

HITLER'S BOMBED- OUTERS



BY ERNEST ZAUGG

“Yesterday a heavy force of Allied bombers attacked German cities.” All of us have wondered what happens inside Germany after a raid. This authoritative article gives you the answer

I**N JANUARY, 1933**, when Hitler took over power, there were 6,000,000 unemployed in Germany. The figure of unemployment fell rapidly—in the first year by 1,000,000. Soon, workers were being imported from foreign countries. Almost every German thought Hitler was a genius; he himself thought so. Now, however, the Germans are beginning to see that Hitler made one of the worst deals that a statesman has ever made. As this is written, he has exchanged 6,000,000 down-and-outers for 16,000,000 bombed-outers—10,000,000 who have fled from their homes and 6,000,000 whose houses have been destroyed. The number grows as the Allied air offensive continues.

Hitler pumped the unemployed into German industrial cities to forge weapons with which to conquer the world. These cities enjoyed a great boom period. Under Nazi patronage, the Krupp Steel city of Essen grew from 470,000 in 1925 to 666,000 in 1939. Wilhelmshaven had the most sensational growth, from 27,000 to 113,000; Hamburg, from 1,079,000 to 1,700,000; Kassel, from 171,000 to 216,000; Düsseldorf, from 432,000 to 541,000; Duisburg, from 272,000 to 434,000; Bremen, from 294,000 to 446,000.

The workers made money, but the death-dealing instruments they made were cursed. They came as down-and-outers and are leaving as bombed-outers. The Allied air force is shoving these people of death back to their pre-Hitler level and lower. Essen has 400,000 bombed-outers; Wilhelmshaven, 95,000; Hamburg, the city of horrors, 1,013,000; Kassel, 175,000; Düsseldorf, 500,000; Duisburg, 310,000; Bremen, 356,000.

From the Rhineland to the northern coast, they flee in terror to Alsace-Lorraine, South Germany, East Prussia, Poland and Austria. As Allied bombings have recently been extending southward and eastward hard on the trail of migrating war industries, they catch up with the bombed-outers. Some bombed-outers have been bombed out three or four times. In Poland, in East Prussia, the bombed-outers meet Germans fleeing

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Why so many Germans are homeless. This R.A.F. photo of the Berlin area north-west of the Tiergarten makes it easy to count the roofless, uninhabitable houses

from stolen Ukrainian estates before the on-marching Russian armies. And there, too, they meet the pent-up hatred of the Slav people.

In most cities, they immediately get 200 marks cash payment. The money is fresh and clean from the press. Usually they have a list of their properties signed by a lawyer. Most vital items are paid out in cash by the government after some delay. However, the lost property can only be bought on the black market at ten to twenty times the amount of the government payment and the normal price.

With cup in hand, the bombed-outer waits in the street for the army goulash truck to drive up and give him a feed. Sometimes he waits for as much as forty-eight hours. People who don't like or cannot get the army goulash build themselves a fire and cook the horses, dogs and cats that lie around the street. Handouts of twenty cigarettes, one quarter of a bottle of brandy and a bar of chocolate are donated by the Nazi Party. Food is rushed from other cities, where already rations are "too much to starve on and still too little on which to live."

Bombed-outers scatter through other areas of Germany, carrying their bad morale like an infectious disease. At first, they were greeted with patriotic speeches, flowers and bands. But now they have become too numerous and burdensome for these luxuries. With different customs, habits and dialects, the bombed-outers get on the nerves of their hosts. It is especially difficult, for instance, for Bavarians to stand Prussians, or for Austrians to stand the North Germans.

Every bombed-outer gets a little book containing rules of behavior. "Be brave among your hosts and help to protect the inner front of courageous hearts." "Do not demand advantages which other citizens cannot or do not have." "Complaints lead to quarrels."

