but we are more solidified."

"You have not had a drink for some time," the beautiful blond Aryan interrupted softly, giving us her best social smile.

The three of us immediately raised our glasses, drank with broadly-beaming faces and applauded an act which had just finished and which I am sure none of us saw.

"Yes," he continued thoughtfully, though still wearing that smile, "we have dropped the theatre—you know, the detailed stories that we formerly gave to the Party press outside. We have become far too serious for that. Under conditions where it means imprisonment or death people do not act as though performing on a stage for applause. They act in simple, dead earnest and this very seriousness and realization of what they are doing and the risks they are taking has welded those of us who are now working with an unbreakable bond of steel. It has given us a new outlook on the revolution, on life and on our work.

"How seriously we take our work is evidenced by what happens when we are arrested. Invariably we keep our mouths shut. Despite tortures, despite anything that they can do those who are caught accept their fate. We have a

smaller Party, but it is one of tempered steel," he repeated with a note of pride.

"Are the tortures today as brutal as when Hitler first took power?"

"That depends on the region and the people in charge. The German people are not sadists; they are really a kindly people and the tortures inflicted on the Communists in the early period of the Nazi régime have revolted many a German. Today there are still vicious, inhuman tortures, but the number subjected to them is considerably fewer. They have learned that Communists will not talk; they have developed a feeling of admiration for the stoical suffering that many Communists have undergone. And often, even the Nazis simply get tired of inflicting tortures. People do get tired of that sort of thing, you know, unless they are insane. In many sections of Germany, Communists have won the sympathy of the people and the courts and there are numerous cases where the Nazi courts themselves have leaned over backward to find defendants not guilty, or if that could not be done, to give the prisoner a small sentence.

"This attitude of the courts, especially in small, agricultural areas where everyone knows the arrested Communist, has forced the Nazis to send special police because they could not trust the local courts and the local police to handle the Communists in the old-fashioned way. Strange situations have arisen as a result of this changing attitude by the courts and the people. Recently in Giessen, for instance, the local police were supplanted by special police sent from Cassel in distant Prussia because the local police wouldn't torture the Communists. The Cassel police were especially picked because they enjoyed brutality and when they started to beat up the Communists the Giessen police threatened to beat them up and drive them out of town if they did not stop it! These cases are important as showing the significant change toward the Communists and it has become particularly noticeable within the past half

year—the same period when the shortage of foodstuffs became pronounced.”

“How many are in the prisons and concentration camps now? The Nazis refuse to give any figures.”

“We have a fairly good idea, though we do not have the exact figures. Those are kept in so many different ways and in different places. I should say there are about 200,000 in the prisons and about 100,000 in the concentration camps. The average sentence is about two and one-half years.”

“Have any recently been sentenced to death by the courts for Communist activity?”

“The beheading of Communists by court order is infrequent,” he said, for the moment losing his smile. “But the bodies of Communists are constantly being found, usually in the woods outside the industrial centers or even in the rural districts. Near Berlin, where the surrounding woods are a favorite place for walks on holidays, it is not infrequent for hikers to stumble upon the dead bodies of Communists. Some had obviously been tortured to death; others had met their end by a merciful shot. When such a body is found the people realize that it was a Communist and often walk away, leaving the body to be discovered by children who notify the police or by the police themselves when the stench of decomposition attracts too much attention. How many have been so murdered we do not know because many are not Party members. They were sympathizers who were suspected of being Party members.”

“Are Socialists, too, murdered?”

“Yes; some. Many have been imprisoned or killed but their activity is comparatively small. They used to be quite active and maintained connections between Berlin and Prague but spies got into the organization and virtually destroyed it. The Socialists are now trying to rebuild, but without much apparent success.”

“Is Socialist strength gaining?”

“No; its strength is chiefly among the older generation—

those who have been Socialists most of their lives. The younger generation is swinging toward us."

"What's the strength of the Communist Party now—so far as sympathizers are concerned?"

"We lost ground at first as I said, but today we are making enormous strides."

"That being the case, with the Nazis losing the people's sympathy and the Communists gaining, how long can Hitler last?"

"Barring a war—for a long time."

"But the financial condition of the country is very precarious. Hitler has enough money to last another year at the most. Then comes inflation, more unemployment. The people are grumbling. Will the people stand for it?"

He smiled a little grimly.

"The Nazis have the army and the army has the guns. It would be suicide at present to attempt to seize the Government. We would be slaughtered. In the event of a war, when soldiers are dissatisfied and a lot of us and sympathizers have arms and can lay hands on machine guns, munitions, bombs, planes—then it becomes a different story."

"But what will happen when Hitler cracks?"

"That depends upon a great many circumstances—the economic and world political conditions at the time. At present it looks like the dictatorship will be assumed by the military who already show a tendency toward the restoration of the Hohenzollerns. Should that happen, there will be, of course, concessions to the dissatisfied populace, like elections and so on—probably a monarchy patterned after the one in England, but with not so much freedom. The Reichswehr is far more shrewd than the Nazi Party. The General Staff is composed of scholars who know not only the military situation but the political and economic as well. They know what is happening. But, though the General Staff are very competent, their cleverness is limited. They want to maintain the economic system and it is this

disintegrating system which will defeat them in the long run. We Communists can only confine ourselves to preparing the workers and the farmers to seize and hold power when the upholders of the system have been so weakened by its disintegration that the soldiers upon whom the General Staff depends will also rebel and be ready to turn against it."

"You have not had a drink for some time and you are not looking at the show," the beautiful Aryan reminded us again.

He smiled quickly at her. We raised our glasses, touched them to one another and drank silently.

"Conditions make for revolutions, not Communists," he continued quietly. "The period Germany is passing through today is but another step in our direction. Before Hitler is through he will have helped considerably to wreck the already weak capitalist system here."

"But when Hitler goes, there will be chaos. What will the Communists do then?"

"Why will there be chaos?" he asked gently. "The strings of government are never suddenly thrown to the wind. Those in power know when they are about to collapse and those seeking power also know it and have prepared for it—for a long time. There may be some chaotic conditions for a while, but some group will control the army and that is the group that will emerge in control. It is not, of course, inevitable that when Hitler goes Communism follows. The people are not quite ready for a Communist attempt, the conditions are not ripe and though we gain sympathizers rapidly (this is even more important) we are not ready."

"But a war seems to be likely in the next two, possibly three years. Will the Communists launch a civil war which will hasten the disintegrating process?"

"That depends on conditions. We are not rushing into anything. If the war is against the Soviet Union, as from all indications it will be, then it may become necessary."

"Are you so organized that you could start a civil war immediately after a war began?"

"No. It would take at least half a year before we could do effective work along that line."

"It is past two," the beautiful Aryan reminded him.

The place was emptying and was beginning to take on a sad and dismal air.

"I think we must go," he said apologetically.

"Tell me," I said, "is it all right to say where we met?"

"Of course!" he laughed boyishly. "Why not? No one knows me here. I am not from Hamburg and before morning I shall be far away, ready for my day's work. Only don't describe me!"

"And the Fräulein? I have been wondering why she is here."

"For several reasons. This is not a place for a Nazi officer to come alone and sit for a long time talking to a foreigner. We would attract attention. Secondly, to keep her eyes open while we talked, but that is incidental; and thirdly, to follow me when we leave here to make sure that no one else is following me."

"You sure take a lot of precautions!" I commented.

"That is why my head is still on my shoulders," he said simply.

"Shall I stay, go first, or what?"

"You stay for about fifteen minutes after we leave. Well—"

We rose. The woman offered her hand first.

"Charming evening, *nicht?*" she said in her best social tone.

He clasped mine in a firm grip. "We shall meet again."

"*Auf wiedersehen,*" they said.

I sat staring at their departing backs. A new act was on, some more beefy girls raising tired, fat legs. When the fifteen minutes were up, I drained the rest of the wine in my glass—to them:

"*Auf wiedersehen—in a happier Germany!*"



## POLAND



## TOWN AND COUNTRY

I WAS THE GUEST of a banker in Warsaw and he told me of the misery and hunger of the Polish people.

"It is simply incredible how they live," he said, helping himself to another glass of rare wine. "You should see the industrial workers as well as the peasants to understand how poverty-stricken we are."

He drank the wine and shook his head sadly. The banker really felt sorry for the people but other than trying to keep the zloty stable and contribute good-sized sums to charity to relieve the distress, he had no idea of what to do about it.

"How do the industrial workers live?"

"Terribly. You should visit Brzeziny—" He shuddered at the very thought of that city.

"But I don't want to see unusually bad conditions. I want to see the average. Are the conditions there fairly representative?"

He thought about it carefully and finally nodded.

"Yes—for that type of worker. The city itself is peculiar because the entire population lives by sewing trousers and vests and coats. It's a city of little tailors. They make cheap clothes for export abroad, especially to England, which in turn sells them to her colonies. When you see Brzeziny you will have an idea of how the Polish industrial worker lives."

I went to Lodz where many middlemen who supply the cloth to the little tailors at Brzeziny have their factories. There I was the guest of a rich pants-manufacturer. Sitting at his table laden with fruits and cakes and tea, he sighed,

"You must go to Brzeziny. There you will get an idea of how Polish industrial workers live."

The pants-manufacturer was a kindly man and his sigh was real. I had heard of his charity contributions, of how really heartsick he was at the extreme poverty all about him.

"They are very poor?" I asked.

"Terribly poor," he said, pouring more tea for me into an exquisite cup.

"Do the middlemen who distribute the cloth among these tailors make any money?"

"Naturally." He smiled understandingly. "When I give work to many families I make a profit from each one—"

"Yet you feel terribly sorry for them?"

"I do," he said and I believed him. "But what shall I do?" he asked rather helplessly. "If, touched by their extreme poverty, I pay them more I will not be able to compete with other manufacturers. If I let softness get into my business I will go bankrupt."

"You had a strike of your workers—" I began.

"That is true; and with the help of the police I broke it. What else could I do if I want to stay in business? I fought for my business just as these workers fought for their livelihood. I felt sorry for them; I wish I could have done something but I couldn't without reducing my profits or going bankrupt. And if I start reducing my profits and follow it through logically I might as well divide up everything I have and join them and let someone else exploit me as I exploit them; and that would not help the workers much and it certainly wouldn't help me."

"But you are so touched by their poverty. What can be done about it?"

He shook his head slowly. "The only answer is to change the whole economic system and I am opposed to that because it is to my interest to keep this system," he said frankly.

"Then you are willing to keep these tailors in the poverty you describe so that you can live well?"

"I am not willing," he said with feeling, "but it is poverty for them or poverty for me, and if it comes to a choice I prefer poverty for them. But you really should go there and see for yourself how they live."

Brzeziny is less than an hour's drive from Lodz and the ancient, rattling taxi threatened to fall apart as it bumped along the rutted frozen road. Occasionally a bony nag pulling a long wooden wagon with a scarecrow sitting on the driver's seat passed us. You tried to see the scarecrow's face but it was too bundled up for protection from the bitter cold; and occasionally a man or a woman hurried by on the road, carrying something in their arms.

"What are they carrying?" I asked the driver.

"A little wood," he said. "They find little sticks in the fields sometimes and they can build a fire to keep themselves warm."

And then we came to Brzeziny.

Rows upon rows of houses stretched along the twisting main street, houses of wood and houses of brick, some with wooden roofs and some with straw-thatched roofs, one-story houses and two-story houses and three-story houses with rooms portioned out to get the most rent out of the 17,000 human beings who live there.

I walked along its cobbled streets and narrow, broken sidewalks with an odd feeling that there was something familiar about the place, that I had seen it somewhere before and then suddenly it came upon me in a flash: it was like a cemetery. It was a dead city. There was no one to be seen. It was just a city of cobbled streets, sagging buildings, broken walls, cracked sidewalks and—silence.

I turned a corner and saw the figure of a woman issue from a doorway. Her hips bulged from the many petticoats she wore to keep warm and her head was covered with a great shawl. I hurried toward her, but she vanished

into a courtyard. I stood at the courtyard entrance trying to figure out where she had gone when I became aware of a faint whirring noise and while I was puzzling over that another creature with a long beard darted out of a nearby doorway, lugging a huge bundle of clothes.

I rushed after him. "Where is everybody?" I asked. "There doesn't seem to be a soul in the city."

"There is work now and we must work," he said, hurrying on while I kept pace beside him. "There is not time to go outside, for soon there will be eight or maybe ten weeks when there is no work. Then we can go outside, but now we must work."

He darted into a doorway and the door closed in my face. There was work now and soon there would be no work; they had no time to talk to a curious individual whom they had never seen before.

I looked at the one-story shack looming drab and gloomy in front of me. From here too came that whirring sound, a sort of drone that would rise to a sharp, high pitch and then die down to a faint moan as if it had no more strength to go on. I listened for a moment and knocked on the door.

A woman, her head wrapped in an old shawl, opened it. I could not see for a moment when I entered because of the dim light, but as I stood explaining why I was there the whirring grew louder and then I saw that the sound came from two Singer sewing machines near a window so covered with steam from the breath of those in the room that it was opaque. Two men in their shirt sleeves sat at the machines, working by the half light that came through the panes. I could not make out their faces, for they were against the light, but when they talked the voices were those of young men. As my eyes became accustomed to the light in the room I made out another woman, a shawl wrapped round her, and four little children squatting on the plain board floor looking up at me curiously. The woman who had opened the door seemed to be crouching, as if she were

about to pounce on me. It was a little while before I realized that she had sat over those whirring machines for so many years that her spine had been permanently affected and she could not walk upright.

"What is this street called?" I asked.

"Kosciusko," came a man's voice from a dark corner of the room. It was not until he spoke that I noticed a bearded figure bent over a wooden table cutting cloth with a long pair of shears.

"How do you spell it?"

"Spell it? I do not know. He is the one to whom there is a monument in Lodz. I hear he went to America, to help make them free. I have a daughter in America," he added, "but I never hear from her."

I took out a piece of paper to make some notes.

"And your name?"

"Why do you want his name?" the woman with the twisted spine suddenly asked in a frightened voice. "His lungs are better now. It is not necessary to take him away. See, he is working very hard, so why do you want his name?"

She snatched up a little child playing among the few sticks of wood near the stove as if she feared I would take the child too.

"I am not here to take him away," I explained gently, "I did not even know that his lungs were bad."

"Everybody's lungs are bad," said a young voice from the whirring machines.

"My name is Platter," said the old man, trembling.

"Don't give him your name!" the woman cautioned excitedly. "Maybe he will take you away. How can you tell?"

"How many children have you?"

"Ten," he said, continuing his cutting.

"There! What did I tell you!" the woman cried despairingly. "He will take the children away."

"No, no, no, I only want to know how you live—"

"How we live?" The old man raised his head, turned to

his wife and then to the two men working at the machines. "He wants to know how we live! He has come from America to see how we live!"

He chuckled as if it were very funny, a chuckle that was abruptly broken by a fit of coughing.

"There!" the woman cried in agony. "See! Now he sees that you are not well and will take you away and then how will we live?"

"He wants to know how we live!" the old man repeated gasping for breath from the fit of coughing.

"You see how we live," said a voice from the whirring machines.

"How can all of you sleep in these two rooms?"

"On one another," said the voice from the machines. "On one another and on the floor covered up by the pants we are making when there are not enough rags to cover ourselves."

"How many hours a day do you work?"

"Eighteen," said the voice from the machine.

"And what do you earn for a full day's work?"

"When we have work, maybe a zloty, maybe a zloty and a half" (20 to 30 cents).

The terrified woman who had been quiet for a few moments interrupted shrilly:

"Don't talk to him! Why did he come here? There are other houses where they work eighteen hours a day and make a zloty. And in what house are they not coughing up their lungs? Why did he choose us? What misfortune has come to us! Don't talk to him!"

"Be quiet," a voice from the machines said. "He is not come to bring misfortune. He is come to see how we live."

"He wants to see how we live? Well, he has seen—"

The door opened and a squat figure in baggy pants and a dirty, torn shirt, open at the throat, came in. He had a dirty rag wound around his neck for a scarf and it seemed to emphasize his sunken cheeks and the head almost swamped



by a huge cap with a cracked brim. He was Moisha Bierbaum who lived in a street also named after a Polish liberator—Pilsudski Street, No. 20, and as I talked with him I realized that I was not growing hard of hearing, but that he was toothless and had a disease of the throat that made his voice unusually faint.

“Go with him and see how they live,” said the woman who was by now almost hysterical because I did not go, so I left her in peace and went with Moisha Bierbaum through the still deserted streets of the dead city. We climbed worn and broken stairs in a two-story building and entered a low-ceilinged room where two boys of not more than seventeen or eighteen sat at Singer sewing machines. There was a wood-burning stove just big enough to heat a small kettle of water in the center of the room, a long table at which Moisha himself worked and another table near the sewing machines where two pasty-faced children worked on boys’ pants piled high before them. One of the children, a little barefooted girl with red-rimmed watery eyes, had a rag around her throat. She raised her head to glance at me for a moment and then bent it low again to her work.

“How old are you?” I asked.

“Seven,” she said in a faint, husky voice.

“And you?” I asked the child standing on a wooden stool because he was not big enough to reach the table at which he worked.

“Nine,” said the boy.

“But he is the size of a four- or five-year-old child?” I said to the father, while the mother stared at me with a frightened and helpless air.

“He cannot grow up,” said Moisha Bierbaum toothlessly. “Something is the matter with him and he just doesn’t grow up and we can’t take him to a doctor.”

“Haven’t you ever found out what’s the matter with him?”

“Ah!” he exclaimed, cutting rapidly, “I have worse woes than that. I have a boy who is fifteen and he is not bigger

than this little one. He is crippled. He cannot walk and today, because he coughed so much, I let him go outside. Otherwise he is working with us."

"How many hours a day do you work?"

"Everybody in Brzeziny works eighteen hours a day—when there is work. If we don't work somebody else will get it."

"What time do you get up?"

"At four and by five we are at work and we eat while we work for we do not dare to stop."

"But it is dark—?"

"We use a candle. And that, too, costs money—to burn candles during the long winter months and we have to pay for the cotton for the sewing machines—"

"What do you earn when you work eighteen hours?"

"Eighty groschen (16 cents). Sometimes we earn a zloty and sometimes even a zloty and a half. I have not paid rent for five years," he volunteered.

"What does the landlord say?"

"He has threatened to throw me out and now he tells me this is the last year he will let me live here. But how can I pay rent when we have nothing to eat and my children are crippled and one died from the lungs and the others don't grow up?—"

The words issued from him in a rush, tumbling over one another as they came from his toothless gums.

"But if you are so poor how did you get enough money to buy these two machines?"

"Ah," he said, "they are my dowry. I got two machines for marrying my wife so we can both work."

"How do you manage to live?"

"We eat bread and drink water."

Moisha Bierbaum cut cloth rapidly, the children bent low over their work, the Singer sewing machines whirred and the mother, her hands clasped nervously, stood rooted to the

spot where she had been standing when I first entered, a tragic picture of dejection and misery.

"Well," I said finally, "what is to be done about these things?"

"There is nothing to be done," Moisha said slowly. "So we sit at the machines until we die. Many have died—just sitting at the machines. Two weeks ago, one died so—sitting at the machine and his wife lost three days' work because she had to pay to clean the pants he spoiled with the blood from his lungs. He had tried to spit out mouthfuls of blood, but he was too weak, sitting there at the machine, and it fell on the pants and spoiled them."

"Aren't you organized here? Didn't anybody ever try to organize you?"

Everybody began to talk at once. The boys at the machines and the wife and Moisha Bierbaum. Yes, they had been organized, but the organizers had sold them out.

"Then why don't you organize yourselves if you can't trust the professional organizers?"

"It cannot be done," said Moisha Bierbaum. "A union is no good when everybody is hungry. We have had strikes here. Everybody agreed to stop work but here a man needed milk because of his lungs and where was he to get the milk if he didn't work? And there a child was sick and needed bread and where were they to get bread if they did not work? And so it is, woe is us and woe to our people! In the early morning somebody would smuggle in some work and then somebody else heard that they were working and they, too, got work. The people here cannot go on strike. They are too hungry."

