

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

Madame Romansky.

Mann, Erika

Datierung v. Stuart D. Ferguson

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When Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop was arrested in Hamburg, he had to be identified by his sister. His wife, it seems, was not there. But here - just in case they are looking for her - is a valuable clue: The Frau Minister is traveling. What's more, she is doing so in an elegant traveling costume, richly embroidered, fairly new and rather expensive. The suit - a creation of the house of Romanzky - was delivered as recently as last April and cost as much as 175 Dollars - without material.

All this was revealed to me by an employee of the famous Berlin fashion shop on the Kurfuerstendamm. Fraulein Ilse Schad, 21 years old model, has seen more top ranking Nazi belles undressed than she is proud to admit. Madame Romanzky, she maintains, was no Nazi, ~~she was not~~ but could hardly afford to reject such illustrious clients as Frau Food Minister Darre, Frau Reichminister Kerrl, Frau Minister of the Interior Frick, Frau Gestapo General Lorenz, or Frau Propaganda Minister Goebbels. Business was booming during the entire war. Although clothes were severely rationed, there was nothing to prevent Madame's customers from furnishing their own material. Persons somehow connected with the Wehrmacht, the Gestapo, or the Foreign Office were never short of European loot. Surplus booty went to the black market and could be bought by anyone provided he or she commanded the necessary means. ~~Material~~ Material sufficient for one suit was worth *any thing from* 350 to 700 Dollars.

Despite her anti-Nazi leanings, Madame was, of course, a member of the NATIONAL SOCIALIST FASHION RING.

"She had to," said Miss Schad. "All leading houses had to join. The Ring ~~was~~ was a nation-wide institution, headed by Herr Benno von Arndt whom the Fuehrer personally appointed Fashion Commander of Germany."

"And yourself?" I inquired; "Were you a member of the Party?"

She shuddered at the suggestion.

"My blood", she announced with pardonable pride, "is partly Jewish."
I was scarcely surprised. While confessed Nazis, as well as pure "Aryans" seen on the verge of dying out, there is an over-abundance of Jewish grand-mothers in Berlin today. For obvious reasons the old ladies are not here to testify, but their nordic looking offspring are devoted to them.

Asked how the house of Romanzky was doing now, Miss Schad shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"Look around," she suggested; "and judge for yourself. These two measly rooms are all that's left of the beautiful suites we used to occupy. Everything happened to us. We were bombed, shelled and robbed by the Russians. Of Madame's 100 employees only 15 stayed on the job. The rest have vanished, along with ^{the bulk} ~~most~~ of our customers."

As for Madame herself, she, too, had departed. She was now in Bavaria to await further developments. Business might soon pick up. There were after all many foreigners around whose wives were slated to replace Madame's ^{missing} ~~former~~ clientele.

"Frau Propaganda Minister Goebbels", I was told, "was easy to dress - although you should have seen her, when she first came ^{in here.} She looked positively abysmal. It took all Madame had to make a lady out of ^{her} ~~her~~."

Even so, Lady Magda hadn't bought a new dress in years. Goebbels wouldn't let her. The situation, he claimed, was too serious. Ever since Stalingrad.

Remarkably enough, Hitler's Foreign Minister didn't seem to think so. His wife for one kept honouring Madame until the very last. What with the Russians at the gates of Berlin, was it not - Miss Schad wanted to know -

rather screwy for Frau von Ribbentrop to insist on a new ~~dress~~ outfit?

"But then", I learned, "that" s the way she was: quite screwy, very arrogant and enormously difficult ~~if~~ - character, waistline and all. Nothing ever suited her. Everything had to be altered a dozen times. So, when that embroidered traveling costume wasn't returned for alterations, we knew, ~~that~~ she was traveling alright."

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