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Our Newest Problem - German Civilians.

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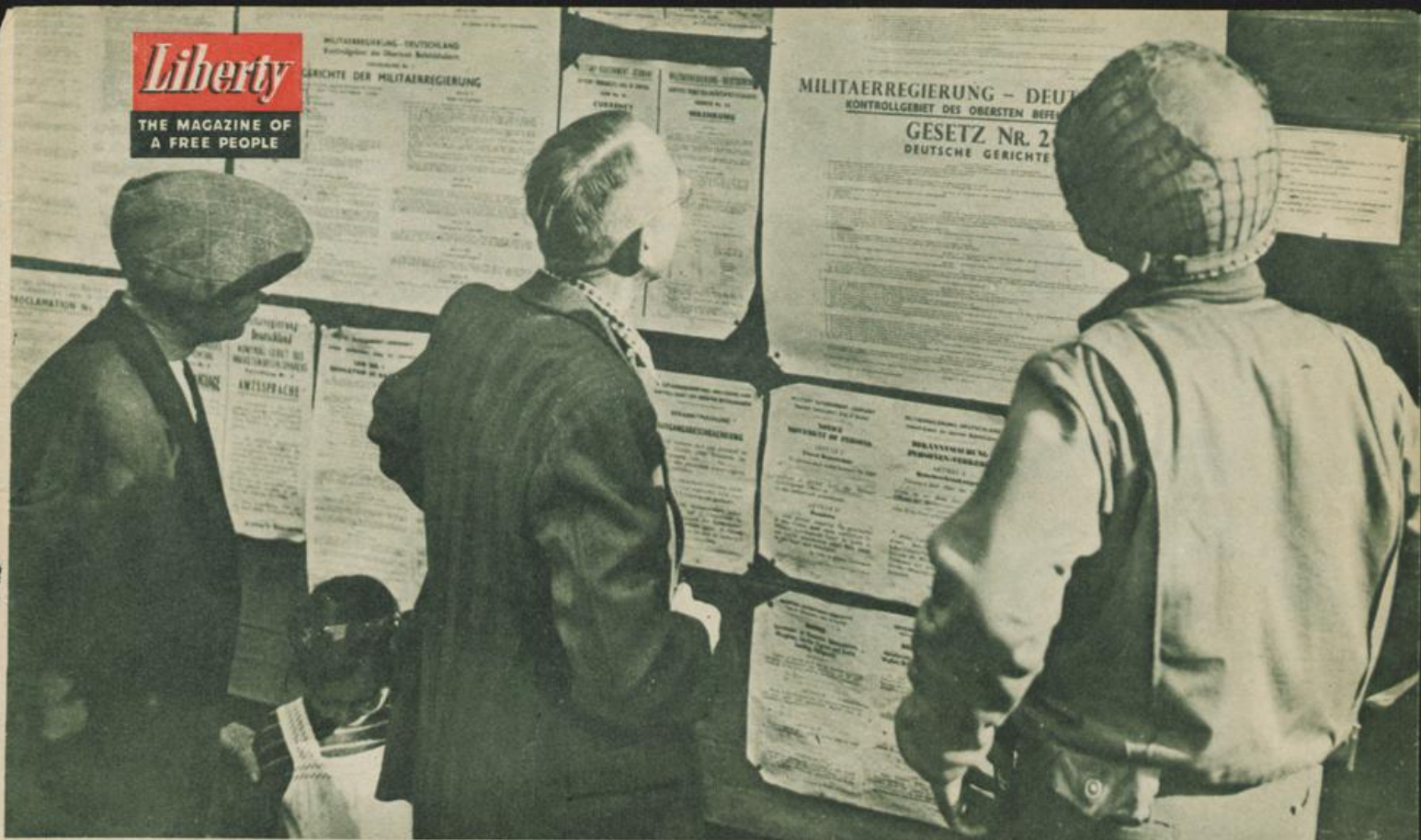
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To enforce these new regulations in occupied Germany, the American First Army has opened a school to retrain Nazi cops.

Our Newest Problem—German Civilians

BY ERIKA MANN

SOMEWHERE very near what used to be the German boundary, the U. S. First Army has opened a school the like of which had never been seen. Here German policemen are studying the laws and regulations by which occupied Germany will be run. Also, they are taught their own duties and to speak and understand enough English to do the job.

Army authorities are quick to stress the experimental character of this enterprise. Nothing is risked, while much may be gained. If the cops turn out to be stubborn or treacherous, if they engage in passive resistance or in sabotage, they are likely to get hurt, just like any other Nazi who won't play ball. If, on the other hand, they can be made serviceable to the Allied Military Government, the time and effort invested in their education will pay dividends.