"Haven't you any leaders at all?"

"Can the blind lead the blind?" he asked, waving his shears.

"You are Jews. You have a synagogue?"

"Of course," he said with surprise.

"And isn't the rabbi a leader?"

"Ah, the rabbi!" everybody began with a note of disgust. "He eats well. He doesn't care about us. When we give birth to a son and must have him circumcised the rabbi says 'Give me four zloty and if you do not give me four zloty then I will not circumcise him.' And how can we let our sons grow up without being circumcised? For this boy here"—he stopped work and ran over quickly to the little boy standing on a stool—"she sold her golden wedding ring to have him circumcised. Where can we get four zloty?"

"Then what have you got a synagogue for?"

"To pray in," said Moisha Bierbaum.

"And what do you pray for?"

The lips over his toothless gums quivered.

"For the end to come quickly by God's will," he said slowly.

When I returned to Warsaw a Polish diplomat invited me to tea in the Hotel Europejski's cheerful and richly-upholstered café where the capital's "best people" gather.

Here at little glass-topped tables sit the men who run Poland and the women who wear their jewels. Here they come almost every day to drink a coffee or liqueur, read the papers and discuss world affairs. Wherever you look are beautiful women expensively perfumed; diamond bracelets and gold earrings flash as they turn their graceful heads or raise their lovely arms; and over all is the buzz of cultured voices and the soft sound of laughter. And sitting in this atmosphere my host talked with me long and earnestly. Poland was poor, so distressingly poor—

I told him of what I had seen in Brzeziny.

"Shocking," he said when I finished. "Yes; I know. It is as I told you. Poland is terribly poor."

"What is Poland—these people—doing?" I nodded toward those about us.

"Most of them know only vaguely that conditions are so

bad. The Government is trying to raise farm produce prices so as to increase the country's purchasing power."

He talked to me as diplomats talk—suavely, culturedly, saying nothing except that Poland was poor, very poor.

I left him and went wandering to the great market at Hale Mirowskie, where the people come to buy from little traders, those who can afford only a little stall or, unable to afford even that, stand about on the curb so closely together that they form a solid line of humanity. There they stand from early morning until late at night and here the people of Warsaw come to buy and save a groschen or two on store prices. As I wandered from stall to stall men and women, in evil-smelling leather or woolen coats and high boots crusted with mud, cried their wares. One old woman stood at one of the street corners clutching seven thin radishes in her hand. It was obviously all she had to sell and as I passed she held them out, calling: "*Prosha pana.*"

She was very old and her gray head was covered with a heavy home-knitted shawl, the corners of which were tied around her neck like a scarf, and the wrinkles in her face were so thick that they almost hid her eyes, deep sunken and with that washed-out appearance peculiar to old age.

"I don't want any radishes," I said, shaking my head.

She smiled a friendly little smile.

"But they are good radishes," she protested, holding them toward me. "And only five groschen for one."

"I am not buying radishes," I explained, "I just wanted to see how you live and work in this market."

"I was not always like this," she said quickly. "Once when I was young I was a servant girl in a grand house. Then I was happy and had a place to sleep in all my own and all I wanted to eat." She looked at her radishes and smiled a little wistfully. "But that was long ago. I married a man and so I lost my nice place to live."

"And your husband? You are still with him?"

"No. He is dead. But I have two daughters. One is in

America and the other is in Lodz but I never hear from either of them. I do not know if they are living or dead."

"Then whom do you live with?"

"I have a son. But he is not working. He cannot find work—"

"Do you live in Warsaw?"

"No," she shook her head, "I live seven miles from Warsaw in a little village."

"How did you get here?"

"I walked, of course," she said. "At two o'clock this morning I got up and with my radishes walked to Warsaw because everybody comes to buy here on Tuesdays and Fridays. These are the big market days and I had to be here at five o'clock. It takes me longer," she added apologetically, "because I am old now and cannot walk so well."

"But it snowed and rained last night—"

"Yes. It snowed and then it turned to rain. Just before I got to Warsaw it turned to rain and the roads were very muddy and it was hard walking."

"And you stay here how long?"

"All day until it gets dark and then I walk back to my village."

"How much do you make after a day's work like that?"

"Sometimes a zloty and fifty groschen and sometimes two zloty and sometimes not even fifty groschen."

"And on that you have to live half the week?"

"Me and my son. He is ill now and cannot get up from bed or he would be helping me," she added quickly.

"When you have so little, what do you eat?" I asked.

"Bread and potatoes. What else is there to eat? Potatoes are very cheap but the bread is dear. Sometimes if I make only fifty or sixty groschen after all day here I buy only potatoes and we have them. But if I am lucky and make a zloty, then we can have bread too."

I had been taking her time which she might have used to

sell her radishes and I gave her a zloty. She offered me the seven radishes she held in her hand.

"No, no," I said. "I have taken up your time so you keep this zloty."

"The whole zloty!" she exclaimed, holding it in her hand and looking at it with unbelieving eyes.

"Yes, of course. You keep it. Put it away. I guess you can use it. Life is pretty hard, isn't it?"

And suddenly those old eyes filled with tears and she began to cry.

"*Ai, pana, pana,*" she sobbed, "no one knows how hard our life is."

Several other old women and men were attracted by her soft crying and crowded round us.

"What is the use of crying?" said another old woman solicitously. "Life is hard. Life is always hard for the poor."

"Yes, but I cannot help it. He gave me a zloty and suddenly I began to cry," she explained, wiping her eyes with the dirty old shawl and trying to smile again.

"A zloty!" exclaimed the other old woman, equally bundled up and equally wrinkled. "For what?"

"I do not know. For telling him how I live."

"For the pleasure of a story!" the second old woman gasped. "I know many stories—"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised," I smiled, "but you, too, are poor, are you not?"

"*Ai,* so poor that no one knows," she said, forgetting her desire to tell stories for a zloty.

"And you do not make much here in the market?"

"Today I have sold much," she said cheerfully. "I have sold almost all the vegetables I brought with me but I did not have so far to go as she, for I live on the outskirts of Warsaw. It only takes me an hour to come here."

"And if you make so little, then how can you afford to spend money on vodka, for I can smell your breath?" I said gently.

"*Ai!*" she laughed, shaking her head. "Yes, it is true I have had vodka. But I am old. I am sixty-eight years old and when I got up at three o'clock this morning it was so cold. And I had to walk to Warsaw and to the market and my old bones were chilled through and through, and it was snowing and raining and I was wet, so as soon as I had sold some vegetables I bought a drink of vodka early this morning—just to warm these old bones."

She paused and shook her head back and forth in sympathy for herself.

"And when I saw that God was good to me today and that I had sold almost all my vegetables and because I had gotten cold standing here all these hours in the frost and mud—it is very cold when you stand in one place, especially for the feet—I took more drinks of vodka. What, then, should I do? Otherwise I would freeze, for these old bones cannot stand as much as younger ones. But you want to hear stories. Now in my village—"

"Not those kind of stories," I said. "But, here is a zloty for you. Buy yourself some more vodka. I think you are entitled to it."

She took it eagerly.

"Only tell me one thing," I asked, "if everything is so bad and sometimes you have nothing to eat, what is to be done?"

"What's to be done? Nothing," she said with an air of surprise. "What can be done? We live, we hunger and then we close our eyes."

"*Ai,*" said the woman who had cried and who had now recovered her composure, "there is nothing to be done. There have always been poor people. There must always be poor people until the end of time."

I left the old woman and returned to the hotel where I had an appointment with a famous Polish journalist who wanted to take me to a café called the Institute of Arts Propaganda, across Marshal Pilsudski Square from my hotel. This is where the Polish intellectuals congregate; here, in-



stead of seeing business men and diplomats and army officers, you see the poets and the novelists, the actors and the journalists—all of them well-dressed, nails daintily manicured, and no mud from the markets on their polished shoes.

"Have you read this book by the French woman, oh, I can't think of her name—it is called, 'Oh, my Yid,' or something like that. It's a fascinating book, the story of a Christian woman who flirted with a Jew she met in a restaurant and became his mistress. They married finally—"

"There was an answering book written called, 'Oh, my Christian,'" said one charming lady raising a dainty demitasse with her delicate fingers.

Through the large plate-glass windows of the café I could see, across Marshal Pilsudski Square, businessmen and diplomats with their wives or mistresses getting out of luxurious cars to enter the Café Europejski and I kept thinking of what a worker had said to me in Crakow.

"The hunger is great," he said, "and when people are hungry they become like wolves and they show their teeth."

"When you show your teeth blood will be spilled," I had said.

"Yes, blood will be spilled," he had returned slowly. "Much blood; but then will come justice. And when we start getting justice for ourselves it will be as terrible as our hurt is terrible today. We will not spare as we are not spared."

Suddenly I became aware that the group I was with was laughing. They had asked me some question three times and I had not heard it.

"You were lost in thought!" a beautiful lady said accusingly. "Now you must tell us what it was!"

"Oh it's nothing," I smiled. "Just an impossible fantastic story I heard somewhere—"

"Tell us about it!" they insisted.

"It's about a great queen and gallant courtiers and beautiful ladies in waiting who ate and laughed and danced, in-

different to the great hunger about them. And one day the hungry ones rose in fury and cut the queen's head off and the heads of the courtiers and the beautiful ladies in waiting, and when they were dying they probably never knew why—

“It's just a fantastic, impossible story I heard somewhere—”

## THUNDER FROM THE LOWER DEPTHS

IN THE THIRD-CLASS COMPARTMENT on the train from Lemberg to Warsaw there was a policeman with his wrist manacled to the wrist of a thin man in his early thirties with beady but bright and cheerful eyes. I assumed the prisoner was a thief, for it is quite common for policemen, their wrists manacled to those of their prisoners, to be seen walking Polish streets. A woman with a kindly, sympathetic face, a rather cocky self-assured man, my translator and I occupied the rest of the compartment.

All of us stared uncomfortably out of the window, trying to keep from looking at the manacles or meeting the prisoner's eyes, as the train rattled on past peasant villages dotting the monotonously level land now white with the winter's frost. No one spoke and the silence became more embarrassing than if we had talked. Suddenly the prisoner announced cheerfully.

"I'm on my way to Koronova to do five years."

The policeman looked stolidly at him and shifted to a more comfortable position on the wooden seat, securing a firmer hold on his prisoner by a twist of the wrist. The woman's eyes filled with pity and the short cocky man smiled a little contemptuously with a look that said it was a good thing the police got him; that now there would be one thief less in a land where thieves are plentiful.

"I had been doing two years in Lemberg for stealing but they knocked off six months for good behavior and let me

out on parole," the thief volunteered pleasantly when no one said anything after his announcement.

My companion was translating what he said in a low voice and the thief apparently thought he was commenting about him, for he turned abruptly upon me with a note of harshness in his hitherto cheerful voice:

"You are well dressed, eh? Then why are you riding third class, tell me that!"

Before my translator could tell me what he said the thief continued angrily:

"I am not good enough to be spoken to, eh? But I have been spoken to by teachers—the best of them! By professors and scholars and men who know more than all of you will ever know!"

He made a quick motion with his hands and the manacled one fell back.

The cocky man with the contemptuous smile now laughed openly.

"I suppose they invited you to their house for tea?" he asked sarcastically.

"I lived with them!" the thief exclaimed. "In Lemberg prison!"

"Fine people," the man commented dryly, "to be in prison."

"They were not in prison for stealing," the thief said quickly. "They are not like me. They would not take a groschen from anybody. They are good men, but very unfortunate. They were political prisoners."

"Oh," said the man. "Communists, eh? They—"

"Don't you say a word against them!" the thief interrupted harshly. "They are better than you and me."

"You got out on parole and now you are on your way to do five years in Koronova. You learned a lot from the Communists!"

The prisoner nodded his head and smiled cheerfully. He

had returned to his good humor now that people talked with him.

"Well," he said apologetically, "there was a chance for a piece of business—"

Everybody laughed. Even the stolid policeman.

"And now I got five years! I have always been very unfortunate. Even when I was in Lemberg and we started a hunger strike because they were beating us I was the one who got the biggest beating!"

"The Communists—" the man began tauntingly.

"I will not hear a word against them," the thief interrupted sharply. "I can tell you do not like them and I will not hear a word against them! They are not like us. When we thieves and robbers went on a hunger strike against the rotten food and the way we were being beaten, the Communists also went on a hunger strike—just to show their sympathy for us! Tell me, who would do that for a thief? Instead of spitting on us they used to tell us about the world and the history of the world. They used to tell us more than I ever learned in school—"

The woman nodded her head sympathetically.

"I'm on my way to do five years in Koronova," he continued, turning to her, "to do five years at hard labor. Eh! That's nothing. I do not care. I like to work."

"You'll get a chance to like it," said the man dryly.

"Tell me this," the thief turned upon him. "They give me five years to do hard work. Why did they not give me work when I was free? Tell me that!"

The man stared at him without answering.

"When I was young I got four zloty a week for working and I was hungry, so I began to steal—" the thief continued thoughtfully. "And now that I have grown up I steal because they will not give you work. They give you work only when you steal!"

He shook his head and laughed as if the absurdity of it was terribly funny.

"I wish I were on my way to do five years for doing what the Communists did—to make speeches and organize the workers—instead of stealing," he volunteered. When no one answered him, he shrugged his shoulders and added regretfully, "But I am a dark man and I do not know enough; but they are good men, those Communists."

The policeman, who had not opened his mouth, let the prisoner talk. As the train entered the Warsaw station, the thief laughed cheerfully.

"Change for a five-year ride," he called loudly. He bowed with exaggerated deference to the man who had aroused his ire. "Good day to you, sir," he said, holding his left hand to his heart.

The policeman, whose stolid expression had not changed during the entire ride, now turned to his prisoner.

"We shall have to walk through the streets," he said. "I do not want to shame you by having these handcuffs on your wrist. If you will give me your word not to try to escape I will take them off."

The thief looked at him in astonishment.

"You will take my word—a thief's word?"

"If you give it," said the policeman solemnly.

"I give it!" said the thief. "See, you"—he turned upon the cocky man—"follow us and see whether a thief can keep his word! When you talk to me like that," he said, turning to the policeman, "I would walk all the way to Koronova without a guard and appear at the prison walls. That's the way to talk to a thief!" he said loudly, turning again to the man who had irritated him. "Human, this policeman—almost like a Communist!"

I stood on the platform watching the policeman and his prisoner stroll away like two old friends, and I understood a little more of the growth of Communist sympathy in that poverty-ridden and starving land. More significant than the thief's defense of Communists because they were "good men and human" was the policeman's attitude. Wherever I

wandered in Poland, among industrial workers and peasants, I found a growing sympathy for radicals. Everywhere the people are restless and unhappy and the soil for the planting of radical seeds is rich.

Ignorant and illiterate peasants who form the overwhelming majority of the population have reached the stage where they would welcome almost any change from the conditions under which they are now living. Once, like all small farmers, they had dreamed of acquiring a little more land and possibly a little wealth; once, those who worked for landowners had dreamed of acquiring a bit of land of their own and being independent; once, these farmers and peasants, because of their dreams, had been the backbone of conservatism, but today these dreams are gone. After years of ever-deepening poverty, misery and hunger they had stopped dreaming of great things like owning a small parcel of land and a couple of horses and cows. Today they dream only of food.

Millions of these hard-working peasants who till the soil and grow the wheat do not understand what happened. They know only that they have very little to eat, that they lack even the few groschen required to buy the most essential things, and that the Government is trying to take in taxes what few groschen they do scrape together. Some are bitter and some find escape in a Slavic fatalism like the simple peasant with whom I talked in the "pacification area" in the Polish Ukraine.

My translator and I had been rocking and bumping in a long wooden wagon over the frozen roads while an icy wind, sweeping across the level plains, had us numb with the cold.

My companion turned his blue face toward me and asked faintly, with a pathetic note:

"Do all journalists have to do this?"

I was so numb that I think I had passed the stage of feeling anything, but his face, and the tone with which he asked

the question, made me break into a laugh. I told the driver to halt at the nearest house of the nearest village and ask for shelter. When we finally knocked at a straw-thatched peasant's *izba* (hut) a deep, heavy voice bade us enter.

The peasant was alone. Where his wife and children were on that cold day I never did find out. We found him sitting at a wooden table near a small, tightly closed window, carefully slicing matches with a short but very sharp knife. He was a little startled at the appearance of two strangers and moved quickly in front of the table as if to shield the matches scattered on it. After we had explained why we sought shelter I urged him to return to his work, for we did not want to disturb him.

He laughed shyly, showing worn, yellow teeth almost lost behind a stubble of reddish beard and said he was cutting matches—like this. He illustrated by splitting a match in half, including the head, and then splitting each half in the same way, thus making four matches of thin wood and still thinner heads.

"We have learned how to fool the Government," he explained with a pleased air. "They are sucking the last drop of blood from us, they are fooling us all the time so we have learned how to fool them!"

"By splitting matches?"

"Matches are ten groschen a box—and who but the richest have ten groschen? The Government owns the match factories and they have to pay big salaries to the directors, don't they? That's what we hear. So they charge us high prices. We stopped using matches and struck fire from stone—everybody did, for nobody could afford to buy matches. And when the Government saw that nobody was buying matches they told the police to tell us that it was against the law to strike fire from stone and that we would be sent to prison if they caught us doing it."

He looked at me, shrugged his shoulders and chuckled.

"But we do it anyway!" he added with a sly wink.



He seemed to derive a great deal of delight from the knowledge that despite the prohibition against striking fire from stone many were fooling the Government.

"Why," he said suddenly, with a faint touch of indignation, "there used to be fifty-two matches in a box but now the Government gives only thirty-eight; sometimes they make a mistake and we find forty-two matches."

"Suppose you are too poor to buy even one box of matches and must strike fire from stone to keep warm, how can the Government catch you?"

"They can't," he chuckled. "They just try to frighten us—like we were children," he added contemptuously. "They say if we are caught striking fire with stones we will be made to pay from two hundred to a thousand zloty or go to prison from six weeks to six months."

He shook his head and laughed heartily.

"That only shows that they are trying to frighten us—like we were children. Eh! There isn't a thousand zloty in the whole village!"

He spat on the hard brown earth which was the floor and added, "Besides, they cannot send a whole village to prison, for who then would till the soil?"

We talked about his extreme poverty and what he thought of the new Government. He tried to explain that it was "the independence of Poland" that ruined the peasants. It was clear that it was a phrase he had heard somewhere and had no idea what it meant but he felt that somehow, since Poland became independent, things have got increasingly worse. He liked to talk politics and after I had listened a while and saw that he had no idea of what he was talking about, though he was very intense in damning the Government, I interrupted to ask him the name of the president of Poland.

He looked embarrassed, thought long and carefully, the while scratching his head and beard methodically, and finally said as if speaking to himself: "Pilsudski is dead—"

"That's right," I said encouragingly.

He scratched himself a little more and then shrugged his shoulders.

"The devil take them!" he exploded, grinning and shaking his head. "I do not know. I have heard the name. But what does it matter? No matter who is president they take everything away from us!"

He looked brightly at me and grinned broadly.

"Look," he said, touching my arm, "there's no sense to anything in this world any more. Look at me. All spring and summer and fall I work very hard to raise wheat. These fields, blessed by God, are filled with good rich wheat. I plant it and I watch it with the care of a mother; and in the fall I harvest it. Wheat—oh, so much wheat! Yet when winter comes I have no bread to eat."

He shrugged his shoulders and peered into my eyes with an amused air.

"Now is that not mad? Eh! The devil take it!" he exclaimed, spitting disgustedly at his inability to understand such insanity. He was partly toothless and some of the spit slithered down his stubbly chin.

"What happened to the wheat?"

"It was sold to make bread."

"And what did you get out of it—you who grew it?"

"The landowner owes me my wages!"

"You have not been paid?"

"Eh!" he grinned, spitting again. "*Chorte!* we are never paid!"

"Then why do you work?"

"Who will grow the wheat if I don't work? The wheat must be grown."

"But if you don't get paid?"

"Then he owes me the money."

