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"In Spite of the Gestapo"

BY KLAUS AND ERIKA MANN

IT IS important that the world should know the truth about Germany, but it is still more important that Germany should know what is going on in the world. It is the duty of the exiles to flash light into the darkness of Germany. The Germans under the scourge of the Nazis must be shown Hitler's machinations; they must be told what the world thinks of them; they must above all be taught what free Germans are thinking, doing, and planning; they must realize that preparations are being made for a new Germany.

The paths which lead from the German exiles into Germany are many, intricate, and thorny; death lurks at every corner. We love and admire the unarmed and defenseless heroes now moving on those paths. We have spoken with many of them, known many a one who fell in the battle. Here is the story of one fighter for German freedom who was lately beheaded in our country.

He was about twenty when Hitler came to power. As a boy he had been a member of a republican organization; as a young man he had joined a Social Democratic group known as the Black, Red, and Gold Banner. It was dissolved and many of its leaders thrown into concentration camps. The young man of whom we are speaking was young and obscure, but he was resolved that his submission to the horror should be no more than a pretense. We have heard him tell of the illegal work he undertook against Hitler.

"The chief thing," he said, "is to spread the truth. The rest will come of itself. If only our people knew the whole truth, it would soon be all over with Hitler. Thus our work is not revolutionary in the ordinary sense; it is a work of enlightenment."

"But how is the truth to be spread since death is the penalty for spreading it?"

"I am a skilled worker," the young man said, "and had a good name in the factory I worked in. A lot of my mates there—60 or 70 per cent, I should say—are against Hitler. Of course we don't dare to speak openly with each other. Even when there are only three or four of us together, one is often a spy. I begin to tell them about a radio talk I heard yesterday—a German one, of course—and I pretend to admire it. Then, I say, something went wrong—all of a sudden some foreign station cut Germany out. I couldn't help it, and of course I didn't believe what they said. My mates ask me what it was about. 'Oh!' I reply contemptuously, 'foreign lies—atrocity mongering.' And then I quote the speeches of the English opposition in the House of Commons, a question about the

German 'volunteers' in Franco's Spain, or a few sentences from an appeal by Roosevelt. It is staggering, I say, how people can lie. Yes, say my mates, it is staggering. And all the time their eyes are glowing with hatred of the real liars."

We asked the young workman if it was possible to hold meetings of any size in Germany where the enemies of the regime would have the opportunity of open discussion. He shook his head. "Of course not," he said, "but we find ways. We are great funeral-goers. If someone dies who we know was one of us, the announcement of his funeral is for us a summons to a political meeting. Without further notice we turn up at the cemetery in hundreds; walking behind the hearse, we tell each other all there is to be told, and exchange news and inquiries."

"Where does the news come from?" we asked.

"From various sources," the young man replied, "from the German Liberty wireless station, which the bravest of us listen to in the evening, and from leaflets which are sent to us from abroad or are brought in by friends. Have a smoke," he said suddenly, offering us a box of cigarettes he opened specially for us. "German cigarettes," he said, "Remtsma No. 3." We lit up. The young man watched us. "Haven't you noticed anything?" he asked after a time. No, we hadn't noticed anything. "Look at the smoke," he said. "When it gives off fumes like that we know what's up. Give it to me." He took our cigarettes out of our mouths, put them out, and unrolled them. A whole sheet of very thin paper appeared, covered with close but legible print. "There you are," he said, and we read it.

We were touched to see the facsimile signature of one of us, Heinrich Mann. The paper was the printed copy of a speech he had broadcast from Barcelona. "On Hitler's birthday," the young man told us, "cigarettes were distributed in the factories—Remstma No. 3. We replaced thousands of boxes—you'll admit that nobody can see anything from the outside. But as soon as they light a cigarette, our men notice—too much smoke, too much paper. Then they read." There was satisfaction in his voice.

"And if you get caught?"

"Well," he said, with an expressive movement of his hand round his neck, "then it's all over."

When we met this young man over a year ago—he came to see us at our New York hotel—he had already gone dangerously far. He had been abroad several times and had gone back with pamphlets in the double floor

of his trunk—cheap paper-covered editions of the classics and travel advertisements for the Third Reich which looked just as innocent as the cigarettes and contained just as much inflammable material in the form of truth.