As civilian policemen and city, rather than party, employees, they are not to be considered "professional Nazis," although, like anyone holding public office under Hitler, they had to be members of the party, with loyalty to the Führer their supreme law. More often than not these petty civil servants were drafted from civilian life, where they had been tailors, gardeners, clerks, or salesmen. Thus they are familiar with the viewpoints of former associates, who form the bulk of the lower middle classes. It stands to reason

that any advance knowledge of their attitude will prove profitable to us.

Although they were found in flattened Aachen, they do not hail from there. They had been brought in by the Gestapo from Cologne and other Rhineland cities because it was feared that local police would not carry out evacuation orders with the desired ruthlessness.

Originally there were some 200 of them, all of whom seemed willing enough to attend the AMG school; but after they'd been "screened" repeatedly, only eighty-nine were left. The rest were rejected as potentially treacherous.

"This does not mean that we actually trust the chosen ones," I was told by Colonel Damon Gunn, chief of G5 (Civil Affairs) and AMG, First Army, to whose initiative the school owes its existence. "All we do is give them a chance to prove their dependability. They're under strict military discipline and very closely watched. Once they've learned their stuff

and graduated, we'll send them out, individually or in small groups, to take up their duties and teach their colleagues what they've learned. No matter how this experiment turns out, we'll have to use the German police, just as the Germans had to use the French, Belgian, or Norwegian police forces. And while we can't possibly educate all of them, a few hundred well-trained men can school thousands and influence tens of thousands."

When I first saw them, they were playing a game in front of their barracks. Their own police outfits had been taken away from them to be dyed and altered, and they were wearing ill-fitting Wehrmacht uniforms. Commanded by their own *Polizeimeister*, they were running in circles, pursuing, catching, and arresting one another for exercise.

"Just like kids," said one of a bunch of G. Is who were plainly enjoying the sight. Actually, the baby among the Ger-

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OUR NEWEST PROBLEM— GERMAN CIVILIANS

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mans was thirty-nine and the oldest must have been nearly sixty.

The former stable which serves as the cops' mess hall and classroom was plastered with posters—all the laws, proclamations, and official notices to be enforced by the students. At the moment, one of the Germans was giving an English lesson featuring such depressing announcements as "The bank is closed" and "The post office is far away."

The next period, an analysis of Military Government police functions, was conducted by an American sergeant, Austrian-born Paul Lobl of Middleboro, Massachusetts.

"To begin with," Sergeant Lobl told his students, "I have to state that the Hitler salute has again been given to some of our officers. How often do I have to tell you that this is strictly against the regulations of this school? That it is also a violation of Paragraph 2 of Official Notice to the Population and, as such, a punishable offense—all the more so in the case of a policeman? From now on, anybody committing this offense will have to be punished."

They nodded quietly, as if in complete agreement.

"Yesterday's tasks," Sergeant Lobl continued, "have been completely solved by only a few of you. One mistake in particular has been made frequently. According to proposition number three, a German citizen was found in possession of two U. S. Army blankets and five packs of Camel cigarettes. It could not be proved that he had stolen any of these items, but since the Allied forces are forbidden to make presents to Germans, the mere possession of American goods by a German is to be considered unlawful. But it is not, as many of you suggested, a *capital* offense and, as such, according to Article 1 of Ordinance 1, 'punishable by death or any such other penalty as a Military Government Court may impose.'

"What you may have had in mind is Paragraph 19 of the same article, wherein 'stealing or obtaining by fraud property of the Allied Forces or any member thereof' is defined as a capital offense. This particular culprit *might* have stolen the objects in question, but you are not in a position to prove it and the charges you pressed against him are unfounded. Do you seriously think that we'd shoot a man for having accepted a present?"

THEY did not laugh. Nor did their expression betray their thoughts. Perhaps they admired the "leniency"; perhaps they despised it. At any rate, the mistake they had made was as indicative of their Nazified condition as their failure to renounce the Hitler salute. Twelve years of Nazification had determined their reactions.

After a while Sergeant Lobl was replaced by a *Polizeimeister*. Nothing could have been more fantastic than to watch this uniformed German impressing on his fellow Nazis the significance of our laws.

"Here," he would say approvingly, pointing out one paragraph or another, "regulations are pretty sharp, and don't you kid yourselves about it, either!"