"But he never pays you—"

"That is right."

"Then why work?"

"What else will I do? Here is the land and in the spring I must plant it—"

"But you don't get paid for it—"

"That is right."

"Then how do you live?"

"Oh, on a little potatoes and bread."

"Where do you get them?"

"The landlord gives me a little."

"Then he does pay you something?"

"Of course! How then would I eat? But he owes me more than he pays."

"Ah," I said, and he nodded his head, pleased that he had finally got the idea across.

"Very good. Now tell me, if you work all year growing wheat and in the winter you haven't got bread from that wheat, what happened to it?"

"It was sold," he said, like a child repeating a catechism.

"And who got the money for it?"

"The landowner."

"Then why didn't he give you what he owed you?"

"Because he says they owe him, too."

"And what are you doing about all this?"

"What can I do? I eat when I have and when I haven't I'm hungry."

"Does the landowner eat?"

"M-m-m-m-m," he said with a broad grin and a shake of his head. "Of course he eats! He has a very fine palace and servants and even oranges! Once, when I was there, I saw the oranges, great big yellow ones."

"And he is eating on the money he owes you?"

"That is what I cannot understand! But," he added, "it has always been so. There is nothing that can be done. But it is mad just the same, isn't it?"

Statistics are usually boring but a few percentages often present a bird's-eye view of conditions in a country. When the consumption of essential products, like salt, drops tre-

mendously, it is a good indication of a people's poverty. Poland has its own salt mines and refineries and exports great quantities. In 1930, when the effect of the world crisis was first felt, the consumption of salt, absolutely essential in a diet, was 15.2 kilograms per capita. Today (1936) it is 8.2 or almost half of what it had been.

The standard of living in Poland is now incredibly low. For years the Government refused to face it. By suppressing news of the people's restlessness and juggling its official figures, it thought it would get along somehow until the world got out of the crisis and pulled Poland along with it; but conditions are now so grave that even the Government cannot close its eyes to them any longer. There are now almost six million more people living on the land than are necessary to cultivate it under present working conditions. Industry cannot absorb this surplus and agriculture cannot feed it under the present distribution system. The peasants (and the Polish population is 68 per cent agrarian) have no money with which to buy; Polish products are not absorbed locally and the country's economic life is pretty much at a standstill.

My good-natured host did not understand what was happening in his country. He knew only that he was very badly off. In the course of our conversation I asked what he wanted, since he was so patently dissatisfied.

I thought that maybe he would want a new Government, ownership of the land, property, cattle—but the simple peasant had long passed those desires. What he wanted, after he puzzled over it, told me more than anything he had said of the poverty of the land.

"If I could have salt for my potatoes—" he said hesitantly. "It is so hard to eat potatoes without salt."

I had seen the people's poverty but it had never occurred to me that they were at a stage at which, when asked what they most wanted, the only thing they could think of was a little salt for their potatoes. It was not until after I left him

and wandered around in the "pacification area" that I found this state of poverty quite common.

When I had somewhat recovered from the shock of his request I asked:

"And what else would you like?"

"Ah"—he shook his head and smiled at the impossibility of getting his great desire—"it is too much to want in these black days—"

"Tell me. I would like to know."

"It is too much"—he began again.

"Maybe; but tell me."

"Well, if I could have a little sugar I could have sugar in my tea on Sundays. I have not had sugar for my tea for almost a year."

"But these are trifles—"

"Salt in potatoes is no trifle," he returned sadly. "They have no taste without it, especially when you eat them every day."

"But have you no desire for work that will bring you in enough money to buy salt and sugar?"

"Work? Ah!" He waved his hand as if he had forgotten. "There is no work in all the land—for anyone. I have work, but from all my work I do not get enough to buy salt."

"Why are you so poor?" I asked, as I had asked so many others. "Whose fault is it that you workers who mine the salt have none for your potatoes, you who grow beets for sugar have no sugar for your tea, you who grow wheat have no bread?" And these simple people whose lives had been spent on the rich and fertile Polish soil shrugged their shoulders. "We do not know," they say. "We do not understand these things. We are a dark and ignorant people."

"Why are you hungry?"

He scratched his head and shrugged his shoulders. "It is so all over the world. We hear there is a great hunger everywhere. In America, do you not have hunger?"

"Yes, we have hunger in America," I admitted.

"See; it is the same everywhere. Even in America, where everybody is rich and they have machines to plow the earth in the spring, there is hunger.

"Has the harvest been bad in America?" he added sympathetically.

"No; we have had very good harvests. We are now destroying part of every harvest."

"Destroying the harvest when there is hunger in the land?" he asked, startled.

"Yes," I smiled. "That is to keep up the prices."

He looked at me and then at my translator as if I were kidding him. Finally he shook his head slowly.

"I do not understand it. I am an ignorant man."

"Many others do not understand it," I said, "but tell me: you are very poor and very hungry. You do not have even salt. What can you do about it?"

"Do? What can I do? It has always been so."

"What would you like to see happen in Poland to make things better?"

"I do not know," he said slowly, "but I would like food."

"Yes, but how can you get it?"

"I do not know. I do not understand it at all. Perhaps there are people who understand these things—learned men; but I do not understand them."

"But surely, at some time or other you must have thought of what you would like to see happen to change conditions and end your hunger?"

He stood up from where he had been sitting. For the first time his eyes flashed.

"Let anything happen! Only that our misery end! We cannot continue like this"—the words came from him in a swift flow—"We are hungry. We are cold. We work and we have nothing, not even corn for our children or hay for our horses. Yes! Let anything happen only that this shall not continue!"

"What do you mean by 'anything'?"

"Let a flood come and drown us all! Let the earth shake and shiver and destroy—so that we will not have this hunger!"

My long questioning and insistence upon what he wanted to see happen had apparently broken the reserve with which he had been talking; or else, the need of thinking of what he wanted and the inability to express his desires other than in the elimination of his hunger, had excited him and there was a despairing passion in his cry for an earthquake, a flood—anything that would change the misery in which he lived.

"A revolution?"

He threw up his hands helplessly.

"We would be shot down."

"But you said you wanted anything—anything to escape from these conditions."

"Yes," he said cautiously, "but I do not want to be shot, to be killed. If everybody made a revolution—that would be good. But we have had a revolution and all we got from it was a greater hunger. No, no, revolution does not help. I do not know what will help. Only, something must be done because we cannot go on like this."

This desire for "something to happen—anything"—is widespread and there is a whole vast area in Poland extending from 100 to 200 miles from the Russian border and running about 1,000 miles from the northern frontier of Czechoslovakia to the southern frontiers of Lithuania and Latvia where the "anything" is being translated into action with organization behind it. This is the "pacification area," so named because Poland is trying to "pacify" the peasants. How the peasants feel and how they are being "pacified" is not being made public by the Government or by the Polish press nor does the iron censorship permit news of it to seep out if it can be stopped.

"Pacification" first began in 1931 in the region immediately north of the Carpathian-Russ section of Czechoslovakia

and has become increasingly brutal and ruthless. The men and women, both radical and conservative, who told me what is being done to the peasants there were as frightened as those who speak in Italy or Germany, for in Poland the authorities need only to suspect that you talked of these matters for you to find yourself on the way, without a trial, to the concentration camp at Bereza Kartuska.

Communist propagandists had made considerable inroads among the starving peasants in this region. Not far away was the Soviet Union where the peasants had been miserable but now news was seeping across the frontier that Russian peasants were eating again, that they had salt for their potatoes, that they ate meat, that they had bread, that things were getting better while in Poland life for the peasants was steadily growing worse. Peasants turned their eyes eastward where Soviet soil now seemed to offer a haven of plenty. Polish Communists were not slow in capitalizing on the difference in conditions between peasants in both countries and a strong Communist sentiment developed and this resulted in the effort to "pacify" the region.

Battalions of soldiers swarmed on villages seeking the agitators, but the peasants refused to surrender them and in desperate efforts to root out the "Reds" the officials introduced the custom of "common responsibility." This procedure is quite simple. Soldiers surround a village where a Communist is suspected of being active and line up all village residents. The officers then announce that the village is "commonly responsible" for the existence of a Communist in its midst and unless he is surrendered within one hour every fifth person, man, woman or child above fourteen, chosen at random, will be placed under arrest, beaten severely and then imprisoned on suspicion of being themselves Communists.

On my way to the village of Kolki in the Volhynia district, where I had heard children had been "pacified" for asking for free schools, I talked with peasants who told me



many things with anxious pleas not to tell that they had talked with me, pleas as anxious as any I encountered in Italy or Germany. Even Government officials in Warsaw, sick of the occurrences in the "pacification area," talked. And I heard tales like the one when the military swept upon and surrounded the little village of Bobrka where a Communist was active. The threat of "common responsibility" was made and either because the peasants were terrified or because there was an informer in their midst the Communist was found and taken away to prison "and the *izba* where he had lived was burned to the ground and over the cold ashes plows were drawn and the land plowed so that no one would ever know even the ground where a Communist had lived."

There were many such tales as I went wandering around the Volhynia district, stopping at *izbas* that sagged from the weight of their snow-covered straw-thatched roofs and then I came to Kolki where an old and bearded peasant told me of what happened on May Day of 1935.

The new Polish Constitution had guaranteed free schools and there had been joy in the hearts of the "dark people." The illiterate and hungry peasants had heard that the educated did not hunger and they wanted to see their children educated so they "would not hunger as we are hungering." When no schools were built Communist agitators urged the peasants to demand them and at first shyly and with many apologies, and then a little irritably they asked why the schools were not being built for the children and the authorities had no answer. On May Day of 1935 a twenty-two year old Communist, the local school-teacher, organized the peasants from the neighboring farms and led a May-Day march on the village. They carried a red banner inscribed with the words "Give Us Schools for Our Children" and well over a thousand peasants, ancient Poles whose ancestors had tilled the soil for generations, their wives, younger folk and children of school age, marched upon the village

of Kolki. There was a picnicky air about it. The long winter was over. May and the sun and warmth were here and to most of the gay and laughing line it was a great big party to be enjoyed, a sort of communal celebration. The young teacher led the procession and as they approached the long, level road leading to the village they met a group of policemen obviously on their way to intercept them.

"Where are you going?" the police demanded.

"To the village to ask for free schools," the teacher responded gaily.

"Our children will not be as dark and ignorant as we," said several peasants crowding around the police.

"You cannot march on the village," said the police.

"But the new Constitution had guaranteed us free schools," the teacher protested.

"You will have to disperse," said the police. "You cannot march on Kolki."

"But all that these peasants and children want is to ask for the free schools the Constitution has guaranteed them," the girl protested.

The police officer shook his head angrily and spread out his arms to signify that the road was barred. The girl turned to the peasants and waving the red banner with the words "Give Us Schools for Our Children" called, "We have the right to march to Kolki and we are marching."

The policeman slapped her and in a few moments the gay and happy peasants and their wives had so set upon the police, kicking and cuffing them, that they beat a hasty retreat.

"Ah," sighed the old peasant, "we laughed—even the children laughed when we saw them running back to Kolki; and the teacher laughed and said that that showed what we could do when we were determined that a few policemen could not stop us."

They marched on again, singing the *Internationale*, laughing and joking about how the police had run away.

And then they saw a detachment of soldiers in the distance and an old peasant, wise in the ways of the military, called a halt.

"They are there to stop us from going to Kolki," he said. "They will threaten us."

"We are not children to be frightened," said another. "I have been a soldier and I am not frightened so easily."

They placed the children in the front line so that the soldiers could see they were on a peaceful mission, placed them right behind the teacher who was leading them and carrying the red banner asking that the children not be allowed to grow up in the darkness of their elders.

The officer in command of the soldiers shouted to them to stop. The teacher's face flushed as red as the banner she carried and she turned to the peasants behind her.

"Let us sing!" she called loudly. "All together—as we go to demand the end of darkness for our children!"

She waved the red banner and her voice came strong like a challenge to battle.

*"Arise! Ye prisoners of starvation—"*

The children who had learned the song joined in. Quivering peasant voices picked it up and then the voices were drowned out by a burst of machine-gun fire.

Nineteen were killed. Twelve little children who had gone to plead for free schools that they might not grow up in the darkness of their elders, the teacher, still clutching the banner even in death, and six peasants. They had been "pacified."

"We could not even bury our dead," said the old peasant, rubbing a grimy hand over his nose. "We were told that here and there they are buried, the teacher and the children. There were many wounded and when we fled we carried them to our homes."

Not a word of the massacre was published. The organ of

the Socialist party, *Robotnik*, learned of it and tried to publish an account of what had happened and the issue was promptly confiscated.

"And now?" I asked.

He stared at the floor.

"Now we remember our dead," the old peasant said quietly.

We sat silent for a while, none of us feeling much like talking after this tale.

"Some day," said the peasant slowly, "where those children died and where that teacher lies buried, blood will run like a river in the spring and it will not be the blood of peasant children."

"They will shoot you down as before," I said.

"They will shoot many of us down," he returned quietly, "but there"—he motioned to the east—"not a two days' journey by even a starving horse, are soldiers of the peasants. They are our soldiers. And they will come to help us."

## *POLAND MOUNTS THE BARRICADES*

THERE WAS A GROUP of Polish workers in front of the paper factory in Czestochowa when we walked up. My translator explained that I was an American who had come to Poland to see how the people lived and that I wanted to ask them some questions. One of the group, a middle-aged man, beamed at me good-naturedly while another said incredulously:

“He came all the way from America to talk to us?”

My translator nodded.

“Eh! They live better in America than here,” said another with a gesture intimating that there was no comparison. “Here we are starving to death. But—” and he looked at me inquiringly—“why does America care how we live?”

“Because how you live, what you think and what the people are doing will affect Poland and what happens in Poland affects Europe and what happens in Europe affects America,” I explained.

The workers looked puzzled; finally one said, “I don’t see how, but I guess you must be a learned man to understand these things and we are dark and ignorant men.”

“He came all the way from America to talk with us,” said another, scratching his neck thoughtfully, “because America wants to know what we are doing and thinking.” He shrugged his shoulders and added, “The Government here wouldn’t walk across a smooth road to find that out!”

“If they ever came to find out,” said another, cheerfully, “I’d tell them enough to be jailed!”

“What do you earn a day?” I asked one.

"I do not work all the time," he smiled.

"How many days do you work?"

"Sometimes I work two days a week. Sometimes three—if I am blessed by God. There is not much work. Most people do not have work. Is that not true?" He turned to the others for verification.

"To think he came all the way from America to learn that most people do not have work," one of them commented wonderingly.

"But when you do work, what do you earn?"

"Eh!" He spat disgustedly. "Nothing." He looked at the others again for verification and they nodded their heads in agreement.

"How much is nothing?"

"It's not enough to live on."

"I understand; but how much do you get—five zloty a day?"

"Five zloty!" he exclaimed, turning to the others with an amazed air. "Why with five zloty I would be as rich as Stefan Manowski who has a store all his own—"

"Well, how much do you make a day when you are blessed by God and have a day's work?"

"Not enough to live on," he repeated, spitting again.

"Now, is it two zloty?"

"No, no," he said pityingly, "even with two zloty we could live. No, when I make one zloty I make a lot of money—"

"That's what I'm trying to find out—"

"Nobody makes more than one zloty a day," he said with an air that said it was so apparent that I should know better than to ask so stupid a question.

The overwhelming majority of workers in Poland are unskilled and they average from eighty groschen to a maximum of four zloty a day—when they work; the skilled workers average from eighty groschen to one zloty and eighty groschen an hour; and the average for all types of

workers, including the highly skilled ones, is about eighty zloty a month (about \$20.00).

"What does it cost you to live?"

"Everything I earn, of course!"

"All right," I said, a little helplessly, "what do you pay for rent?"

"More than my hole is worth."

I tried another tack. "What do you eat?"

"Potatoes. What else can I eat when I have no money? And I am very fortunate to have potatoes—" He laughed and touched my sleeve gently. "You do not understand," he said with a great tolerance. "We have nothing else to eat."

"Don't you eat bread?"

"Of course! When we have it, but we do not have it."

"Do you ever eat meat?"

The entire group laughed. "Ah," said one, "I have not eaten meat for so long I have forgotten what it is like."

"You do not understand," the first speaker explained again. "We have no money. When I work I make a zloty—maybe. But most of the time I do not work. And from this zloty I must pay rent and buy food and clothes not only for me but for my wife and my children. So how can we eat meat?" They looked at one another as if this was obvious to anyone with eyes, yet here was a man who had come all the way from distant and fabulously rich America who didn't realize this simplest of things.

Poland, which had always been a potato-eating country, is now much more so; and a growing consumption of potatoes usually indicates increasing poverty of a country and a people. In Poland, the increased consumption of potatoes ran side by side with reductions in wages and the increase in the number of unemployed.

"Are you organized?"

"Of course," he said quickly. "If I were not organized I would now be getting twenty groschen instead of a zloty a

day! What could I do alone? If I were not in a union they would take even the potatoes away from me!"

"Has the union done much for you?"

"What can they do? It is a bad time the world over."

"Do they lead you in strikes?"

"If we start them," he grinned. "You see, they used to tell us not to be too excited, for conditions were bad everywhere—"

"So what did you do?"

"We talked among ourselves and decided that it was good to have union leaders and to be organized, but to pay no attention to them when they tell us not to get excited—"

"When things got too bad we just had to strike," one of the workers interrupted.

It was time for them to return to work and as they started to enter the factory I asked one more question:

"What do you think will happen if things don't get better?"

They shrugged their shoulders. "Who can tell? No one knows. Certainly we don't. We are ignorant men. The learned maybe know. All we know is that things are very bad for us."

So I went to men who were not "dark and ignorant," to leaders of the Government, to financiers, to the cloistered men who, sheltered from the turmoil of economic and political activities, study conditions and trends with scholarly detachment, and I found that they—

But let me tell of the conversation I had with Henryk Gruber, President of the Polish Postal Savings Bank, one of the country's largest and most influential institutions. When I went to see him, he gave me the impression of youth, vigor and intelligence, yet when I asked whether he thought Poland was coming out of the crisis and if not, why not, he gave me a long answer, the essence of which was that one of the chief reasons why Poland and the rest of the world were not out of the crisis was "the psychology of fear."



"You mean that the Polish people, who, you yourself just told me, are in a terrible state of poverty, are not buying because they are afraid to buy?"

"They are not buying because they have no money," he smiled. "I was considering the entire economic organism and its resumption of function."

"When do you think Poland will come out of the crisis?"

"That depends upon England and America. When they come out we will come out. They hold the key to world recovery."

Poland, he explained, now plans, like so many other countries in Europe, to become a self-sustaining nation to help it avoid future crises when the rest of the world is affected.

"Assuming that Poland becomes self-sustaining, that the Government succeeds in its plans to industrialize the land, how will you balance production and consumption, the maladjustment of which you agree brought on the present crisis?"

"We are not planning to balance production and consumption; but there is little to fear along that line in Poland, for the living level of our people is so low that we could produce for a long time without supplying all their needs."

"Where will they get the money to buy the things produced?"

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"We will, through a long, slow process, gradually raise the wage scale level so that they can buy."

"But that will reduce profits. Isn't it the aim of business to make profits?"

"We will figure it out somehow" he said, a little sadly.

We talked of the group now ruling Poland's thirty-three and one half million inhabitants and I asked if the picture I had formed of Poland was accurate: that a small group of between 50,000 to 100,000 people ruled the country and

that all others, peasants and workers, simply worked for them, paying tribute for the right to live.

"That is right," he smiled.

"In what period of history has any ruling class voluntarily relinquished its control—which is what you expect this group to do when you expect them to relinquish even a good measure of their profits?"

"The Government in time will level the sharp and wide distinctions between the rulers and the workers," he said hopefully.

"How?"

"We have our best minds figuring that out now. It is a long process."

"And it hasn't been figured out yet?"

"Some things we have figured out; it's a long process. It cannot be done over night. When anyone tells you he has a plan for Poland which can work, he is a charlatan."