Armed Against the Police

When Germans go out into the country to scrape up some food from the peasants, they take a pistol as defense against busy-body police agents. A pistol is part of the air-raid-shelter equipment, to shoot hysterical *Volksgenossen* who might bar the way out.

Soldiers give pistols to their wives, "just in case," before they go to the front. In Hannover, a grandmother was brought

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before the judge because she had stolen forty grenades, two pistols and a light machine gun from her grandson. In 1933, it was difficult for the diligent German police to check up on the millions of down-and-outers. It is practically impossible for them to check up on Hitler's bombed-outers today. Tens of thousands of people live "black"—that is, without signing up with the police, or with false passes.

This is especially favorable for foreigners who are escaping homeward, or to England, Spain or Switzerland. When they come into a bombed city, they can take their pick of passports and working papers from the corpses and get free food from the army canteen. If a German has a bad record with the police, he just takes a pass from one of his neighbors who has been killed. A Nuremberger, who escaped to Switzerland recently, heard that the authorities reported to his wife that he had been killed in a bombing in Cologne.

"He who plunders will be shot," is written on the remaining walls of bombed cities. Nonetheless, there are still two kinds of *Volksgenossen*—those who rescue the goods, and those who steal them when they reach the sidewalk. Jewels, money and other small valuables are put in special "bombing bags," which are easy to carry and easier to steal. More exciting booty than jewels and money is cigarettes. When a cigarette store is burning everyone goes in and helps himself—even the guard who is supposed to shoot the plunderers.

Bombing psychosis is a widespread plague in Germany. Its worst victims are called "panic idiots." A city which has not been bombed for some time is even more nervous than a recently bombed city, mainly because its inhabitants expect it to come every minute. Fear of death eats away morale. Some people don't want to work because there is no sense in creating something which will be smashed the next day.

Disease is rampant in bombed areas. One in every three bombed-outers has something wrong with him. The yellow flag was raised in Hamburg last summer, as cholera and typhus had their day. Brewers from all over Germany rushed their beer to the thirsty Hamburgers who could not drink the polluted water. The hospitals were overfilled. Out of ten cases of cholera, seven died. Practically all the doctors were at the front.

The tales of horror told by the bombed-outers increased the fear of those Germans who have not yet suffered bombardment. In Hamburg, during a flaming raid, the tar in the streets melted. The people who were caught in this mess became blazing torches and were shot down by the SS out of mercy. The corpses of men no larger than little babies were found. Quantities of small-size coffins were ordered. Bombed-out women carried the charred bodies of their husbands in flower boxes.

Fear of the Holocaust

The phosphorus bomb is the weapon which fills the hearts of the Germans with the greatest dismay. The burning phosphorus splashes for hundreds of yards and cannot be put out.

In Hannover the draft created in the streets by the fire in the center of the city was so strong that only a strong man could walk against it.

Nazi propagandists are afraid that the disgruntled bombed-outers will entertain rumors dangerous to Nazi rule and hence they promise them revenge on large scales by means of secret weapons. Goebbels

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and even Hitler have spoken mysteriously of these secret weapons. Doctor Ley has dished it out in bucketfuls to his restless workers. Talk about the new secret weapon was common in the most expensive restaurants and in the cheapest inns throughout Germany.

Eyewitnesses described it. It was a huge aerial torpedo being built in Peenemünde, on the island of Usedom. The filling, a substance clear as crystal, was made in Clausthal-Zellerfeld, in a factory where the hair of workers changed to green. Most people expected the new weapon to be ready by August. Launched from the shores of France, this dangerous weapon would wipe out entire English cities at one shot, they said.

However, the British Secret Service was not sleeping. One night, Allied fliers pretended an attack on Berlin and swooped down instead on Peenemünde. The factories were laid in ruins, and a score of learned German death mixers, including General-Oberst Jezonek, were killed. However, talk of vengeance goes on, and the Nazis say that the work of the secret weapon is continuing in other parts of Germany.