How are we trying to make them understand the practical meaning of the rules we teach them? Well, here are typical examples of the tasks they are asked to solve:

1. You are on duty as a policeman in a German city occupied by U. S. forces.

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AMG ordinance has imposed a curfew from 1900 hours until 0600 hours, during which period no civilians are permitted on the street or in public places without a special permit from MG. On December 18, 1944, at 2030 hours, you stop a civilian at the corner of Wall Street and Hindenburg Street. His identity papers, which appear to be in order, show him to be Heinrich Hulsemann of 77 Krupp Street. His worker's card shows him to be an employee of the Municipal power plant. He tells you that he works on the night shift at the power plant, reporting there at 2300 hours every night, and that he is on his way to work. What action do you take? What paragraph of Ordinance 1 is applicable?

Correct solution, as quoted from the Instructor's Answer Sheet: Arrest Hulsemann for violation of Paragraph 22—circulating without a permit during curfew.

2. You are on duty as a policeman in the small town of Womelsdorf, patrolling on foot Hoch Street, from north to south and return, for a distance of five blocks.

Your superiors have advised you that a brothel operated by one Eva Goetz at 8 Schiller Street, three houses west of the intersection with Hoch Street, has been declared "off limits" by the U. S. military commander and that all ranks of U. S. military personnel have been forbidden to enter it. The house itself has been posted with a sign, "Off Limits to All Military Personnel."

On December 3, 1944, at 1600 hours, you notice a man stopping U. S. soldiers on Hoch Street near this corner and handing them cards. You recognize him as one Otto Speiser, an employee of the brothel who lives on the premises. Several soldiers drop the cards to the street. You pick up one and find it says in English, "The House of a Hundred Pleasures, 8 Schiller Street, Womelsdorf."

Two soldiers go around the corner and enter the house. You follow them, ring the doorbell, and Eva herself answers it. Just as you are reminding her that her establishment is forbidden to soldiers, another soldier arrives. He is slightly drunk, seems in a hurry, and asks that you get out of the way so he can enter.

What action do you take? What offenses have been committed and by whom? Specify paragraph numbers.

Correct solution: Permit soldier to enter, then arrest both Eva and Speiser. Speiser has violated Paragraph 28 by inviting or conducting members of the Allied forces into a place designated "off limits." Eva has violated the same paragraph in two ways. First: Since Speiser is acting as her employee or agent, his acts are taken as her own; hence she, too, is guilty of inviting the soldiers into her brothel. Second: She is also presumably guilty of "supplying services" to soldiers in her place.

The soldiers have violated their orders by entering a place marked "off limits," but that is no concern of the German police, except that it should be reported to the M. P.s.

THE policemen's training schedule is a comprehensive one. Language instruction, physical exercises, work details, and study fill their day, which lasts from 6.30 A. M. to 6.30 P. M. Apart from regular lessons, there are lectures covering such subjects as proclamations, laws and ordinances, reports and forms, police functions, military courtesy and discipline.

While the actual schedule is limited to police matters, the men are permitted to ask relevant questions. During my visit, a question period revealed an astounding

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naïveté on the part of these Germans, and a complete lack of feeling of collective guilt.

What plans, they inquired, existed in Washington for the reconstruction of German cities?

How did we propose to solve the task of repatriating Rhinelanders who'd been evacuated by the Nazis to other parts of the Reich?

By what measures did we intend to strengthen German economy?

And, as a war correspondent, had I not come across a lot of interesting postal stamps? The questioner wondered whether I would not help him fill a few gaps in his collection.

One would have thought they were innocent citizens of an Allied nation. That anyone here could have anything against them—that, indeed, it took considerable self-control even to talk to them—did not seem to enter their minds. Dumfounded by such unawareness, I proceeded to ask a few questions myself:

In their position as MG policemen, did they expect to run into a great deal of trouble at home? How would the average German accept our laws? Would he, for instance, insist on wearing Nazi insignia and displaying the Nazi flag?

"No!" they shouted. "Of course not!"

Why, they said, apart from a few fanatics, the German nation was more than ready to abandon Nazism! The failure to transmute such readiness into action was easily accounted for.

"Terror!" several of them explained in chorus. "Dictatorship! The Gestapo!"

IT was the same old song. How many times had I heard it before from all those German prisoners of war, none of whom had ever been a Nazi at heart, none of whom had ever fired a shot, and none of whom doubted the shining innocence of the German people!

"Resistance," went the burden of the song, "is humanly impossible. Every German is watched over by two Nazis."

Yes, in one breath these Germans would tell you that Nazism was kept alive in Germany by a mere handful of hated fanatics; in the next, that every German was watched over by two Nazis!

Asked what kind of government they'd like to see established at home, they said a democratic republic was all they were yearning for. And it must be stated that this sounded as if they meant it.