So I learned that the financiers are in as much of a muddle as the small businessmen and the "dark and ignorant" workers outside their factory gates. Then I went to the men of learning, like Edward Lipinski, professor of economics and director of one of Poland's leading economic research institutions.

"Poland," said the scholarly professor, "is in a very acute crisis—like the rest of the world. But I believe we are beginning to see our way out of it. Business is improving a bit as it is improving in a great many countries."

"Assuming that Poland will come out of it, what plans is the country making to avoid similar crises in the future?"

He looked a bit puzzled and I explained: "If we know what made us sick it may be possible to avoid a repetition of the illness by taking certain precautions. What caused this economic illness from which we are suffering?"

"Cheap money," he said definitely. "There was so much money available at such cheap rates during the boom days that everybody borrowed and enlarged his plants. The re-

sult was that we had plants turning out much more than was necessary."

"Then the crisis was caused by too much production which consumption did not absorb?"

"No. The trouble lay in the failure to balance production and production."

"I don't understand," I said.

"For instance," he explained, "one factory, let us say, produces a vast amount of machinery. Another factory produces tools. There is no balance between the factory producing tools and the factory buying tools with the result that the tool factory, for instance, produces a great deal more than is needed and has to stop work."

"Assuming that your theory is right as to the cause of the crisis, is Poland, in its efforts to get out of it and escape future ones, now balancing production and production?"

"No," he smiled, "we do not believe in that."

"But that was the cause, wasn't it?"

"Yes, and a planned economy would be necessary to avoid it in the future, but we don't believe in that."

"All right," I laughed. "You don't believe in it. Will you tell me why?"

"Because we believe in permitting capitalism to function independently."

"Then without this planned economy to regulate production and production, as you call it, will you not again face precisely the same conditions that produced the present crisis?"

"I think so," he smiled again. "The rest of the world is doing the same. The only place where there is a planned economy is in Russia, but we cannot tell what that planned economy will result in as yet."

"Then what the rest of the world is actually doing is striving by might and main to get out of this crisis in order to get into another one?"

"I think so," he said again. "Germany will have a crisis

within another year. Italy, England, France—they are all inevitably going the way of another crisis.”

“And that means that the people will have still less to eat, earn less money, there will be more unemployed—”

“I think so,” he said with scholarly caution.

“Then what will happen?”

He stared out of the window and then back to his nice new modernistic desk.

“War. Revolution. Who knows?”

“Then the picture we have of Poland is that of a country inflicting terrific hardships upon its millions of inhabitants in an effort to get out of the crisis by a procedure which produced the present one. Isn’t that rather insane?”

“I think so,” he smiled gently, “but that is the world as it is.”

Poland has always had a low living standard, but the hunger and misery are now so great and widespread that the country is seething with far greater unrest and bitterness than the world realizes. Workers, driven desperate by starvation, are occupying factories, mills and mines while the Government suppresses news of it; gaunt, hungry peasants are marching upon village governments and are being mowed down with machine guns. Only a handful of Polish people favor the Government which is maintaining itself in power by force and a brutality, in some sections, quite similar to the Nazi brand.

Since Polish Fascism is not so complete as the Italian or German, it failed to achieve one of its chief aims: making labor unions the instrument of the governing clique and prohibiting the right to strike; and as a result, strikes have swept and are sweeping the country. The Polish Government’s figures on strikes, unemployment, wage scales and living costs are utterly unreliable. I found that in every Fascist and semi-Fascist country, official figures aren’t worth the paper they are printed on. The Polish Government

deliberately suppresses unpleasant figures and juggles others so as to present to a world to which it goes for financial credit a picture of conditions better than they actually are.

Official statistics of workers embrace only plants employing twenty or more persons. Those employing fewer are not recorded but Zygmunt Zulawski, General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress of Poland (independent unions) estimated for me that this second group "probably includes about 400,000 workers." But when we tried to figure the total number of Poland's industrial workers we were reduced to guessing. Illustrative of the unreliability of the official figures are those on unemployment. Before the world crisis, the statistics show 923,000 persons employed in industry. By 1932 (there are no figures after this date) this number dropped to 478,000 which means almost 450,000 workers added to the unemployed. The official unemployment figures show that in 1929 there were 185,000 unemployed and by 1932 there were 220,000 or an unemployed increase of about 35,000!

This sort of juggling makes it difficult to estimate accurately the effect of the crisis upon the people, but the wave of bitter strikes and the seizure of factories tell the story even better than figures.

The outstanding development of recent Polish labor history is the seizing and occupying of work premises by the workers—a strike tactic which prevents the importation of strikebreakers. Union leaders had cautioned their members not to be too aggressive because, as Zulawski put it, "the owner himself was having difficulties due to the crisis." The workers, however, were driven desperate by repeated wage-cuts which reduced them to a literal starvation point; and strikebreakers were drawn from the ranks of the unemployed. It was then that the workers took the desperate move of occupying the factories as a tactic to prevent strikebreakers from coming in.

Occupation strikes began in 1931 when 5,434 workers employed in four factories refused to leave their plants. The workers were evicted by the police after struggles in which people were hurt on both sides. From then on this strike tactic spread. The Government tried desperately to suppress the news but it spread by word of mouth and the tactic was quickly adopted by other workers. The Government is still trying to suppress such news and only the most dramatic instances, like the now world-known occupation of the Klimontow mines when the coal diggers went into the bowels of the earth and announced that they intended to starve to death in protest against their starvation wages, break through the rigid censorship. The fear lest news of these semi-revolutionary acts get out and affect Poland's credit in the world's money markets is evident when you speak to Polish officials. It's one of the things they would prefer not to discuss—especially the enthusiasm with which the workers adopted the tactic and the way it is sweeping the country.

I talked with a number of workers who had seized and occupied factories and almost all of them told me the same story that a worker in Lodz did.

"We did not know what to do," he said. "We knew there were many hungry ones waiting to take our jobs if we went on strike. We knew that there was great unemployment not only in Poland but everywhere: in Germany and in Austria, in England and France and even in America. So we suffered. In some factories where they went on strike they pleaded with the strikebreakers not to take the bread out of the mouths of wives and children and they got only beatings from the police. And then"—his eyes laughed at the recollection—"we heard that in the Peltzery factory in Czestochowa 800 workers had gone on strike and refused to leave the factory. Strikebreakers could not get in to take their jobs. The workers just sat at their benches while their wives and relatives brought them food. They slept there,

too, we heard, for seven weeks and the factory owners and the police couldn't get them out because it would have caused a great battle.

"We told our union leaders that we proposed to do that and they shrugged their shoulders like this." He illustrated it with a shrug that brought his shoulders up to his ears. "They said if other workers could do it so could we. So we occupied our factory here in Lodz. In this city alone, there have been fourteen such strikes in the last year! We have learned one thing: if we stay inside they cannot bring in strikebreakers. And if the police want to get us out they will have a good fight on their hands!"

"Weren't you worried at what might happen?"

"What could we lose?" he asked, spreading his hands out in a gesture of hopelessness. "It is better to die quickly than to die slowly of hunger."

So far as I could learn, force to dislodge occupants of seized plants was used by the Government in only one instance: during a strike in a telephone factory under Government control. The occupation was considered a move against the state. In other factories, mills and mines, the efforts by local authorities to evict the workers who had barricaded themselves in the factories they had seized created so much unrest in the community that it produced political repercussions. The sympathy of the people was invariably with the workers and the Government did not want to irritate an already desperate people by using too much force. You never can tell what workers who had already committed a semi-revolutionary act might do if pressed too hard; and the Government is none too strong and certainly not popular. So the authorities, worried by the unrest that invariably developed in a community where workers had seized a plant, brought pressure upon the owners to settle the strike before it resulted in bloody battles and created greater unrest.

When I discussed these seizures with Zulawski I told him how the occupation of the Klimontow mines was featured

on the front pages of almost all American newspapers and how much sympathy the plight of the miners aroused.

"They took the only means they knew to defend their right to live," he said. "That was an important strike but there was another one with a different issue, but equally important at the Szczescie Luizy (Happiness of Louisa) in Upper Silesia. The issue there was whether coal operators who are not making any money from their property can close their mine and let their workers starve. Few coal mines in Poland are showing a profit and the owners of the Happiness of Louisa said it wasn't worth working the mine. They wanted to destroy it because running it was not profitable. The miners saw the very means of their pitiable livelihood being destroyed because of this drive for profits and they went down in a body and occupied the mine for weeks. The owners could not destroy the mine with the miners in it; and eventually, after Government pressure, the owners agreed to continue to operate it!"

"Now, suppose the factory owner says, 'All right. You occupied my factory. Stay there.' What can the workers do? If they continue working at their jobs it will not be long before all of the available raw material in the plant is used up. To whom will they sell the finished product to get money for wages and to buy more raw materials to continue working? Bankers and business men will not extend credit to them. Workers seized factories in Italy and the owners simply let them stay there and work until all the raw material was used up. They couldn't sell the finished product; they couldn't get credit, and in the end they were licked."

"Usually employers do say that. But you must bear in mind that Poland is restless; the workers are desperate and the continued occupation of a mine, mill or factory simply throws benzine on the fire. Politically it is not good for the Government. News of such strikes spreads and the possibili-



ties are too dangerous for the Government and it has to intervene and arrange a settlement."

"Since occupying and holding the factories is really a revolutionary act, why didn't the workers keep them?"

Zulawski's eyes twinkled shrewdly.

"They tried that in Italy and got—Fascism."

"You've got Fascism here, haven't you?"

"We consider the Pilsudski Government as the one with the Fascist tendencies. The present Government comes from the same Fascist circles but is opposed to Fascist tendencies. It wants a friendly relationship between itself and the people."

"Since it wants to be friendly with the people, just what is it doing for them?"

"It's giving them new taxes," Zulawski laughed and then added seriously, "but in compensation it is reducing their rents. The Government is trying to raise agricultural prices so as to enable the peasants to buy, and at the same time is trying to cheapen industrial articles."

"Doesn't that mean wage cuts?"

"Yes, but the Government does not want to see wages cut."

"I have observed that it is one thing for a Government to reduce rents and prices and another thing to enforce it. Employers and landlords usually find a way to get around these Government decrees."

"I have no doubt they will try it here, too," he agreed quickly, "and there will probably be some big struggles over this. But we are prepared for it."

As near as I had been able to learn, what little the workers had managed to get in recent years had been gotten through their own desperation. Certain labor leaders had actually tried to restrain them. The workers themselves had inaugurated the occupation of factories. The Government had pretty much destroyed bills favorable to labor and the unions had done little about it. The workers, though or-

ganized, got wages wholly insufficient even for the very low standard of living of the Polish worker.

And now the workers, in a period when the Government is afraid of them, are being told by their leaders that the Government wants friendly relationship—this of a Government subsidizing the export of coal at less than the cost of mining while the workers who mine it cannot afford to buy it; this from a Government exporting sugar at an incredibly low price while the people who grew the beets to make the sugar cannot afford to have sugar for their tea; this from a Government subsidizing the export of salt while the people buy empty herring barrels and scrape them for the salt because they cannot afford to buy salt mined in Poland!

“What do you think will happen to the Polish worker now that you think the Government will do something for him?”

Zulawski stared thoughtfully at the notes I was making of the interview and sighed.

“We realize,” he said slowly, “that no Government today, even with good will, can solve the problem of giving the people work and food.”

“But the problem must be solved—”

“Yes, but it can be solved only by a Government representing the workers and peasants. We, the workers, must get the peasants to come with us. Only a workers’ and peasants’ Government can settle that problem.”

“Like Russia? They have a workers’ and peasants’ Government.”

“No,” he said, shaking his head slowly, “we want to achieve it by democratic means.”

“By the ballot?”

“Yes.”

“But history shows that when you really threaten the control of the ruling class and the Government which represents this class, your right to the ballot will be taken

from you. History repeated itself right here in Poland in 1935. You used to have your political parties, but when the Government saw that it would not be re-elected, it simply made your political parties illegal. Today the only candidates the people can vote for are those chosen by the Government. It was in protest against this very act of illegalizing the independent political parties that the people boycotted the 1935 elections. The Government, with all the pressure it could exert, managed to get a bare 22 per cent of the normal number of voters to cast their ballots for the dummy candidates. Obviously, then, the people are opposed to the Government, but your democratic means to change this Government has been taken from you."

"We showed that we disapproved of the Government's act," he said, somewhat lamely.

"I don't doubt that; but what happened to your democratic means of changing the Government?"

He did not answer and I asked:

"Do you think that the ruling class will ever give up power without a fight?"

"I don't want to prophesy," he said evasively. "It is a great mistake to prophesy as to how things will turn out. First we must create the power to take over the Government in a democratic fashion."

"But how," I persisted, "since the minute you get a little power you are made an illegal body?"

"First we must create the power," he repeated.

I could not tell whether he could not say more because he was, after all, in Poland where, though unions are still legal and strikes allowed, the prisons are filled with men who said less than what logic might force him to say.

"There is only one more question I should like to ask," I said as I rose to go. "Poland's population is increasing at the rate of 400,000 a year and the people have no place to go. You have more people than you know what to do with now. What will happen in another generation—assuming that

we avoid a war. The efforts to industrialize industry and agriculture mean that more people will be thrown out of work because machines will take the place of countless men and women. How will you feed these additional millions?"

"The problem is not to decrease the population but to change the distribution of what we have," he said. "Poland has enough to feed all we have and all that will come for many years. Only we must distribute what we have so that everybody can eat."

On my way back to the hotel, I could not help wondering whether the Zulawskis and the Lipinskis, the Grubers and their like really see where they are going. All of them know history, economics. They know what has happened, what caused upheavals in the past—or don't they know? Here was Poland crumbling before their eyes and one man thought it was due to psychological fear, and another because the country's economy wasn't planned, but he didn't believe in planning it, and still another declared that the mess could be straightened out by democratic means even at the moment when those democratic means had been taken from him. And these are the men who are running Poland's thirty-three and one half millions of people!

The simple, ignorant and illiterate workers at least know that they want food and when the Lipinskis and the Grubers couldn't figure out a way to give it to them and labor leaders of Zulawski's type couldn't get it for them by "democratic means," the "dark and ignorant" people simply took over the means of production until they got it. Somehow, in view of the bewilderment of the leaders, I felt that one of these days the workers, driven more desperate by the uncertainty and vacillation of their leaders, may forget that seizing and occupying the mills, mines and factories are supposed to be only temporary measures.

## WARSAW CONVERSATION-PIECE

TO BE SENT TO PRISON in Poland as a Communist it is not necessary for the secret police or the courts to prove that you are one; all they need is just to suspect that you have Communist sympathies and they do not trouble about things like charges or a trial. Naturally, under such conditions, the Communist Party is about as deeply underground as it can get. That is why I still chuckle when I think that it was one of the most reactionary newspapers in Poland, one which is virtually a Government organ, *The Cracow Illustrated Courier*, which unwittingly introduced me to the much-hunted leaders of the Polish Communist Party.

When I left for Europe I had not anticipated that I might want to meet Communist leaders in Poland so I had not asked Communist friends of mine to try to arrange such meetings. But after I had been in Poland a while and realized the extent of the country's economic disintegration and the seething unrest among both workers and peasants, I began to wonder what would happen should the economic life of the country collapse. The country seemed to be in a revolutionary ferment and I kicked myself for not having tried to arrange to see a Polish Communist leader, for with a country in this condition it was important to learn what the Communists were doing and planning to do. Poland, it seemed to me, was in a more advanced state of economic disintegration than even Italy or Germany.

But, all unknown to me, a book of mine, *Georgia Nigger*, which had been translated into Russian, had been sold in Poland and I was somewhat well known there. I had not

been registered long at the Hotel Europejski when *The Cracow Courier* telephoned for an interview. The charming voice at the other end of the telephone assured me that I was a famous American writer. I thought that very funny and very flattering and gave the interview to Matylda Sapiezanka, a princess who had turned journalist. I did not realize that the announcement that I was in Poland to study Polish economic and political conditions was a journalistic and literary event closely approaching the first magnitude!

Two days after the interview was published, still unaware of the stir I was causing, I went on a stroll along Warsaw's streets and paused in front of a display in the window of the Gebethner and Wolfe bookstore, the largest in the city. I had not been standing there more than a few seconds, staring at the volumes and wondering what Poles were reading, when I became aware of another man beside me who addressed me quietly in German:

"You are Mr. Spivak?"

"Yes," I said, wondering who he was.

"You are the Mr. Spivak who wrote *Georgia Nigger*?"

"Yes," I said again, looking curiously at him.

"Could we perhaps take a little walk?"

"I think we could but where to? And who are you?"

"I am a friend," he smiled. "We will just walk on the street. Too many people stop to look at the books in this window."

"Then perhaps we had better go to a café and drink a glass of tea," I suggested.

"Very good," he said.

After steaming glasses of tea had been served, I said: "Okay. Now who are you? How do I know you are a friend and what do you want?"

"You are in Poland studying conditions, no? And you are meeting with officials and reactionary journalists, and we are afraid that they will fill you with information that is not accurate."

"Who is the 'we'?" I asked.

"The Polish Communist Party," he said quietly.

"To be even suspected of being a Communist is punishable by a long prison term. Does the Communist Party think that what I write is so important that they are risking one of their men?"

"When you hear only one side, you write only one side," he said mildly.

"Well," I laughed, "I agree with you there. Are you authorized to speak for the Party?"

"No; I was told only to find you."

"Who told you?"

"The Party."

"Where did the Party hear that I was in Warsaw?"

"An interview with you was published—"

"Oh," I said, a light beginning to dawn. I had not seen the published interview. "Now what?"

"Perhaps you should meet a friend of mine. You would like?"

"I think so," I said. "Where and when?"

"Tonight, in this café?"

That night, at the appointed hour, I wandered into the café and found the gentleman who had accosted me in the company of another. They were drinking tea and conversing in a very friendly fashion. Neither broached the subject of the appointment until we had finished the tea.

"Are you hungry?" asked one of my hosts.

"I could eat—if I have to."

"Then we will go to a restaurant," he said.

In the restaurant, with a bottle of vodka and a platter full of herring and onions and black bread before us, he talked of the difference in degrees of cold between Polish and Russian winters, the climate in America, the delight of a hot glass of tea on a cold winter night, and everything except what I had come to hear. Throughout the conversa-

tion he eyed me very closely, trying, as unobtrusively as possible, to study my face and expression.

When the herring and onions had been consumed, a goodly quantity of vodka drunk and glasses of steaming hot tea were again before us, one said:

"You are interested in the Party work in Poland?"

"Yes," I said, breathing a sigh of relief.

"And what would you like to know?"

I took out a list of questions I had prepared in anticipation of this meeting and showed them to him. He read them over carefully, nodding his head.

"I do not think I am the man to answer these questions," he said finally. "These are questions which must be answered by more important members of the Party. I will tell them about it. I think you should see one of the leaders."

"Very well. I am in your hands. What do I do now?"

"Tomorrow, perhaps we meet in the café across the street? I will see what they say. It is not always that they have time so quick."

So on the morrow I appeared at another café and we drank tea again for half an hour while a thin drizzle of snow was silently covering Warsaw with a white coat. I waited for my companions to broach the subject, for I had learned long ago that in dealing with the underground movement it is not good to ask questions until you are told that you may. We sat there, none of us saying very much while I kept wondering how many glasses of tea I should have to drink before I learned whether one of the Communist leaders would see me. Abruptly one of my companions said:

"One of the leaders will see you."

"Good!" I exclaimed. "If he could come to my hotel, I could take the notes down on my typewriter and save a lot of time."

He shook his head. "No. The hotel is not good. People see who comes in. We must find a better place. Perhaps we take a walk and discuss it?"



So the three of us took a walk to discuss it. We wandered through dark streets with only an occasional light to reflect the snow which had now blanketed Warsaw. Where we went I had no idea, but I found myself with them on streets so dark and deserted that only an occasional pedestrian was seen; then for the first time I began to wonder whether I was not a little foolhardy. After all, I did not know these people. They said they were from the Polish Communist Party and wanted to give me information but I had no evidence that they were. I had been told in Germany that the Nazis did not like me but that they would do nothing to me in Germany for fear of a reaction in America but that they had a special squad attached to the Gestapo to deal with people in other lands; then, if anything happened, the country where it happened was responsible. And here I was in Poland which was very friendly to Nazi Germany.