"I get a lot of hints from our friends out here," he said to us then. "They provide me with information and the names of go-betweens. I settle dates with them. For such and such a thing which has to be done in Germany I get, let's say, five days. Five days later I have to turn up and report—I must. How I do it is my business. If I don't get there it's a sign that something has gone wrong, that I've been observed or caught. Now and then one of us falls into the hands of the Gestapo, which may merely keep him locked up for a few days. But those days can break his back—his spirit. The torture, you know, and the threats that his parents or his girl will be put to death. However, when his spirit is broken, he is set free, but he's a changed man, even though nobody can see it. He goes about, free, but he is watched and spied on by the agents of the Gestapo. Every step he takes is reported, everyone he speaks to, all the people he knows at home are reported, the hiding-places of our printing presses are reported, and so is the whole network we have spun with so much toil and at the risk of our lives. That is why we have to be on time. If one of us can't give an account of himself for every day and every hour he spent in Germany, he is at once under suspicion. He has been in the claws of the Gestapo, and has been broken and changed."

We looked at the young man as he spoke. He looked perfectly ordinary—brown hair, medium height, distinguishing marks none. He spoke without emotion, dryly and to the point. We felt ashamed that our names and not his should be mentioned here and there in the world when people speak of the fight against Hitler; it was he who deserved it.

"Everyone fights in his own way," he said. "And the exiles, you know, are our lines of support; they provide us with important points to fall back on. Besides, they can—they *could*—proclaim our will to the world. They are free! The political exiles are really important."

The emphasis lay on the word "political," and it was clear that among the élite which is, or should be, represented by the exiles there is again a small, carefully chosen élite which plays a part in the fight against Germany.

Our friend, a metal-worker, twenty-five years of age, was beheaded in the little town in the German midlands which was his home. But he hadn't let his back be broken: he had refused to become a decoy for the Gestapo; he did not betray the names of his friends. He was killed. His young wife put on mourning; for two days as she went about the streets the townsfolk bravely went up to her and pressed her hand. They said nothing; they merely pressed her hand and looked at her face, which was

frozen with grief. Two days later she appeared in the streets in her colored clothes. One reckless spirit asked her why. "The Gestapo," said the woman. "They forbade my wearing mourning—it was a public nuisance."

What is going on in Germany is a war; the weapons of the troops of liberty are whispered words, their bombs are thin sheets of closely printed paper—but they are staking their lives.

We are not seen, we are not known,
We have no badge to wear,
Our foes' revenge is powerless
To reach us anywhere.
We're no more to be grasped than air
Or water swiftly flowing,
Our foes have never caught us yet,
They only feel we're growing.

That is a verse of a song which is often sung in Germany. It is called "The Illegal Whisper," and it is imbued with great revolutionary fire.

The German Liberty radio station, which has for years past made an onslaught on the Nazis every evening, always closes down with the promise, "Goodby till tomorrow evening, same time, wave length so and so, and in spite of the Gestapo." In spite of the Gestapo, these men, with the little transmitter that has to be perpetually shifted to some new vehicle, dare to travel through Germany. The voice issues from motor boats, racing cars, delivery vans, from dark high roads or the open heath. "Hello, hello, German Liberty Station calling." The station is wonderfully well informed about everything going on in Germany. Very often it knows about the schemes of the Nazi leaders sooner than anyone else. There must be among its reporters men in the closest touch with the Führer. Many of its communications, however, come from abroad. And here again the exiles, that is to say, the militant élite among the exiles, can be seen at work. They provide the Liberty Station with truth from all over the world. The speech given at Geneva by Del Vayo, the Spanish Foreign Minister, an appeal to the German people by Thomas Mann—such are the things which the Liberty Station broadcasts to the heads and hearts of the German people. "Hello," we can hear it say, "the Gestapo is cutting us out. We're going a bit to the right." The voice dies out. We turn the knob a little to the right—there it is again. Now it is quoting Goethe, Schiller, Herder, reminding the German people of the best it has, calling the great minds of the past to witness that what it says is the truth and what it demands is just and right. And all over the country people are sitting breathless over the wireless sets, with doors and windows closed, listening spellbound to the voice, the fearless voice they have to tune down until its words have faded into an inspiring whisper, for in Germany it is high treason to listen to it.

At night, when a few gaily colored balloons glide over the big cities along the frontiers of the Reich, such as Düsseldorf or Saarbrücken, when they burst in the air, dropping their contents—thousands of sheets of thin, closely printed paper—into the streets, when people rush after the leaflets to pick them up and read them, this also is high treason. The truth comes from abroad; the militant élite among the exiles use this way of sending it into the country; the people at home then know that their friends who are at liberty are at work. The knowledge gives them renewed courage, and we may be sure that they will do their share.