Asked whom they would choose for a leader, they answered with equal unanimity:

"Bruening! Bruening is our man!"

This was startling news. The former chancellor and head of the Catholic Center Party played a fatal role in the tragedy of the German Republic. It was he who introduced government by decree, thereby violating the Constitution and paving the way for Hitler's regime. Having fled Germany, he came to the United States and accepted a position at Harvard University. At no time, however, did he in any way participate in the preventive fight waged by Americans against the Nazi menace. Indeed, he refused to lend to the anti-Fascist cause the weight of his name and the strength of his experience. In cagey silence he waited for *Der Tag*.

"Bruening?" I said. "Would he be generally acceptable? Perhaps as a prominent Catholic he'd please the Catholic Rhineland, whereas in other parts—"

"Everywhere!" they insisted. "All over Germany! Bruening is the man!"

If what they said was anything like the truth, it was reasonable to assume that no new figure had risen within Germany—no underground leader and re-

sistance chief who had secretly won the nation's admiration and confidence. Bruening never possessed either. Despite his important victories in the field of international negotiations, he had never been liked in Germany and his eventual downfall was at least partly due to his utter lack of popular appeal.

That twelve years of silence and absence should have made him popular was understandable only by comparisons. Succeeded as he was by von Papen, von Schleicher, and finally Hitler, Bruening was the last democratic, the last "normal," chancellor the Germans had had. And although he himself had done away with much of this now-longed-for "normality," his intentions were said to have been of the best. Compared with what followed, Bruening was good. Surely he was better than Hitler. And, since Hitler was doomed, surely he was better than nothing.

Is there nothing in Germany, no man, no group, no movement fit to take over?

We can't yet say with finality. Germany is big and the part so far occupied by the Allies has been comparatively small. As a test case, however, Aachen is as good as any. If there is anything about its people which cannot be considered typical of all Germans, it is their Catholicism and their relative intimacy with other nations—France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Moreover, this district is largely populated by industrial workers, on whose alleged anti-Hitler feelings many a wishful thinker bases his best hopes.

I HAVE talked with scores of Germans in freshly-occupied villages, in the streets of Aachen, and in the near-by refugee camp of Brend, where some 5,000 Aacheners awaited permission to return to their ruined homes. On the whole, these civilians differed little from their uniformed compatriots in the MG school. None of them claimed to have been engaged at any time in any anti-Nazi activities, or even to resent Hitler for any ideological reason. Some did assert that they'd broken his orders by refusing to leave their town. But most Aacheners admitted that, while they'd been told to depart on a Wednesday, by Tuesday afternoon no vehicle of any kind was left in the doomed city.

"We were trapped!" they grumbled. "There was no way out!"

This complaint was followed by the familiar tune: They all disliked the Nazis and they all had been terrorized into submission. They said, yes, there probably

were some people who had dared to resist, but they did not know who they were—and they seemed to refer to them as to a species with whom respectable citizens like themselves would not even now care to associate.

Bruening's name was heard a number of times, but most of these civilians seemed uninterested politically, and too apathetic to make specific suggestions.

FOR the rest, they confirmed the impressions which I had gained before: 1. The Germans failed to organize any kind of resistance worthy of the name to the Nazi order. The number of Germans who individually fought it and sacrificed themselves is too small to carry decisive weight. Nor have their deeds gained widespread acclaim.

2. The Hitler regime has become unpopular in Germany and most Germans would like to see it abandoned. But it is by no means the moral depravity of the venture which made it—finally—objectionable. Germany's leading criminals stand accused today not of being criminals but of being failures.

3. It is generally acknowledged that, having failed, the Führer and his henchmen deserve any fate which may be in store for them. But it is generally denied that by choosing, maintaining, and obeying this regime, the German people rendered themselves guilty. Since their collective conscience is clear, the Germans will deem any "discrimination" against them a gross injustice.

In these circumstances it is hard to foresee how the average German citizen will feel and what he may do in the face of a prolonged occupation. More likely than not his reactions will be split and ambiguous. He may not, for instance, have any spontaneous desire to sing the Horst Wessel song. But knowledge that a victorious enemy is ready to arrest him for doing so may cause him to disobey.

Therefore the experiment carried out in the AMG school ought to be viewed in this light: If even a very limited number of Germans can be turned into guardians of our laws, many Germans are likely to conform. Proud of his position, proud of his learnedness, and proud of his new uniform, the AMG "gendarme" may become a valuable helper as well as a first incarnation of the "re-educated German." He may or may not. At any rate, the experiment seems worth trying.

THE END