While these thoughts were flashing through my mind, the one who had first accosted me in front of the bookstore stopped and said abruptly:

"I must go now. I have an appointment and I must catch the tram car that runs on this street."

He shook hands with us, doffed his hat and remained standing while the two of us walked on.

We turned a corner and came to a street where car tracks showed faintly under the film of snow. A man stood at a corner apparently waiting for a street car, but as we approached him he turned to us and my companion said:

"Here is our friend. He will answer your questions."

The other man who had dropped behind to "catch a tram car" had apparently really dropped behind to see if we were being followed as we approached the spot where I was to meet one of the leaders of the Polish Communist Party. It meant fifteen years imprisonment for this man if he should be caught and they were taking no chances of our being followed.

We shook hands and my companion said:

"I think it is best if we take a walk and talk."

I did not ask who he was; it is one of the things that is not done when you meet underground revolutionary leaders.

The three of us fell in step, walking slowly, speaking in quiet voices like three old friends strolling home after a late dinner.

"First," I said, "let us begin at the beginning. When did the Polish Communist Party go underground; what was its strength then and what is its strength now?"

The Communist leader, who had not spoken a word, even when greeting me with a friendly smile, said in a low voice:

"We went underground in 1919 when we had approximately 4,000 members. Our strength was chiefly in the industrial centers. Today our strength is 16,000 members, excluding some 12,000 in the youth movement, of whom about half are Party members. We have about 10,000 Party members in prison. The 16,000 are those who are working actively in the field."

"When was your biggest gain made and what do you think were its causes?"

"Our biggest gain came in 1927-28 after the Pilsudski *Putsch*. People came to us because of great disappointment in Pilsudski. They thought the Pilsudski *Putsch* a move to the Left, but soon realized that it was really Fascism. Our gain was not so much in actual Party membership but in the sympathy we aroused among the Polish masses.

"Our Party, of course, was illegal, but there were legal parties which the people knew were Communist-directed which put up candidates for the Polish parliament. In the election our legal Party drew about one million votes, whereas in 1919 our sympathizers totaled a maximum of about 100,000."

"What do you estimate is the number of your sympathizers now?"

"It is hard to say because our legal Parties are now illegal. There are now only Government-picked candidates. But

from various sources and reports, plus the original legal vote, we estimate about 2,000,000 sympathizers in Poland today."

"What made you gain so many?"

"The people's disappointment in independent Poland. The masses actually hoped that the country's independence would free them from capitalism. The agricultural question is not solved and the peasants are restless; the continual oppression of Jews, Ukrainians and White Russians adds to the general discontent. Then there is the economic crisis and last but not least our own work among the people."

We were passing under a street light and he turned and looked at me with a pleasant smile. We had wandered to the outskirts of the city, for not even the occasional clatter of a passing droshky now disturbed the stillness. The snow under our feet muffled our footsteps and I had the feeling that we were three disembodied spirits in a setting of ghostly whiteness. It was an odd feeling to know that the secret police would give their right arms to capture this soft-spoken man who talked like a professor delivering a lecture and that he himself never went to bed or awoke in the morning certain that on this day he was safe from a prison sentence that was practically a life sentence. I asked him about it and he said gently: "It is a chance all Communists must take."

The whole terror under which the revolutionary movement worked rose before me against a background of rebelling peasants, workers who seized factories, starving millions. A Government that is not afraid of imminent collapse does not go to such extremes. Yet with almost half of its total membership in prison, with only a comparative handful to work under extraordinary difficulties, the "pacification area" was swept with Communist sympathy and Communist propaganda was apparent among the industrial workers. Poland was in a revolutionary temper and the Government, weak and leaderless, was afraid; and, being

afraid, the brutalities it inflicted in the prisons upon the Communists it caught rival the exploits of the Nazis.

As we walked along he told me of tortures inflicted upon Communists in prison; of some who died from the punishments, especially in Polish Ukraine and White Russia where, because of its nearness to the Soviet Union, the viciousness of the governors is terrible; of life in the prisons at Lusk, Kobryn, Kovel, Bialystock,—the whole long list of them; of life in the concentration camp in Polish White Russia at Bereza Kartuska, to which people are sent, if they are so much as suspected of having Communist sympathies, without even the formality of a trial or an explanation. In this camp the prisoners live in wooden barracks which even neighborhood peasants are not allowed to approach. There the prisoners may not even speak to one another; when they answer a question put to them by the commandant they must swing about and face in the opposite direction, for they are not worthy of looking on the face of their keeper.

“There is one torture,” said the Communist spokesman, “which rivals the best that the ancients devised. It is not one of beatings, for our comrades can stand beatings. It is a physical as well as a psychological one; only those who have experienced it can fully understand it.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“It is not a nice story,” he said apologetically.

“I can stand it,” I said.

“The prisoners are forbidden to go to the toilet,” he said simply. “That does not seem so terrible, does it? If you do anything in your cell, you are beaten unmercifully. So the prisoners hold themselves in as much as possible. When a day and a night has passed the governor summons all the prisoners before him. He looks at them trying to stand still in their agony and then he says, ‘I think it is inhuman to make you hold yourselves in any longer. All of you can now go to the toilet.’”

“There is a mad rush, for the agony is great. Even com-

rades elbow one another out of the way. Every second is precious for they are suffering. And when they are half-way to the toilets, with visions of relief in a second or two, the governor blows a whistle which means they must stop instantly. 'No,' he laughs, 'I made a mistake. You cannot go to the toilets.'"

I had learned from a Government source that several guards at the prison of Bereza Kartuska had quit their jobs and had recently petitioned the courts for permission to change their names. They wanted to start life anew; they did not want anyone to know who they were, should the Communists get in power. I told him of what I had heard and he nodded. "I guess they were afraid of getting their own medicine," I concluded.

"We know who they are and we will remember," he said simply.

"How does the Party function—as much as you can tell me—and how influential are its propaganda and its activities?"

"We are divided into cells as most underground movements are; but our cells are not so small as in Germany. Ours range from four to as many as ten members and at every cell meeting there is a district representative of the Party who acts as the Party contact. In our cell activities we function as the legal parties do, though, of course, we have to be extremely careful.

"Excluding the Ukraine and Polish White Russia we have seven illegal Party organs; the central theoretical organ, *The New Review*, the central mass organ, *The Red Banner*, and so on. The circulation all told is about 12,000 and is distributed chiefly among workers in the great industrial centers. Though the circulation seems small you must remember that each copy is read by many people, for it is passed on from hand to hand and the illegal Party press also has wide circulation among Communist sympathizers. Even

with our press illegalized, we manage to reach a great portion of the population.”

“The situation in Poland today is very acute. The people are in greater poverty than they have ever been and the Government, as near as I can see, is disliked by everybody except a handful of big landowners, industrialists and financiers. So—what will happen?”

He walked on thoughtfully without answering, his head buried a little in his coat collar.

“What I mean,” I added, “is whether, in a country so poverty-stricken and restless, the Communist Party is in a position to seize power?”

“No; the Party is not in a position to seize power. If it were it would seize it. The masses are not prepared.”

“When will they be prepared?”

“The masses will be prepared when they attack the state. What we Communists are trying to do is educate the people to understand the cause and cure of their misery and poverty. At present we are concentrating against Fascism in the hope of forming a Government of the United Front. The problem of Fascism is the great one today for, though this is a Fascist Government, its activities can become even more vicious.”

“The antagonism of the people against the Government was shown when they boycotted the 1935 election. When a people is so opposed to a Government doesn't it seem that the time is almost ripe to make an attempt to seize the Government?”

“I do not think so,” he said thoughtfully. “I see no prospect of attempting to seize the Government—under present conditions. But conditions may change. The proper moment may not come for years and then again it may come tomorrow. We do not know.”

“I have just come from Germany and there I talked with a number of representatives of great foreign powers. All of them think a war in Europe is inevitable within the next

two or three years. What will the Communist Party of Poland do in the event of war?"

"We will call upon the people to turn the guns given them to fight, against their oppressors. We are bending every effort toward peace, making all the propaganda for this that we can, but in the event all our efforts toward peace fail and war is launched, we will turn the war into a civil war. We will say to the people, 'The enemy is in our country, not invading us.' We will not run away from service in the army. We will join and carry on our work within the army."

"Suppose the people do not follow your call?"

"We will do what we can with those who do follow us."

"Does the Party here in Poland expect a war?"

"We think war will come, but when we cannot say. Polish Fascism already has a treaty with Germany and Japan against the Soviet Union. Much depends on conditions. It is possible that due to our work we can stop a war or postpone a world war long enough to see the revolution come and thus avoid wars forever."

"What will the Party do if the war is not against the Soviet Union?"

"If the war starts against a country other than the Soviet Union, like a war against Czechoslovakia or Lithuania, or wherever it may break out, we shall still say to the people that it is a war which is eventually aimed against the Soviet Union, for efforts will be made to turn the war in that direction. If you observe the international line-up you cannot avoid seeing why I say the next world war is being planned against the Soviet Union. Internationally, Poland is strengthening its alliance with Hitler and is hoping for France as an eventual ally of both Hitler and Poland. Poland and Germany are at present trying to draw France away from its pact with the Soviet Union because France and the Soviet Union together are well-nigh invincible. Poland wants this bloc broken up and is bending every effort to do so.

"Then there is the plan for dismembering Czechoslovakia, giving part to Germany, part to Poland and part to Hungary. Polish diplomacy today is centered upon keeping Rumania from becoming an ally of the Soviet Union in preparation for the planned attack. Polish enmity against Czechoslovakia and Rumania is based upon its efforts to keep them away from a Russian bloc.

"I could go on in great detail but I think I have made myself clear. Then there are the numerous economic reasons driving these powers toward this planned attack, but these you already understand."

"Are you so organized that you could start a civil war immediately war broke out?"

"No. Not at present. It all depends upon when war will break out. What we shall do depends upon conditions at the time, how far we have progressed in our activities among the workers and peasants, the state of the country, the dissatisfaction in the army and many other factors."

The hour had grown late and the snow had now turned to a fine drizzle of rain, making the streets rather wet and sloshy.

"I am grateful to you," I said as we started to walk toward a droshky in some section of the town which now showed a few lights.

"Not at all," he returned quickly. "It is important that America and England, France and the rest of Europe know that we will not let the Soviet Union be attacked."

They took a droshky and went off in one direction while I took another to my hotel and, protected from the fine rain by the hood over the seat, I leaned back, thinking of what he had said. I had the same feeling I had in Germany when I had talked with the underground: they knew precisely what they wanted, and they were biding their time. In Germany, if all peace efforts failed, they planned a civil war in the event of war; in Poland they planned the same.

Fifty thousand determined men and women scattered



throughout Germany with the authorities not knowing who they are; sixteen thousand in Poland; sympathizers who are to all intents and purposes Communists except that they are not members, in vast numbers. In the last war there were no strongly organized bodies of determined men to carry on propaganda, to start and lead uprisings at home. Such uprisings could bring the next world war to a quick close; it is probably the only hope the world has of shortening the next war.



# CZECHOSLOVAKIA



## *SALT OF THE EARTH*

THE CARPATHIAN-RUSS, in the easternmost section of Czechoslovakia, is only a few hours' train ride from Vienna or Budapest. When you reach this garden spot of beauty nestling between the Polish Ukraine, Rumania and Hungary and wander from Uzhorod, its chief city, through the villages at the feet of the towering Carpathian mountains you are struck by the appearance of the men. Wherever you go among the 750,000 people who live in this region, you see them in their sheepskin coats looking like great bears, huge goiters hanging from their necks. Sometimes you meet them on the road, ropes around their powerful chests, pulling ancient wagons, for very few peasants have beasts of burden. Tax collectors have seized and sold almost everything they owned.

My translator and I had been jogging along in a broken wagon through the Irsava district on our way to the village of Lukova when we saw an old peasant in the distance. He looked like a great bear in the coat held around him by a rope tied about his waist. He had no hat and the shock of gray hair was a tangled, greasy mass which he scratched constantly. A goiter the size of a spring chicken made his chin run almost into his chest.

He looked up as we approached and the driver shouted a hearty greeting, adding a little proudly, I thought, that he had an American who had come to see how they lived. The peasant smiled and I immediately forgot the dirt and the greasy hair and the yellow, ground-down teeth. The whole

face seemed to radiate kindness and an extraordinary combination of shrewdness and sadness.

"You can see how we live," he said, motioning with his hand to his hut. "Only by the love of God are we still alive, for there is a great hunger in the land."

We sat in his one-room hut near the fire enclosed by field-stones, over which they bake their bread, and while he spat through his beard upon the hard earth that was the floor he told me how he lived and what was happening and in the course of it I heard the story of Stefan Zcjkan, "a strong man with only a small swelling on his neck instead of a big one, and a good neighbor who sat with the sick when they were in need, being even more tender than a woman."

Stefan had lived down the road tending land owned by some big lord whose name he did not even know, for he dealt with an overseer. The hut where he lived was very old and the roof sagged so that often, when he was in good humor and did not have to worry about his hunger so much, his neighbors would see him come out, beat his chest with his strong arms and fill his lungs with the air that always smells of the great forests; then he would call out gaily to his neighbors that he thought that since there was no work to be had, he would devote this day to "holding up the roof, for it leaned over the doorway like an old man carrying a great load of wood."

His wife, who had borne him three children, developed a goiter that was as big as a melon and died and the children followed in quick succession until he was left alone. Almost the only visitors he had were the Communist agitators, for every fourth man in the Carpathian-Russ is a Communist. But they did not come to visit him because he was lonely; they came to persuade him to vote for Communist deputies for Parliament and to take part in gatherings to demand that the government feed them.

"They told him of the great land about a two days' ride by horse from the border of Czechoslovakia. There, they

said, the peasants owned everything and had enough to eat and the land is so big that it ends on the other side of the world where the people do not even look like us, for their eyes go up into their foreheads."

He paused, looked at me shrewdly and asked: "Is that true? That there are people whose eyes go up into their foreheads?"

"Yes, it is partly true," I said. "They do not exactly go up into their foreheads. They sort of slant—like this," and I illustrated it by pulling a corner of my eye up in a rather sad attempt to give it an almond shape.

"Yes, that is right. That is what the Communists said." He seemed lost in thought for a moment and then said: "I once heard of a land where there are very big men, twice as big as you or me and they have only one eye right in the middle of the forehead. Is that true too?"

"I don't think so," I smiled.

"They would look very strange, wouldn't they? With an eye right in the middle of their foreheads? But then, there are many strange things in the world."

Stefan was told of the boundaries of this land where the peasants and workers owned everything and that right near the Russian border the Communists were very badly treated. That was in Poland which lay across the road to Russia. But in Czechoslovakia Communists had meetings and talked a great deal. When you cross a border you are in a new and entirely different land; that is why in one land Communists own everything and in another they just talk and in still another land they are arrested and beaten for talking. The borders between the lands marked the difference. Since the differences were so sharp Stefan came to the conclusion that a border was a high wall with gates through which you passed when you entered the new and different country. Many times he and his neighbors sat around wondering how much it cost to build the high walls, but once Stefan was not

far from the border and he walked to the Czechoslovakian-Polish frontier, looking for the wall.

"There is no wall," he told his neighbors when he came back. "There is not even a line to show which is Czechoslovakia and which is Poland!"

The Czech soldiers told him that where he stood was Czechoslovakia, but if he took one step to the north he would be in Poland where there are a different language, different customs, different tax collectors, different soldiers and Stefan stood there and listened for a long time and said, "But it is exactly the same land and why everything should be different I do not know. The Poles are dressed like me and they have big swellings on their necks, too!"

The guards tried to explain why one was one land and the other another land, but apparently they did not understand it too well either, for Stefan could not understand why, if the land was the same and the people all the same, everything should be different and finally he spat and said, "I think this is all very foolish," and went back home.

When he returned he asked the Communists if Russia had borders, too, and told them what he thought of it and the Communists laughed and agreed that it was very foolish. They explained that if he were a Communist and everybody else were Communists there would be no borders like that and there would be no hunger as there is in the Carpathian-Russ, for there was enough food all over the world to feed everybody living and the only reason everybody was not eating is that people wanted to make a profit from the food. It was all very complicated, but Stefan listened patiently and thought it was a good idea that there should not be great hunger for some, while others had too much food, and would not give it.

"But it cannot be done today, can it?" he would ask, looking into the faces of the Communists.

"It could if everybody were Communists," they told him.



"But everybody isn't, are they?" he would say, shaking his head and scratching himself.

"No, that's why we are trying to explain things to the people to make them Communists."

"Then it is a dream," Stefan concluded, "a good dream, but it cannot be done, for is not everybody selfish?"

"But the dream has come true in the vast land whose borders are only a little way from here."

"Yes," Stefan would say, "it has been done; and maybe it can be done, but I will have fed the worms long before. Tomorrow maybe it will be wonderful and everybody will eat, but today—" and he used to sigh and shake his head.

So when it came time to vote, Stefan voted for the Agrarian Party instead of for the Communists.

"The Agrarian Party has the Government, has it not?" he explained. "But the Communists have no Government, so what can they do for me if they do not have the Government?"

Many peasants voted for the Agrarian Party: it offered something immediate, whereas the Communists offered a dream of tomorrow. The biggest drawing card the Agrarians offered was the long-promised land reformation. For years peasants had been told that the great estates seized from the defeated countries would be divided among them. Those without land would be given a plot of ground for themselves instead of having to work for a lord on a share-cropper basis, getting one-fourth of the harvest. Stefan particularly was happy at the prospect of becoming a landowner and when, before the last election, Agrarian speakers came and hired him and his neighbors to go into the woods to survey the land so each would know which was his when the division was effected he had been very happy. With his own axe he marked trees to show the boundaries of the hectare and a half that the Agrarians promised would be his as soon as they were elected.

Stefan was most pleased with a section of the land on which he planned to grow vegetables.

"At the beginning he would not eat the vegetables himself," he used to say, "for he could live without them. He would sell them in Lukova and save the money and when he had money he would buy chickens; then he could sell the eggs and save the kronen he got for them until he had enough to buy a cow. Then he could sell the cow's milk and he would be selling vegetables, eggs and milk while he still had the most of his land for wheat. And in that way," the old peasant added, nodding his head, "he could even become a landowner himself. Many's the time I went with him into the woods and he showed me the markings of his axe on the land that would be his."

The Communists asked if he did not remember that preceding the last election the Agrarians had done precisely the same thing, yet the land was not divided. It was true, what the Communists said, and Stefan had asked about it. The Agrarian speaker had told him that the Agrarians were willing enough, everything was ready for it and the prints showing which was his and which was another's land were now at the Ministry of Agriculture and that the Agrarian deputies in Parliament had demanded that the land be divided; but the deputies of the Czech Catholic Party and the Czech Social Democrats and the German Social Democrats and the Czech National and Social Party and all the other Parties had opposed it. That was why they were now trying to get everybody to vote Agrarian so there'd be no opposition.

Stefan was a little bitter against all these Parties which opposed the land reformation, but since he had struck a somewhat sharp bargain because of this very opposition, he was willing to overlook it. He had pretended to doubt whether the Agrarians really planned to divide the land, since they had failed to do it before, but intimated that if the surveyor would give him a few meters more than the

promised hectare and a half he might—and the surveyor had winked and said that if he didn't tell the others it could be arranged. When Stefan told his neighbors of the bargain he had made, everybody envied him for his shrewdness.

There is something about the land with its slow, unhurried growth of the means of life that develops patience in those who live on it and Stefan waited patiently. Great things, like dividing the land, are not done in a moment. But while he waited with the patience of the earth itself, there was the immediate problem of eating and all he, or the others about him had, were potatoes.

"You get tired of eating potatoes all the time," the peasant said, staring at the opaque window of his hut, "but it is better than nothing. A man can really manage to live on just potatoes if there is a little salt to put in the water when they are boiling. Potatoes are so tasteless without salt, especially if you eat them all the time, and it costs only one krone and eighty heller a kilogram—but who can get a krone and eighty heller" (about nine cents)?