Though occupied with talks of vengeance, the bombed-outers still have plenty of time for anti-Nazi thoughts.

A witness riding in Düsseldorf with a truck driver who had lost his wife and children saw him try to run down and kill an SA man who was standing in the street. In an air-raid shelter in Munich, one witness says a couple of Social Democrats were fanning the flames of anti-Nazi feeling among the thirty people taking shelter there. Quite openly, they said: "We once thought that only we were humans and the rest of mankind were animals. Now we know how it is to be bombed. We can thank our Fuehrer for this."

The patron saint of the bombed-outers and potential bombed-outers in the endangered regions is Goering. They remember his speech when his Luftwaffe was aces high, in which he said, "If a single Allied plane flies over Berlin, my name is Meyer." Now they call him Meyer, and they call the air-raid sirens Meyer's hunting horns.

On the night of the biggest raid on Berlin, Allied bombers roared over Hannover for one hour and fifty minutes in a flying column stretching from Holland to Berlin. The Hannoverians were afraid that they were going to be bombed. But when they saw the attack was for Berlin, they said: "Those are Meyer's night chasers. Those are not English planes. Isn't it wonderful that Meyer has so many night chasers?"

Asked why he did not shoot, a 16-year-old antiaircraft gunner said, "We're not crazy! They might have dropped one on us. We're glad they went on to Berlin."

In Würtemberg, the peasants refused to give the Berliners food, as they said the Berliners shouted approval when Goebbels declared total warfare. The Berliners deny this and claim the hall was packed with paid applause.

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"Do you want fire bombs or high explosives?" Goebbels is said to have asked in that famous speech. And the paid applause shouted, "Both! Both!"

The down-and-outers hoisted Hitler into his seat of power, but the bombed-outers, cured of Naziism, find it not so easy to unseat him. The parliamentary system is gone. The only answer to their protests is the muzzles of the guns of the SS and SA. After a big bombing raid, the SS patrols the streets with rifles and machine guns and other armor. Large numbers of SS and SA are kept in Germany to guard the home front. This makes the people furious as they think these men should be out fighting.

In Cologne, the SS rode around in tanks and shot down disorderly elements. In Berlin recently, fifteen bombed-outers were "laid out" for too loudly demanding shelter for their families. After the last big raid on Hannover, Gauleiter Lauterbach issued a statement that it is the duty of every German to report immediately defeatists, pessimists and critics to the police. On the first day 300 were reported; the second day the total reached 500.

Army morale is much better than home morale. The soldiers are better fed, less well informed, have less time for politics than the home people.

Softening Up the Army

However, gradually the Allied aerial bombings are beginning to eat away at army morale as well. The German soldiers do not mind looking at the ruins of Russian cities, which are a sight for sore eyes to them. But their eyes and their hearts get sore at the sight of ruined German cities. Hamburg is worse than Stalingrad, they say. Many a soldier has been glad when his leave was over, so that he could return to the front. Some come home on leave just in time to experience a bombing or to dig their family dead out of the ruins.

On the British radio, the bombed-outers have been especially interested in the repetitions of passages in Hitler's former promises, or exaggerated statements, or threats which now sound very foolish.

His promise to "wipe out" British cities, his references to the Allied generals and statesmen as "military idiots," to the "paralytic in the White House" and to the "old drunkard in London" have stuck in the minds of the bombed-outers.

They notice now that his voice breaks when he gets excited, and they say, "He thought himself equal to God." People know that he cannot control himself. Recent films showing the signing of the French armistice depict him pacing up and down, rubbing his hands in excited, childish glee. These pictures make a different impression now than after the fall of France, and the people associate them with the rumor of his madness, which even his speech referred to as a "nervous breakdown."

The bombed-outers are asking themselves what will be their fate when the turnover comes. Will they be down-and-outers again or will they be busy cleaning up the ruins of German cities? Or will they be carried off to Russia to clean up the Russian ruins?

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