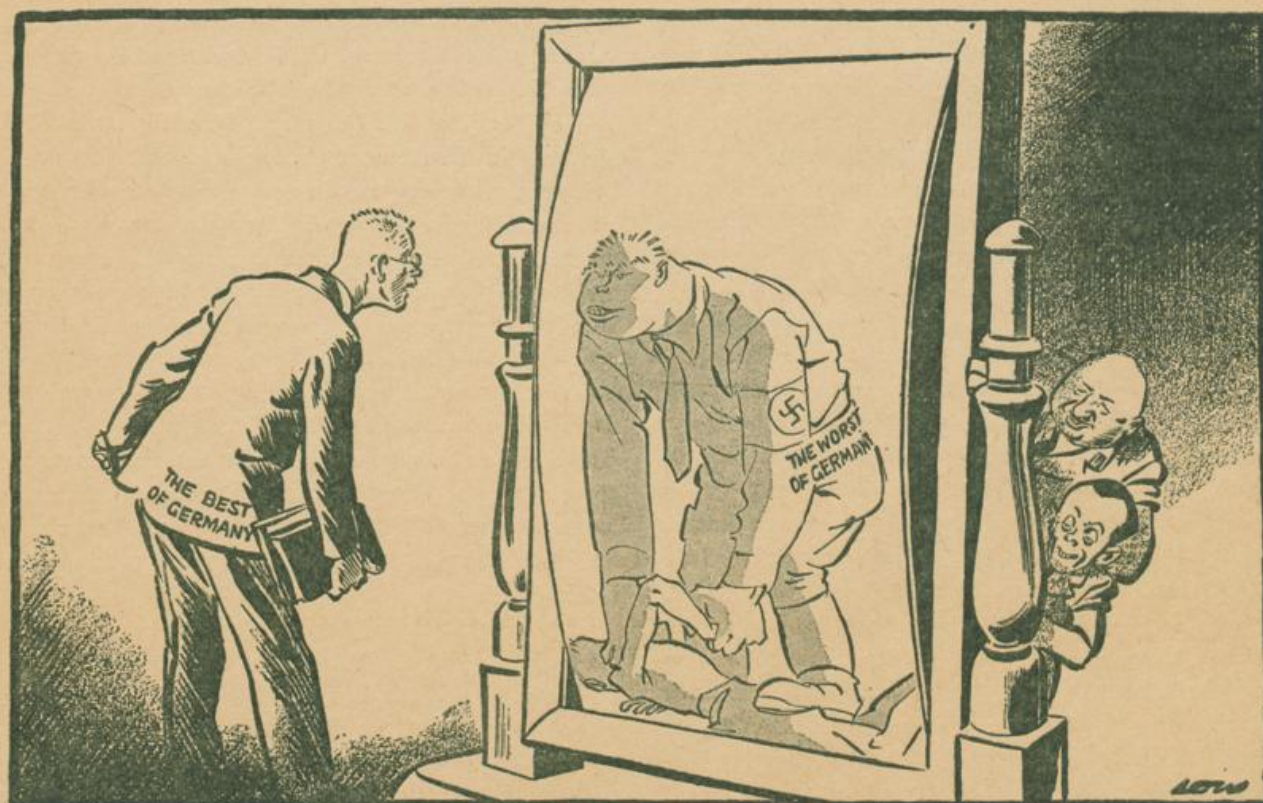
When German steamers put in at Copenhagen or Madeira with a boatload of "Strength through Joy" trippers on a fortnight's strictly supervised holiday, rowboats go far out to sea to meet them, flying odd little pennants with messages such as "Rescue Niemöller," "Stop the armaments," "We want a democratic Germany in a peaceful Europe." Generally these trippers are not allowed to get off the steamer. If they are given permission to do so, they are watched like convicts. They might gain too much strength and joy by free contact with the free citizens of a free country. But the militant élite among the exiles are at work, find their way to the prisoners, contrive to get their literature on board, and many who left home blind and ignorant, dull and hopeless, take courage and truth home with them.

Hitler says in "Mein Kampf": "The British and American war propaganda was psychologically correct. By dis-

playing the German to their own people as a barbarian and a Hun, they were preparing the individual soldier for the horrors of war and so helped to spare him disappointments. . . . It heightened his rage and hatred against the villainous enemy." And he acts accordingly. The German political exiles are his enemies—perhaps the most dangerous enemies he has. Not on account of the weapons they use—they have none—but because they know him.

True to his stated program, the Führer magnifies their dangerousness, which in his heart of hearts he probably underestimates, and their influence to superhuman dimensions; they become a worldwide, insidious, and bloodthirsty band of conspirators. Every other issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter* has headlines such as "Jewish Bolshevik Agitation Poisons Public Opinion in England," "Treacherous Machinations of Emigrants in Paris," "New York under the Scourge of the Emigrants." We admit that we are glad to see such headlines, not because they flatter our self-esteem, but because we believe that they must give new strength to all those in Germany whose eyes are fixed upon us. Our German friends count on us; it is a good thing if our enemies reckon with us. There is no doubt that the political exiles will be a factor—a small, but very decided factor—in the settlement of accounts now due.

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HIMMEL: IS THAT ME ?