"Are there no salt mines in Czechoslovakia?"

"There are great salt mines in the Carpathian-Russ. In Akna-Slatina, near Rumania, there are more people who do nothing but dig salt than there are in the whole village of Lukova."

"Then why is salt so scarce? It should be cheap here."

"When you go to where the railroads run to the great cities you see big cars filled with salt; but here, we are too poor to buy it. The salt is owned by fine gentlemen who live in fine houses—like the lords," he added.

"And what do you think about that?"

"I think it is not just. And Stefan, too, thought that it was not just that one should have so much salt while another hungered for a pinch of it. But Stefan was not just, too, for did he not want to own land and sell what he grew just like those who owned the salt?"

He told me of the rarity of salt, that some thought the

goiters developed because they were too poor to buy salt, while others blamed the water that came gushing down the mountainsides. But if they cannot afford the kronen and eighty heller that a kilogram of refined salt costs and they can manage to earn a few heller by working for some Lukova shopkeeper or in the forests, they buy red salt, which tastes bad and is painted red so everybody may know it is for cattle and not fit for human beings. But when your body cries for salt as a man dying of thirst cries for water, then you use the red salt.

As well as suffering from hunger and a lack of salt, they were given another irritation: that of a Government seeking taxes from a peasantry so poor that it could not afford salt. At first when tax collectors came the peasants thought it was funny that the Government should ask for taxes when it knew they didn't have money enough to buy salt. But it wasn't funny when the tax collector, unable to get money, began to take horses and cows, sheep and pigs and sell those to get tax money.

I heard tale after tale in different villages of peasants whose sole income was milk from their one cow, milk so precious that they wouldn't give it even to their children and of how the cow was taken from them, of horses so thin that they were virtually useless, that were taken. Repeatedly I heard the peasants say: "What can a man do without his horse? How can he plow the land for sowing? No, there is nothing to do but put a rope around your chest and pull the wagon or the plow yourself."

Sometimes it seemed to these peasants that the Government which had promised them land was really taking everything away. Resentment gave way to bitterness and Communists organized a protest meeting. Soldiers fired on the peasants (1933), killing two, wounding many and arresting almost everybody. Despite this and the fury of the peasants, the Government persisted in taking everything it could and on Nov. 3, 1935, more than 10,000 peasants from 300 vil-

lages marched upon Mukacevo to demand the end of all this. There were too many and their anger was too sharp for any more shooting, so the Czech officials suggested they send delegates to see the President of the Republic.

"But nothing came of it," said the peasants.

When the collectors had taken about everything that could be taken in the form of livestock, they began to search the huts, seizing everything that could be sold. It became so bad that when a collector was sighted peasants would send their children running to the neighbors to tell them that one of the demons that seemed to have attached themselves to hound them forever and forever was on the way and there would be a frantic scurrying to hide whatever was portable.

"They would hide even the vegetables," said my old peasant, shaking his head.

"Food?" I exclaimed.

"Have you not heard? Here in Lukova a peasant threatened a tax collector for trying to take his last cow and the gendarmes came and took him off to jail and kept him there for two weeks and when he was in jail they came and took his last cow and the few vegetables he had saved for food for the winter and they sold them and when they set him free and he saw all this his reason left him, for he sought out the tax collector and killed him and then killed himself."

The persistent drive for taxes eventually reached the stage where the persons of the peasants were searched lest they had sold something or had worked for someone and were hiding the few kronen; and one day they searched Stefan Zcjkan.

"Only the day before he told me, 'If I could only earn a few heller I would buy some red salt'; and when he was searched he cried, 'If I had a few heller I would buy a little salt. See! Search my hut and see if you can find a little salt.

I have hardly enough potatoes and no salt at all and if I had a few heller do you not think I would buy salt?' "

The bitterness and unrest among the peasants became so great that finally the Agrarian speaker who had originally taken them into the forests to mark the trees for the land that would one day be their own came into the area to quiet them and the peasants fell upon him:

"You told us we would have land and instead of giving us land the Government is taking from us even what little we have!" they said bitterly.

"That is true," he had said. "But do you not know that the Poles to the north have come together with their neighbors, the Germans, and they plan to come in here and take away everything, even your poor huts, for their own people? They have more people than their land can hold and they must find a place for them. The Government must defend you and your homes and for this a great army is necessary to drive them off when they come. For that, much money is needed, from the rich and from the poor. Shame! that you cry about giving your little mite when there are soldiers ready to give their lives that you may have your homes and your land."

Stefan said that he thought that the Poles and the Germans would soon find that they had not made such a shrewd bargain if they came and took these huts and the Agrarian speaker laughed.

"Then their people will have the land you marked for yourselves," he told him.

"It is necessary to arm and feed the soldiers who will fight for us," Stefan said, "but the Government shouldn't take everything away from us. We should be left something in these dark days."

"There is a bad time all over the world and in many countries the people do not have even potatoes to eat," the Agrarian said, "There is a far-away land where people are so hungry that they eat dirt from the hillsides to end the

pangs of their great hunger. We must be patient and then we shall have enough for everyone."

"But if the Government keeps taking everything from us," Stefan said, "we, too, may have to eat dirt from the hillsides."

"That will never happen here," said the Agrarian, "for the Government has granaries filled with wheat."

"Then why doesn't the Government give us some of it now for bread that we may end our hunger?" Stefan asked, but the Agrarian said that he did not understand and that he must be patient."

Instead of the drive to collect taxes lessening after this visit, it seemed to be intensified. The Government needed money, money for its officials, money for its army, money for the ever-growing number of unemployed. Gradually the villages and cities became impoverished. A year ago, in Lukova, for instance, the Government managed to find 26,000 kronen in money and salable goods. This year, despite the intensity of the search, all they were able to get was 2,000 kronen. Nevertheless they kept coming but they no longer came alone. They brought two gendarmes with them because the peasants were too threatening. Because so many peasants, driven mad by the seizure of their last horse or cow, had killed the collectors, the gendarmes now approached a peasant and ordered him to put up his hands and first they searched him for weapons and then for his possessions.

It was on one of these occasions that some thirty peasants gathered around the tax collector and the two gendarmes who came to Lukova and followed them about wherever they went. The peasants offered them no harm, didn't even utter a word, but just followed them around like great big bears and the collector and gendarmes became so uneasy that they left. The peasants breathed a sigh of relief, feeling that now they would be left in peace.

But the collector had gone only to return again—this time

in the middle of the night. The records of the police at their headquarters in Bilky show that it was on Nov. 21, 1935, that the collector came with twenty-five gendarmes commandeered from Berehovo. They descended upon the worried peasants at two o'clock in the morning and arrested twenty-two of them on suspicion of having hidden their wealth and for following the collector and the gendarmes around while in the performance of their duties. Among those arrested was Stefan Zcjkan. At the police station in Bilky they were thoroughly searched. In Stefan's pockets they found two nails and a piece of twine.

Despite this, Stefan dreamed of the day when he would have his own land and sell his vegetables, eggs and milk; and one day a village storekeeper gave him a little work and paid him a krone and fifty heller, but then it was too dark to buy anything.

"In the morning when he rose he told us of his great good luck and how he went home holding the money in his hand and the hand in his pocket to be sure not to lose it, for when you have waited so long for a krone and fifty heller and you know that it means you can buy a little salt with it, you guard it carefully; and we who had a few vegetables said we would give him of our vegetables for some of his salt, but he asked for too many vegetables. He was always trying to drive a sharp bargain and while we were bargaining a tax collector came again with two gendarmes and pointed pistols at us and told us to put up our hands and they searched us, but they found nothing on anyone; but on him they found the krone and fifty heller and the collector said he was a thief for hiding this money from the Government.

"But I got this only yesterday," Stefan said. "I wanted it to buy a little salt for my potatoes. I have had no salt for many, many months, not even red salt—"

"The Government will have to take this," said the collector, "I will give you a receipt for it."

"I do not want a receipt for it," Stefan cried. "What can a



krone and fifty heller mean to a great Government, but to me it means a little salt. I have not had salt for so long—”

“It will cost fifty heller to mail it to the tax collector’s office, so I will give you a receipt for one krone,” said the collector.

“I do not want the paper,” Stefan cried again. “Search me and my hut. Take anything you can find—”

“I have to take this krone and fifty heller—” said the tax collector.

And Stefan shook his head and said as if speaking to himself, “My potatoes have no taste—”

“But the tax collector and the gendarmes shrugged their shoulders—like this—” continued my informant, “and started to walk away and when Stefan saw his pinch of salt going, his reason must have left him for he ran to the wood pile where he had been chopping a little wood for the fire and seized the axe and without saying a word rushed up to the collector and split his head open and before anybody could say anything he swung the axe on himself and buried it in his own head.

“He was a good man,” the old peasant sighed regretfully. “It is tax collecting that drives men to deeds like this when they have a great hunger.”

I looked at his bearded face and the dirty sheepskin coat and the large hands, red and engrained with dirt.

“And how do you feel about it now?”

He shrugged his shoulders and motioned to the south.

“There is the railroad; when you go you see the trains with many cars that carry salt from Akna-Slatina—”

“Yes?”

“It is not just that men should die because they have no salt and that some should live in fine houses and have much to eat—”

“Yes?” I said again.

“Sometimes we think: is it not better to die taking the salt than to die as Stefan died?”



# AUSTRIA



## *UNITED FRONT—UNOFFICIAL*

SOMEWHERE IN VIENNA were men and women working in the deepest secrecy for the day when they would seize Austria. Secret police and spies searched for them ceaselessly and, like the underground movements in Germany and Poland, these revolutionists were probably known only to the small clique they worked with. And knowing how secretly underground movements are organized you get so that you look at everybody, wondering if they are in the underground.

It's thrilling, but it's exasperating, too, for I had been hanging around the Grand Hotel for three days waiting for the Austrian underground movement to get in touch with me. I finally got to the point where I wouldn't have been a bit surprised if my cheerful and rubicund chambermaid suddenly turned on me and said: "And what do you wish to know of the Austrian underground movement?"

After the lucky break I had in Warsaw when I was kicking myself for not having tried to arrange to see leaders of the Polish revolutionary movement I decided I'd better make some efforts about the Austrian one. Though the Communist Party is legal in Czechoslovakia I knew it would be silly for me to barge in on them and blithely request that they put me in touch with hunted revolutionists in Austria. Communist leaders were in Prague, the Revolutionary Socialists were in Brunn, and though I could probably get what information they could give me, it was not all that I wanted. I wanted to see them actually at work and not sitting in a comparatively safe office in Czechoslovakia.

Since the Polish Communist Party had risked the liberty of at least one of its chief leaders I thought they trusted me enough to be willing to help and before we parted on that memorable walk on the outskirts of Warsaw I asked the spokesman for the Communist Party if he thought it could be arranged.

"I'll see what I can do," he smiled. "When will you be in Prague?"

"In two or three weeks. At the Alcron Hotel."

"Perhaps someone will get in touch with you."

Two days after I had registered at the Alcron Hotel and without my having tried to get in touch with the Communist Party in Prague, I heard a knock on my door and a very business-like looking man entered.

"May I come in?" he asked briskly. "It's in regard to Vienna," he added, noting my inquiring look.

He came in and closed the door. "When do you expect to be there?" he asked, waving aside my offer of a seat.

"In about ten days—at the Grand Hotel."

"Someone will get in touch with you," he said in that brisk manner, like a salesman concluding a deal. He hesitated a moment and then added, "It was suggested that you see the Revolutionary Socialists and the illegal trade unions, too. There is no formal united front there, you know, but we coöperate and it was thought that you might want to see them as well as the Party."

"I'd like to very much," I said, delighted at the unexpected offer of help. "Do you think it can be arranged?"

"It has already been arranged," he smiled.

And now I was waiting to be picked up. I hung around the hotel, fearful that someone might come and find me out and when the waiting became too tense I'd wander down to the American bar and, perched upon a stool in front of it, I'd look wonderingly and suspiciously at everybody, even my amiable bartender. When I had just about reached the stage where I was ready to suspect even Prince Starhemberg

himself of being in the underground movement, there was a very ordinary and very unspiratorial knock on my door one morning. When I opened it a gentleman, hat in hand, asked quietly:

“Mr. Spivak?”

“Yes?”

He walked in, closed the door and said in a matter-of-fact tone, “I understand that you wish to get in touch with some friends here?”

Frankly, I was very disappointed. After days of waiting, wondering, hoping for some dramatic pick-up, this was a terrible letdown. This revolutionist, working with the ever-present fear of arrest and imprisonment, hunted high and low, seemed so darned matter-of-fact and business-like. There wasn't that much melodrama or glamor about him. He looked for all the world like some overworked clerk who might start spouting figures without even being provoked into it.

“Sit down,” I said.

He sat on the edge of a chair, holding his hat and gloves in his lap.

“Are you free this evening?” he asked almost apologetically.

“I'm free any time you say.”

“Then I'll call for you at seven, if that will be all right. We have arranged for a Communist rep (representative), one from the Revolutionary Socialists and the Secretary of the illegal trade unions to see you.”

He rose and extended his hand in a friendly fashion.

“Until this evening,” he said, bowed, and was gone.

And that was all I got after having worked myself up to a pitch expecting something that at least smacked of conspiracy.

He called for me promptly at seven. As we left the hotel and I was about to hail a taxi he put a restraining arm gently on mine.

"Let's walk a little, shall we?" he suggested. "I don't suppose either of us is being watched," he explained casually, "but it's better not to take a taxi here. If the secret police should get suspicious about you they'll ask the drivers stationed at the hotel where they took you. These taxis are all stationed here."

We walked for three or four blocks before he hailed a passing cab, gave him a street corner address and then leaned back comfortably in the seat, looking out through the back window to see if we were followed. After watching for a few minutes during which he was apparently convinced that we were not being trailed, he turned to me with a smile.

"We'll have to walk a little when we get out," he apologized. "But it's not wise to drive up to the house. We have to be very careful."

At the street corner where we discharged the cab we waited for a few moments while the taxi drove off, and then walked to a large apartment house that seemed deserted even at that early hour, climbed several flights of stairs and then knocked on a door. I was ushered into a brightly lighted living and dining room where three men sat lounging in easy chairs and on a couch. They rose to greet us and, having introduced them, not by name but by the organizations they represented, he extended his hand to me.

"I am very happy to have met you," he said. "You will excuse me? I will go now."

I was holding my hat and coat in my right hand when he started to say good-bye, and in an effort to shift them quickly to the left hand I dropped my hat. I made a grab for it in mid air, in the course of which my hand struck his left hip rather smartly. I pulled it away with a stinging feeling of having struck something hard.

"What's that?" I exclaimed.

"A pistol," he said mildly.

It seemed a far jump from the snow-covered streets of Warsaw to this cozy apartment in Vienna where the under-



ground spokesmen sat comfortably in their chairs and smoked cigarettes with the air of good burghers at their ease after a hard day's work.

"Why does he carry a pistol?" I asked.

"He's very foolish," said the Communist spokesman, "and one of these days he'll get into trouble. He's a *Schutzbunder*. Spent quite a bit of time in prison after the February affair and he swore he'd never go to prison again. He had a very bad time of it in prison, I understand."

"I see. Well—I'm sorry he went. I wanted to talk to some *Schutzbunders*."

"We can introduce you to some," he said. "But we know quite a lot about them. We will tell you what we can and then you can see them yourself."

"I should like to start with the *Schutzbund*," I said when we had all been seated comfortably. "Everybody's wondering what happened to them, how strong they are now, what they are planning—"

"After many were massacred by government troops, hanged or imprisoned, the organization was pretty much disrupted. There used to be close to 18,000 in Vienna alone; now there are about 350—which gives you an idea of what happened to them. Immediately after the February affair a great many still stayed in the organization—about 8,000. When Dollfuss was assassinated there was a general mobilization order. Street fighting was expected. No one knew what was going to happen and *Schutzbunders* were ordered to their posts. But out of all those still in the organization only about 3,400 showed up—a really heroic thing when you come to consider that a few months earlier they had been massacred because of the dilly-dallying tactics of their leaders."

"What happened?"

"Nothing. And that seemed to be the end of the *Schutzbund*. Most of them, being youngsters, grew tired of the conservative Social Democrats and swung over to the Com-

munists, since the Communists believe in taking a Government by force when they think the time is ripe."

I turned to the Revolutionary Socialist spokesman.

"How do you account for the disintegration?"

"Chiefly because there is no central leadership. Some districts still have *Schutzbund* groups. Many of them have gone over to the Communists and since neither the Communists nor the Revolutionary Socialists have special military groups there is little reason for an organization like the *Schutzbund*."

We talked of the strength of the underground movements in Austria with all of them agreeing that it would be inaccurate to judge strength just by membership lists.

"There is no registration of Revolutionary Socialists," their spokesman said, "so the actual number of members would be difficult to give. We can estimate our strength this way: our illegal paper, the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, has a paid circulation of 25,000. This, roughly, is the number of members. But there are many close sympathizers who are virtually Party members but who do not get the paper. They get it from some other member. Then there are the unemployed who cannot afford to subscribe or pay dues. Conservatively, we estimate three readers for each copy, which means a minimum of three sympathizers who are virtually Party men."

"How about the Communists?"

"We would have to figure it the same way," the Revolutionary Socialist said while the Communist nodded. "They have an illegal paper called the *Rote Fahne* with a similar circulation—possibly a little less."

"But if you keep no list of names—" I began.

"The first rule of an illegal organization is to have no list of names or even numbers. Later we shall tell you of what can happen if you keep even numbers."

"What is the strength of the illegal trade unions?"

"There are about 30,000 members," their spokesman

said, but we, too, have many close sympathizers upon whom we can depend, a minimum of 50,000 more which means a total of some 80,000 men. I might add here that the Austrian Government estimates our strength at 300,000."

"Is it all right for me to use your figures then?" I asked quickly.

"Why not?" he laughed. "I think it's perfectly all right."

"How about the Nazis?"

"Their strength is about equal to the combined strength of the Socialists and the Communists, or about 50,000—"

"Fifty-five thousand," the Communist interrupted smiling. "We have their membership lists."

All of us burst out laughing.

"Now what do you think is the attitude of the great majority of Austrians toward all these underground parties?"

None of them answered for a while. Finally the Revolutionary Socialist said:

"I think it would be reasonably accurate to say that about 80 per cent of all the people, without having any particular political views or tendencies, are opposed to the present Government and about 50 per cent of all the people in Austria have no particular ideas or sentiments about any political party, either for the Left or for the Nazis."

"How about the legal parties?"

"The only legal parties now in Austria are those in the 'Patriotic Front.' The Austrian Government announced that there are now no political parties; everybody is united on a 'Patriotic Front.' The people who support the Government and are consequently the 'Patriotic Front' are chiefly the Christian Socialists or the clerical party and the Austrian Heimwehr led by Prince Starhemberg. The other legal body is the government-controlled labor unions with about 300,000 members. These operate like unions in most Fascist countries; the leaders are appointed by the Government and you know what that means."

"I have an idea. Now tell me how you work. How do you carry on your propaganda under the difficulties you have?"

In turn, each one spoke. The Revolutionary Socialists have divided the country into twenty "circles" and each "circle" into districts. The *Arbeiter Zeitung* is circulated from the illegal headquarters but each "circle" has its own paper, too. Vienna, with five "circles," has five papers. Two of the illegal newspapers are printed and eighteen are mimeographed. The Central Executive Committee issues special information bulletins containing political, economic and propaganda news each week for the active workers in the underground movement as well as small pamphlets, about 3 by 5 inches so they can be conveniently carried in pockets, for special political matters. The illegal newspapers, too, are about the same size, with small print.

"Some of these pamphlets," the Socialist smiled, "look exactly like official publications and are distributed chiefly among Government employees who read them thinking they are Government matter. Of course they soon discover suggestions that the Government wouldn't quite approve! Other pamphlets look exactly like the Heimwehr publications and these are distributed among members of the Heimwehr."

"What is the total circulation of these papers?"

"The newspapers, both printed and mimeographed, have a total of about 50,000."

"Now, can you tell me how you are organized?"

"Of course," the Socialist smiled. "The Revolutionary Socialists are organized into Groups of Five. One of the Five has a connection with the group immediately above for contact with still higher officials. The Group of Five meets weekly and so careful are we that the contact man for the group higher up does not even know the other four members of the Group of Five that he contacts. He knows only the one man with whom he deals. The Communists—"

he turned to look at the Communist spokesman as if for approval and the Communist nodded—"are also organized into similar groups. Only they call theirs 'cells' and we call ours Groups of Five."

"Where is your strength centered mostly?"

"Both Socialist and Communist strength is centered mostly among the workers. The Nazi strength is chiefly among the students and the farmers."

"Has your strength increased any in the last year or two?"

"Yes; about 15 to 20 per cent." He noticed my inquiring look and added, "We judge the increase by the increased circulation of the illegal papers, plus the amount of money we collect for the families of political prisoners."

"How about the illegal trade unions?" I asked, turning to the secretary of the organization.

"The Communists and Socialists are organized from a political standpoint," he explained, "but we have a trade union viewpoint. We are grouped according to the industries, each industry having a center. We have our own papers for propaganda purposes."

"Is your membership chiefly Socialist or Communist?"

"I don't know. Almost all members are one or the other. The illegal trade unions are above party politics and we ask no questions."

Since the three of them agreed that the illegal trade unions were composed of members of both parties, I turned my questions from the two Party representatives to the secretary of the illegal trade unions, and with the exception of a direct question to either the Socialist or the Communist, he did the answering during the remainder of the interview.

"How do you function within each industry?"

"About the same as the Socialists or the Communists except that we have two people in each Group or Five who know the contact man immediately above them. One is the regular contact and the other is the reserve in case the

first one should be arrested. We do not want to find ourselves suddenly without a contact with the group above. We are extremely careful, of course. For instance, here in Vienna, there is one factory with twenty such groups, without anyone knowing who the other members are. They know only their own Group of Five."

"Isn't it possible, then, that one member of a Group will try to convince a member of another Group?"

"It happens frequently," he smiled.

"What happens?"

"Oh, it's straightened out. Now, in the trade union movement we have a great advantage over the Communists and Socialists, one which keeps us from losing many of our men. All five in the Group work in the same department or workshop. Each one knows that the other is a worker in his own plant. In the political field you do not find this closeness of contact."

"Where is your strength chiefly?"

"In Vienna. We have a few members in the small towns outside of this city but our greatest strength is here."

"You had such great numbers in the trade unions," I said. "What happened to them that you have so few today?"

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "formerly we had great numbers, but when unions are strong many flock to them. Most of our former union members did little but pay dues and read the official paper. Before February the nerve centers of the trade unions were in nice offices but now they are in the factories, the mills and the mines. We have a small group but we have real fighters now," he added a little proudly.

"Do you pay dues?"

"Oh, yes. From a shilling to two shillings a month. One shilling goes to the trade union and the other to the victims of political persecution. The money is collected by the Groups of Five and passed on to the man above."

"What do you hope to achieve with the illegal trade union movement?"

"We want to make the people move," he said leaning forward a bit in his intensity to explain it. "That is our primary objective. We have, for instance, many illegal trade union members who are also members of the Government-controlled trade union and the function of these is to spread the ideas of the illegal trade unions among the Government men. As the crisis gets worse, and it looks like it's going to get worse, we plan to take advantage of the unrest to gain what we can.

"You must understand that though we are few in membership the number of our sympathizers is quite considerable. One of the chief things we seek now is not only to make sympathizers but to get the workers to support us in our demands. At present we are concentrating on trying to get free elections in the factories, mills and mines. In a word, we want to become free again."

"How do you expect to do this?"

"We hope that in time mass pressure will bring it about. We have already created a wedge. For instance, about 4,000 workers in the printing industry in Austria recently rebelled against paying dues to the Government union without having a word to say about who is to run the union. They announced that they did not intend to pay dues until they were given a voice. About 95 per cent of the workers didn't pay—which gives you an idea of the workers' attitude toward the Government unions. After four weeks of no paying they were given a voice. It wasn't much but it was an opening wedge which shows what can be done. They were allowed to choose from among their own men whom they would put up for election. The Government made this concession because it doesn't want the workers too dissatisfied."

"Can the workers bargain collectively?"

"No. No matter who represents them they cannot bargain collectively, for that automatically entails the threat of a strike if the demands are not granted."

"Have there been any strikes?"

"Political strikes, or strikes having a political purpose, were forbidden even before February but economic strikes such as those involving wages were allowed. The Government had a law prohibiting strikes of a political character or in industries of an essential nature, with the Government deciding when a strike was political and which industry was essential."

"Well, what is a political strike?"

"For instance, during the February affair, those who fought against the workers and were unemployed, were given cards to get preference when they applied for a job anywhere. In other places one preferential boy had to be hired by a factory for every twenty-five employees. When these preference boys were hired the other workers refused to work with them and there were a great many strikes as a result. Such strikes were considered political.

"So far as actual strikes are concerned I do not have all the figures because we do not have members in all the plants in Austria. But there have been a great many. The Government, of course, suppresses news of them. But I have a record of fifteen strikes in the metal industry alone during the past year. None of these strikes, however, lasted long—usually a day, possibly two. It is broken immediately and the leaders arrested."

"Have any leaders been imprisoned for organizing strikes?"

"No. Very little is done to the leaders because, though the strike is started by members of the illegal trade unions, it spreads so rapidly that the legal union leaders have to take them up. So nothing is done to them."

"Are workers arrested for striking?"

"Workers are never arrested for 'striking,' " he laughed. "They are arrested for 'resistance to government rules or authority.' They like to phrase it nicely. But the number so arrested is very few. Usually a strike spreads so rapidly that they'd have to arrest the entire factory if they were going to



do anything. You can judge the workers' sympathy for the illegal trade unions by the way they feel about February, 1934. As you know, the fighting started about noon and at noon on February 12, 1935, a ten-minute memorial strike was held in almost half the factories in Vienna.

"Then a couple of months ago the street car monopoly in Vienna, instigated by the Government, got its trade union leaders to advise the 14,000 workmen to give one per cent of their wages for the unemployed winter relief. The illegal trade unions opposed this quietly and when the total came in only 1,800 out of 14,000 had contributed. Everybody opposed it, because it was the Government's desire—even the Nazis and the Catholics were against it. I point this out because it shows that scarcely anybody likes the Government unions even though there are 300,000 in them."

"Out of the 14,000 in the street car monopoly about how many are members of the illegal trade unions?"

"About 2,500."

There was a knock on the door and all of them started slightly. It was the first sign any of them had given of the tension under which they lived constantly. It must be a horrible thing to be under such fear, sleeping or waking, that a knock on your door causes you to start. The Revolutionary Socialist, at whose house we apparently were, said quickly, "It's probably my wife."

He rose but nevertheless motioned to me to put my notes away. When I had hastily folded and put them in my pocket he opened the door. A charming woman entered, greeted everybody and then proceeded to upbraid her husband for not having offered his guests some refreshments.

"But—" he tried to protest while we laughed at his discomfiture.

"Now, now, now," she scolded, proceeding to brew tea and set the table. "I suppose I should know better than to expect it!"

She bustled about, humming a cheerful tune. It seemed

fantastic that this little group was hunted, that these people who looked like perfect middle-class house-holders were ready to fight to the death to capture a Government, that they moved and walked, slept and ate always in the shadow of arrest and imprisonment and violent death.

"All of you are so casual, such perfect homebody types," I commented. "None of you is so nervous as the German and Polish underground. How come? Aren't you afraid of spies and capture like the others?"

"Of course we're afraid; but we have very few spies in our ranks. Most of the Government spies are in the Nazi party—probably because they fear another *Putsch*. Even at that, most spies are not really professional ones. Many are middle-class people who are convinced that the Government is in a strong position and think they will curry favor by showing that they are patriotic and turning in those whom they suspect of Nazi activities.

"Once in a while, of course, there is some betrayal, as a few weeks ago when they arrested the treasurer of the illegal union of city workers. In his home they found a list of the members—no names, just numbers—of the 2,500 who are in the street car workers' union. It was a serious matter to the Government. That's a lot of illegal members out of 14,000 employees. They can tie up traffic in Vienna and the worried Government wanted to find out if the same proportion existed in other industries.

"They arrested about 500 people and searched about 1,000 houses but they had to release all but fourteen for lack of evidence."

"How did they get evidence on the fourteen?"

"It's since then that we don't keep even numbers," he smiled. "You see, the numbers had been divided up into various city districts. One district had only sixty people living in it and on this list of numbers fifty-three appeared for the district having a total of sixty people. Naturally the Government arrested all sixty. They found nothing. The

fourteen were held, not because of any traitors but because of our own stupidity. When a workman was shifted from one district to another, either when he moved or for whatever reason, his number always went on to the new district numbers. By comparing the list of numbers of one district with those of another, they found the numbers which appeared in both districts and knew that these were the members."

"I suppose they were sentenced?"

He nodded without speaking.

"I heard that under Austrian Fascism a man can be sentenced more than once for the same crime. Is that true?"

"Yes," he said a little grimly. "I'll explain how it's done with a specific case. A man named Alfred Tollinger was arrested here in Vienna in October, 1935. In his pocket the police found a Communist pamphlet and a Revolutionary Socialist Party pamphlet. He was given four months for being a Communist, eight months for being a Revolutionary Socialist and ten months for having the pamphlets in his possession!"

"Didn't his attorney—" I began.

"He is not permitted an attorney. Under Austrian law he is not permitted even to defend himself. It's what they call 'administration punishment.' It's a police punishment—no trial, no nothing— The police simply look at you and say, 'You look like a Communist' or whatever it is they think you look like, and give you six months. You're not allowed to open your mouth in your own defense and there's no appeal. You don't even have to have anything of an incriminating nature on you."

"That's pretty bad," I commented, "but, I think if we leaned a little backward on the legal side, which I suppose the Austrians do, what Tollinger possessed could be interpreted as several distinct offenses—"

"Yes," he agreed readily. "This handing out of several sentences for several pamphlets is not what we mean when

we say he can be sentenced several times for the same offense. What happens is that while he is serving these twenty-two months he is brought to trial in the law courts on the same charges for which he has already been sentenced. The law courts can sentence him for the same thing and when he has finished his police sentence, he starts serving the court sentence and when he has finished that he is taken to a concentration camp for half a year to see if any taint of radicalism still sticks to him. There have been many cases like that where men have served sentences for the same offense imposed by different arms of the Government."

"Is the accused allowed a lawyer when he appears before the law courts?"

"Yes; then he's allowed one."

"Is there any fear on the part of lawyers to defend Socialists or Communists as there is in Germany and Italy? I mean is there any attempt made by the Government to intimidate attorneys for the defense in political cases?"

"No," he said flatly. "So far as I know there have been no cases of intimidation in such cases. If there have been, they are few and far between."

"Considering all this," I laughed, "you certainly manage to keep a cheerful air about it all!"

The woman, who was pouring tea while we grouped around the dining table, broke into a gay laugh.

"We are Viennese," she said, as if that explained everything. "Even in our revolutionary work we can laugh." And turning to the others she asked: "Shall I tell him about Kirchengasse?"

The street seemed to amuse everybody, for they laughed heartily.

"Do, please," I begged.

"About a month ago the police raided an apartment in Kirchengasse, Vienna VII, where they found 14,000 pieces of illegal literature. They arrested the woman and her son who lived there and then set a guard within the apartment

to wait for those who would come, for obviously it was a distributing depot. A neighbor learned that the police were on the premises and immediately sent word to illegal headquarters to warn everybody to keep away.

"But, since we are Viennese and love life and laughter, we decided to insert an advertisement in the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* for 'patriotic messenger boys with slips for governmental preference, those having knapsacks preferred.' They were asked to report at the Kirchengasse address with their knapsacks so they could be attended to immediately. Then we sent a watcher to see what happened.

"The patriotic messenger boys just swarmed on the place looking for their preferential jobs and since they appeared with knapsacks it was obvious they had come for literature. As each one appeared he was arrested as a distributor of illegal literature!"

Everybody laughed at the recollection of the watcher's description of their faces as they were led away to jail.

"It took the police a long time before they realized we had played a trick on them!"

"So long as you've told him that story," the Communist suggested with a broad grin, "you might as well tell him about—Skubl."

This met with an even greater burst of laughter and the woman, her eyes sparkling, said, "But he's interested in more serious matters—"

"When you find underground movements with a sense of humor I think it's quite a serious matter! Please go on!"

"Well, all this searching of houses and arresting of people for all sorts of real and imaginary offenses are so widespread that we thought we'd have a little fun out of it. So one day we decided to send some letters. We printed stationery exactly like that used by the police president of Vienna. So far as anyone could tell the envelope was a police headquarters envelope, the letter was on police stationery and the signature was that of Police President Skubl.

"These letters went out through the regular mail to all cafés, barber shops and other public places where people congregate and stated in very solemn and official language that much to the regret of the police president, the need of searching for political offenders was so great that all the police energies had to be concentrated on that. Consequently, the police would henceforth have little time to guard the populace against thieves, burglars, housebreakers and so on, and would the citizens of Vienna please coöperate by watching out for thieves themselves, since the police no longer had time for it? The letter concluded with an order to the proprietor to post it in a prominent place so the citizens could read it, be properly warned and take steps to protect themselves!

"Since Skubl's signature was perfect and the letter written on apparently official stationery the amazed proprietors posted the letters in the most public places, leaving an even more amazed populace to read them and mutter about the pass that Vienna had come to as a result of this mad search for political offenders. Proprietors of jewelry stores, banks, business houses and individuals ran frantically to police headquarters protesting and demanding protection. The police were driven crazy by telephone calls. Finally they had to resort to the radio to order all public places where this letter was posted to take it down immediately on penalty of arrest!

"Vienna is still laughing about it and they say Skubl almost had apoplexy," she concluded gaily.

"Now, how about the Nazis?" I said after the laughter subsided. "Can you tell me anything about them?"

"I think so," the secretary of the illegal trade unions grinned. "They are organized in 'house blocks.' Their idea is to organize the people in a house; but when they have a neighbors' spat or the children fight somebody runs to the police and says that so-and-so is a Nazi."

"Do the Nazis spy on the Socialists or Communists?"

"I doubt it. The Socialists have spies in the house blocks but if the Nazis have spies among the Socialists we'd be very much surprised. In the country the Nazis are organized in Place Groups, made up of groups in a village. The Left parties have the same sort of organization for the villages."

"Do the Nazis have newspapers for propaganda, too?"

"They used to have but now they have only mimeographed newspapers. They haven't so much money for propaganda, not since the Dollfuss affair. The chief Nazi publication is *The Call to Fight* and comes out once every two months. Most Nazi propaganda is word of mouth. The mimeographed papers are in the various districts."

"How about trade unions?"

"They haven't any; nor are their members in the illegal trade unions. They have as many members as the Socialists and the Communists combined but they are very loosely organized and consequently are really not so much of a threat to the Government as the smaller but firmly organized Left underground movements."

I looked at the Socialist, the Communist and the Secretary of the illegal trade unions, all of them with different views as to tactics to be pursued, procedure, organization, and who, under different circumstances, would probably be bitter enemies. Yet here, faced by their common enemy, Fascism, they coöperated like old friends who had never had a disagreement in their lives. It was an ominous sign for Austrian Fascism to see representatives of these groups, who normally would snarl at one another, work together so smoothly.

"I haven't studied the French Front Populaire yet," I said, "but if you three are a sample of the coöperation among the illegal Left movements in Austria then you must have a swell united front—even if it isn't formal."

"We are meeting in an effort to form a formal united front," the illegal trade union secretary said, "and we are quite hopeful. We've learned something since February

and though we disagree heartily on many things and argue bitterly, we will probably get together, for it means our lives and our life-work."

"All of you had to get a rope around your necks before you decided to coöperate, eh?"

They smiled rather sadly and the trade union secretary said:

"In times of stress, enemies, if they do not get together, at least tolerate one another in fighting the common enemy. Why, shortly after February there was even a great tolerance among the Communists, Socialists and the Nazis."

"With the Nazis!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he laughed. "We had something in common: we were all against the Government."

"And now?"

"There is no more tolerance. A few months ago the Nazis thought they had a chance to get into the Government, so they betrayed the Communists they knew. Told who some of the district leaders were with whom they were working on minor matters. Now no one trusts the Nazis, so that tolerance is gone."

"Since you have a more or less united front, do you think I can get a more or less united view of what the Left parties in the underground movements think is the immediate future political trend in Austria?"

"I think we can agree on a few basic matters," the illegal trade union spokesman said while the others nodded. "If either comrade here disagrees with what I say, let him interrupt."

The others nodded and he began:

"In the first place England, Italy, France—all the powerful European countries—are interested in seeing a strong Government in Austria, a Government that will govern with the approval of the people. The present Austrian Government has only fifteen to twenty per cent of public support.



“The Austrian Government, knowing the attitude of the European powers, is now trying to win the workers over to its side, which means the establishment of democracy in one form or another in the not too distant future. Starhemberg’s Fascists, for instance, are afraid of the German Nazis and to prevent their seizing the country they turn to foreign countries, above all to England, for support. They cannot turn to Italy now because Mussolini is all tied up in Africa and in the event of trouble couldn’t be of much use to Austria. Austria must get loans from England, so it means that England must protect Austria.

“With this as the situation, the foreign policy of the illegal movements is that the only guarantee of peace in Austria—and, in a great measure, peace in Austria means peace in Europe—is the reestablishment of democracy. This is possible only if the workers get their organizations legal again; and if the illegal parties become legal again as a result of foreign pressure, they intend to work not on a reformist basis but for a Government run by workers and farmers. Such a government automatically excludes any Fascist party.”

“What makes you so optimistic about the return of democracy?”

“The recent tendency in the factories and mills. As I told you earlier, due to the evident irritation of the workers at the lack of real workers’ representation, the opening wedge has been made so they can choose their own representatives. I think it is a trend which will sooner or later make the illegal trade union movement legal.”

“These small gains, to amount to anything, will take a long time. Suppose a war breaks out in the meantime? What will happen?”

They were all silent for a while; then the illegal trade union leader said slowly:

“One thing is definite: the illegal trade unions will not make peace with a Government that makes war.”

I looked inquiringly at the Communist.

"We are doing our utmost to organize for peace," he said slowly, "but if, despite everything, war breaks out, civil war is possible at home."

I looked at the Revolutionary Socialist who smiled rather grimly. "I don't think the Socialists will fight for any capitalist country, especially a Fascist one."

"Civil war—from your side, too?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "We may not go as far as the Communists," he said, "but we're not fighting for anyone but the workers and the farmers."

It was quite late and when I mentioned that I had better stop questioning them they assured me: "No, no. We'll stay with you all night if necessary. It's quite all right."

"Well," I said a little miserably, "the fact is I'm so tired myself that I can't think of many more questions to ask. But before we break up I'd like to ask a few that haven't anything to do with politics or economics. First: isn't it dangerous for you to have brought me here?"

"Yes, it is," the woman interrupted, "but assuming that you are not reliable or that you have been followed—it proves nothing. My husband and I are perfectly respectable citizens, quite well known as supporters of the Government. My family is well known; there isn't a speck of illegal literature in the house and they can search or follow me from now until doomsday without finding anything. As for these two comrades, within five minutes after they leave here they will be lost among Vienna's almost two million people."

"Good; now, in underground movements like this, isn't it dangerous for spokesmen of these various groups to meet together and know who is working for which group?"

"Normally, it would be," the secretary of the illegal trade unions smiled. "But we three were chosen especially because we know one another. Coöperation does not necessarily mean that we exchange membership lists! But we decided that you should see how well we coöperate without a formal

united front and that though we have different views, we can and do work together. Then again, there was the practical matter of lessening the always present danger. Three meetings would mean taking three chances. One meeting is only one chance, so after talking it over we decided to have one meeting of all three."

"I see," I said. "Now, I suppose you want to leave first?"

"It doesn't matter," they laughed. "We can all three leave."

They walked me to where I could see a row of taxi stands half a block away.

"We will all separate here," the Communist said.

They extended their hands.

"Good night," they said. "Come again some time when we can receive you openly. Then we can have good Vienna beer and music—"

## THEY LIVED TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

OF THE TWENTY YOUNGSTERS who fought a battalion of soldiers and 150 police at the Reumann Hof in Vienna on February 12, 1934, only three are still in prison. The others were released after serving sentences ranging from six months to two years.

One day, I have no doubt, someone will write the whole tragic story of the handful of workers who, armed only with rifles and pistols, held off a nation's military force equipped with the latest implements of warfare, youngsters who responded to a suicidal call to battle for the Austrian working-class, and were trapped, slaughtered and captured because their leaders dilly-dallied.

There is something heroic about the Viennese which arouses the admiration of the observer, a heroism that is not confined to members of the *Schutzbund* who were the armed forces of the Social-Democrats. The Nazis, after they killed Dollfuss and surrendered upon assurances of guarded transportation to the German border and who were hanged instead of being transported safely, went to the gallows crying "Heil Hitler." Socialists and Communists who hate the Nazis speak of their heroism with the same admiration they speak of the youngsters in the *Schutzbund*.

The cannons, machine guns and hand grenades that blasted holes in the buildings where the *Schutzbunders* found themselves trapped in February also blasted the organization which had been the envy of militant Socialists

the world over. Today the *Schutzbund* is a thin shell of what it was. In Vienna alone there had been 18,000 members; today Vienna has an estimated 1,000, possibly a little more. A half-hearted attempt to reorganize them secretly into a fighting unit (membership in the *Schutzbund* is punishable by a long prison sentence), is being made now but without much success.

"We are ready to fight for the working-class whenever we are called upon," two youngsters who had fought in February, told me, "but we do not want to be slaughtered uselessly."

When an effort was made to start an illegal *Schutzbund* paper to bring the disrupted *Schutzbunders* together in the firmly knitted organization it had been, subscriptions were taken—secretly, of course,—throughout the country and only 6,000 subscribed. The majority subscribed only because of sympathy instead of whole-hearted support such as they had given before.

It is difficult to understand recent and current labor and political developments in Austria without a picture of the strength of trade union organization and the political views of the Social-Democrats. The effort to destroy them made by the doll-like Chancellor in his attempt to enforce a one-hundred per cent Fascist Government, brought on the desperate fighting on February 12. Though this date is important now historically, its significance today lies in the attitude of the Austrian workers, an attitude which, I think, will play an increasingly important rôle in the years immediately ahead.

When the cannons roared against the workers' coöperative homes on that cold winter's day the world learned of the Social-Democrats' private army composed chiefly of unemployed workers between the ages of 18 and 30. Since then, those who follow Austrian history asked, as I asked when I got to Vienna: "What has happened to this workers' army; and if anything is left what function is it playing

today and what will it play in the coming eventful years?"

I knew that it was illegal and that most members were known to the police and were consequently marked men. When the interviews with the spokesmen for the Austrian underground movements were finished I had asked whether it was not possible to meet some *Schutzbunders* who had participated in the fighting. A meeting was arranged with the same caution that was used in bringing me to the underground movements.

Since the ones I met had been arrested and imprisoned after the fighting, I cannot say anything of them that might serve as identification. The one who was my chief guide was young, serious, yet with that eagerness to know what is happening in the outside world that helped me to understand the high development of trade-union and political consciousness in the Austrian worker. We met on a street corner and as we walked to a café where we could sit and talk, the one who introduced me to the *Schutzbunder* said I had just come from Czechoslovakia. The youngster turned to me with eager eyes.

"How are things there?"

"Not so good; there is a good deal of hunger in some areas and many are unemployed."

"Yes, yes, that is so all over the world," he said a little impatiently, "but they have freedom?"

He peered at me and his face fell when I shook my head a little.

"They have freedom—of a sort. They can hold meetings and they have newspapers not absolutely controlled by the Government but if they publish anything which the Government does not like it is confiscated. The papers frequently show blank spaces of stories the censor ordered out."

"Yes?" he said. "For us, Czechoslovakia is the only land of freedom in the middle of Europe. But what you say—that is better than we have here. Much better. Then how, if

they have such censorship, can they tell what is really happening?"

"By phrasing it in a way which seems harmless but actually gets the news across. They have become expert at it."

He laughed with a pleased air. "*Ja, ja!* There are many ways to talk eh? *Ja*, there are many ways, but here we cannot."

Freedom! The hunger for freedom was so intense in this youngster's face that it was pathetic. Even the partial freedom in Czechoslovakia was to him a beacon-light in the darkness of a Fascist jungle. He was unemployed and, as I later learned, often went hungry, yet the first question he asked was not of work in other lands or of food but of freedom; and it is this supreme hunger for liberty in him and in others which explained the intensity of the underground activities in Austria and which, I am convinced, will secure some concessions of freedom from the Government—or considerably more trouble will break out.

"Will you take me to where you were during the fighting?" I asked. "I should like to see it and you can tell me about it when we are there."

"Of course," he smiled, "but it would be wiser to part with our friend here. I don't think it's dangerous for three of us to look over the place but three attract more attention than two."

My companion, who had come to introduce me, nodded approvingly and put out his hand.

"I think he is right," he said. "I'm sure he will take good care of you. *Auf wiedersehen.*"

"I fought at the Reumann Hof," my companion said as we started for that workers' coöperative home. "The fighting was all over Vienna and in other cities. In some sections there were many *Schutzbunders*, but at the Reumann Hof we were only twenty."

When we reached the corner of Margaretengurtel and Brandmayergasse I saw the four-storied Reumann Hof,

where workers' families still live. The gray walls were dotted with huge splotches as high as the fourth floor.

"Those splotches show where holes were torn in the walls when the soldiers threw hand grenades at us," he said as we paused to stare, not too openly, at the building which had witnessed some of the fiercest fighting. "The walls were rebuilt and painted over but the splotches remain."

As we stood on the sidewalk surrounding Haydn Park across the street from the Reumann Hof he told me of what had happened on that day which changed the course of contemporary history not only for Austria but for Europe.

For a long time the Social-Democrats' armed forces had prepared for the day when they might have to fight to keep what the organized workers had gained by democratic means. The leaders of the Social-Democrats knew that history showed that no ruling class had ever relinquished its power without a bitter struggle. Since they had achieved such great advances by peaceful means, the Social-Democratic leaders hoped to complete the establishment of workers' control of the Government peacefully for the first time in history, but if that were impossible, they prepared to defend their gains by force. Against that day they had stocked rifles, pistols, machine guns, ammunition. In almost every spacious and beautifully built coöperative, the implements for the possible ultimate class war were hidden. It was common knowledge throughout Austria and Central Europe that the *Schutzbunders* were armed. The leaders used extreme care to safeguard the hiding places so that the state could not seize the arms in surprise raids. In most places, as in the Reumann Hof, the arms were hidden in the walls of the building and they were plastered and painted so no one would suspect what lay behind the innocent exterior. Axes were kept handy to chop through the walls should it become necessary but only the leader and his immediate superior in the *Schutzbunders* living in a coöperative knew the exact location of the cache.



The *Schutzbund*s were well trained. Upon a mobilization order all would report to their posts as quickly as they could and await instructions.

"Several days before the 12th," my companion said, staring at the dark gray splotches on the building, "we expected that we might have to fight and everybody was ready. Early in the morning of the 12th we heard that fighting had broken out in Linz, the chief city in upper Austria. Word spread swiftly through Vienna that the workers there had been attacked by the police. The news was like an electric shock; we were all tense, waiting for orders—but no orders came. Our political leaders gave orders to *Schutzbund* leaders, and we heard nothing definite from the political leaders. We met with our comrades. Everybody asked everybody else questions but none of us knew anything definite. We knew only that the power might be shut off in Vienna—and that that would be the signal for us to report to our posts. No matter where we were we would know instantly, whether we were in the factory or on the street.

"At five minutes to twelve, it was, that it happened. I was walking on the street when a street car approaching me came to a stop. Another street car on the opposite track, too, came to a stop. The power had been shut off. It was the signal we had been waiting for and I started hurriedly for my post at the Reumann Hof.

"When I arrived there were about ten or twelve comrades already there. The others kept drifting in. Some, when they saw that the power had been shut off had first gone home to change into their Sunday clothes for the fighting! I guess only a Viennese could do that!" he smiled wryly. "Our leader was there—Sailer Eunnerich. He was the oldest and he was only twenty-five. Sailer was sentenced to be hanged after we surrendered," he added slowly, "but the sentence was reduced to twenty years in prison. He is serving it now in Stein—it's the prison on the Danube, about two hours from Vienna. Most political prisoners are there."

He took me gently by the arm and suggested, "Let's walk a bit while I tell you what happened. If we stand still too long we may attract attention."

We crossed the street and walked up a couple of blocks while he continued:

"Sailer had been in several fights with the Nazis and had always come out victorious, so we looked upon him as our natural leader. He told us he had tried to communicate with the chief of the *Schutzbund* in Vienna but communication had been cut off or else the chief wasn't around. I don't know. All I know is that all of us were told to report. We reported but there were no orders. We were just there—that was all.

"All of us expected the police at any moment. We knew that the police knew the Reumann Hof was reported to be heavily stocked with rifles, pistols and ammunition. Some of us got axes and then, for the first time, we were shown where the guns were cached—behind a basement wall. We chopped the wall down and got 100 rifles—5 for each of the 20 who had by now reported—pistols and boxes of ammunition—"

We had retraced our steps and were opposite the corner of the building again.

"You see where it slopes at this corner," he said, nodding his head. "It was here that the cache was and it was in this basement that we made our stand. There were two rooms and we divided our forces so as to guard them. By this time it was one-fifteen and we were as yet very loosely organized. We had the arms and were ready—for what, we didn't know."

"What did you talk about then—when you were armed and just waiting?"

"Mostly about Linz and the reports of fighting there."

"What was the attitude of the *Schutzbunders* when they expected the fighting to break out any minute?"

"There was no special attitude. We didn't know what had

happened except that the power had been shut off and that fighting might be expected any minute!"

"Was everybody ready to fight?"

"That's why we reported," he smiled.

"But you knew if fighting started you'd have plenty of police, possibly soldiers here—"

"Yes; but the people were with us. We had many friends all over Vienna and we expected that when the fighting started they would come to our help."

When the power was shut off in Vienna detachments of police were sent to the workers' coöperative buildings. By one o'clock a detachment of police had surrounded the Reumann Hof. Three *Schutzbunders*, chopping through the walls for two machine guns which had been cached and not yet brought up, were suddenly confronted by four policemen who had made their way unperceived into the basement. Whether the police had entered in an effort to surround the *Schutzbunders* or whether they had information that the arms were in the basement has never been disclosed. But when the four shadowy figures in uniforms pointed their rifles at the youngsters heaving away with axes and ordered them to put up their hands, the shooting began.

The *Schutzbunders* answer to the order to surrender was to open fire. Three of the police dropped, seriously wounded. The remaining policeman returned the fire and the four retreated, the unwounded policeman firing wildly to cover their retreat. None of the *Schutzbunders* was touched.

"We didn't want to kill them," my companion said. "We let the unwounded one continue firing while the others groped their way out."

"But wouldn't they have killed you?"

"Probably. But they were wounded. We had removed them as active combatants. Why kill them needlessly?"

When the sound of firing reached the other *Schutzbunders* they immediately took their posts, covering all windows and exits. The police withheld their fire until their col-

leagues reached safety. That was at one thirty—one hour and a half after the power had been shut off.

The fighting, though those in the Reumann Hof did not know it, was by this time general throughout Vienna. All available police forces were used but for two hours after the *Schutzbunders* were trapped, the police, waiting for reinforcements, made no effort to attack, being content to fire an occasional shot to let the besieged know they were still there.

"We kept hoping that help would come from our comrades outside. But we seemed to have been cut off from the world. There was no communication; we knew nothing, heard no word. We used to listen to see if we could hear firing from other places but we didn't hear a sound. And just before it grew dark a whole battalion of soldiers suddenly appeared—three hundred of them, we learned later, armed with machine guns and hand grenades as well as rifles and pistols."

He took me gently by the arm and we started walking again.

"We had two machine guns but no ammunition for them," he added. "It was inexcusable on the part of our leaders."

"Any women around?"

"There were women in the house but we were in the basement. They couldn't get to us and we didn't want them to. It was too dangerous. We had a little water."

The police kept peppering the building, not knowing whether the workers were scattered in places other than the basement. Just as darkness fell the police apparently recaptured the power-station, for the city's lights flashed on. Two outside the Reumann Hof burned brightly, illuminating the windows where the besieged were stationed. "These two, there," said my companion, nodding almost imperceptibly to the small bulbs. "We shot them out immediately. We had no orders to do it. It was almost instinctive."

When the entrance lights were shot out the military commander, accompanied by four men, moved under cover of the darkness to the door. The *Schutzbunder* at his post at the door saw the shadowy figures and opened fire on them, killing the commander and wounding the other four.

"Do you see that house there—the corner house, across the park? We had friends there—other *Schutzbunders* who had waited until dark before they could come to our help. At about the time we killed the battalion commander about twenty *Schutzbunders* crept up in the park and opened fire on the police and soldiers, taking them by surprise. Simultaneously—all these things we learned after the fighting was over—from that balcony there, two of our comrades who had mounted a machine gun opened fire on the military and mowed some of them down.

"The soldiers, confused by the death of their commander and startled by the raking machine gun fire and the rear attack, stopped shooting at us and turned their fire on the house with the machine gun. I heard later that one comrade was killed and the other wounded. The *Schutzbunders* who had attacked from the park scattered. Only one of them was caught. At the same time that they were trying to rout the other *Schutzbunders* and destroy the machine gun, they opened fire on us with machine guns and hand grenades. For about an hour they fired steadily. It was difficult for us to show ourselves at a window to return the fire. Hand grenades kept exploding against the walls, tearing huge holes in them."

"But holes were torn in the walls four stories up," I said, nodding to the splotches near the top floor. "You were shooting from the basement."

"The soldiers didn't know where we were centered. The moment a light showed in a window anywhere in the Reumann Hof they would throw a grenade at it and turn the machine guns in that direction. That splotch way up there—I heard what happened. A baby was asleep and, startled

by the explosions, began to cry. The mother crept across the floor to quiet it. She had a candle in her hand and when the soldiers saw the light from the candle they threw a grenade and blew a hole in the wall."

He noticed my look and shook his head. "No, neither the mother nor the baby was hurt," he smiled.

"Were any *Schutzbund*s killed or wounded during this time?"

"None of us received a scratch. But after an hour of hand grenade attack there were so many holes in the walls that we were virtually fighting in the open. There was no place for us to take cover. It would have been suicide to have continued the fighting. Help had not arrived and our leader called some of us and asked whether we should surrender.

"Only a few of the hot heads wanted to continue. The rest of us saw that with a few more grenades we would all be blown to pieces. We didn't know what had happened. We didn't know whether the fighting was still going on in Vienna or in other cities. We did know our comrades had not captured the city or the soldiers would not be there, so in a lull in the shooting the new military commander called out that if we did not surrender within five minutes he would gas the house. Why he hadn't tried that before I don't know. Our leader returned that we were ready to surrender."

We were opposite the corner again and he paused for a moment.

"All of us—everywhere—we were fighting with no main leadership. We had no contact with *Schutzbund* headquarters. We had no instructions. We had held the place for seven hours against a battalion of soldiers and over a hundred police. Why—after we had surrendered, one fellow who had been stationed at a door kept firing at the soldiers. He did not even know that we had surrendered and he was so furious he wanted to continue the fighting all by himself!"

It was pretty much the same all over Vienna. Leaderless,

out of touch with *Schutzbund* headquarters, with no instructions, these youngsters fought until there was no hope left. Some of them came out with their hands lifted, tears streaming down their faces in their despair and helpless fury.

"We knew it meant being hanged or long years of imprisonment. That did not bother us so much as the knowledge that the workers had lost Austria—the Austria for which we had been trained and organized and armed ourselves—because of the stupidity of our leaders."

"What happened?"

"Oh," he said, rather helplessly. "Some of the *Schutzbunders* were hanged. Many went to prison. Eventually most of them were released."

"And the *Schutzbund*?"

"Pretty much broken—the heart was taken out of it."

"But they are still Social-Democrats or Revolutionary Socialists?"

"Some—yes. Many threw their hands up in despair and dropped out of the movement altogether. Many *Schutzbunders*, furious at their leaders, went over to the Communists. It was this that caused the great increase in Communist membership and influence. We were disgusted with the dilly-dallying tactics of our leaders. Time after time we had been ready to fight—times when we would have been successful; but each time the Social-Democratic leaders said we could achieve power by legal means, by voting—that it wasn't necessary to spill blood. With that policy we now have Fascism—Fascism which cares nothing about legal methods or voting. The Communists are more realistic about what the ruling class will do to the workers before they surrender power."

"What happened to the families of those who went to prison?"

"For a long time it was forbidden even to bring them something to eat. They have scattered. I do not know where they are now. Everywhere."

"Who is living in these coöperative homes now—the homes that were rebuilt after February?"

"The people who shot them down." There was a touch of grimness in his voice. "That was their reward. Some of the people still live there. Many others have fled to Czechoslovakia."

"And what has happened to the old Social-Democrats?"

"Some became Communists. Others simply washed their hands of all revolutionary activities. Still more became Revolutionary Socialists—as the Social-Democrats now call themselves.

"There was much bitterness because the leaders would not let them fight when there was more than a chance of victory. They waited for orders—orders—orders that never came. So they were killed like pigs."

He was silent for a moment and then said a little proudly: "But there were tales of heroism—tales of heroism that need great writers. Perhaps one day they will be told. We Austrians are a heroic people. Even the Nazis show heroism. When Dollfuss was killed. Boys"—he motioned with his hands to emphasize their extreme youth—"went to the gallows crying, 'Heil Hitler!' Real heroism—"

He shook his head regretfully at the thought that such heroism should have been wasted on Naziism.

"These Austrian students, these peasants and farmers—they believe in Hitler. They believe in Hitler as we believe in the working-class and one day it will be a bitter fight between us. When each side believes in what it's fighting for, then the fight must be to a finish. And one day that's what will happen in Austria."

"But the *Schutzbund* is pretty much destroyed—"

"Ja," he said, nodding.

"After February, did they search workers' homes for arms?"

"They searched every place—"

I was a little hesitant about asking the next question



which had been running through my mind during the entire conversation. It was one of those questions that's difficult to ask about men for whom the police are constantly seeking. But if fighting seemed to be in store for Austria it was a question that had to be asked and answered:

"Are the workers armed now?" I finally said, hesitantly.

He shot me a keen glance and hesitated. Then, with eyes lowered, he said slowly:

"They did not get all of the arms."

"I see," I said.

"*Ja*," he said in a low tone, "they did not get all of the arms."



## A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN L. SPIVAK entered newspaper work at an early age and has kept at it for twenty years. In New York he served with the *Sun*, *Journal*, and *Graphic*; abroad he served as special correspondent for the International News Service.

During his career, SPIVAK has originated a technique of journalistic detective work entirely his own. Long ago in Des Moines he had himself locked in a strait-jacket in an insane asylum and came out with proof that the State Board was incarcerating sane people. More recently he contributed to the defeat of Congressman MacFadden of Pennsylvania and exposed as forgeries the so-called "Whalen Documents" that the former New York Police Commissioner used to discredit liberals and radicals.

SPIVAK is the author of several books: *The Devil's Brigade*, the story of the Hatfield-McCoy feud; *Georgia Nigger*, the story of the southern chain gangs; and *America Faces the Barricades*, a report on the state of the Union.

SPIVAK's home is in Hartford, Connecticut, and his hobbies are photography and pistol-shooting. In a recent competition with a Kentucky mountaineer he made nine direct hits out of ten. And he writes the same way.

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