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Germany Draws Laborers From Idle Italian Plants

400,000 Now Slave in German Plants, Mines and on Nazi Farms

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By EDWARD D. KLEINLERER



Following Von Ribbentrop's recent visit, Mussolini, acting on Hitler's demand, decided to add further "civilian reserves," as he calls them, to the 400,000 Italian workers already toiling in German plants, mines and farms.

The official Italian news agency *Stefani* announced that new measures were to be taken in Italy "to perfect mobilization of all forces of the nation." The Fascist radio explained that the new measures were dictated by "deficiency of manpower in several important war industries and the necessity of expanding existing factories and of creating new ones for Italy's war effort.

The Italians are fully aware, however, that lack of fuel, raw materials, and the destruction wrought in Italy's "industrial triangle," Milan, Turin and Genoa, by the RAF, make "expanding and creating of new war factories" very problematic. It is evident for them that announced mobilization of all civilian forces of the Nation has been decreed by Mussolini for the sole purpose of supplying fresh and numerous contingents of Italian laborers for Nazi factories.

Like Prisoners

As a result of his enormous losses on the Russian front, Hitler is interested vitally in exploiting the vast pool of Italian manpower which already has been heavily drained by the Nazis. Long lists of all persons engaged in various trades in Italy recently were submitted to Nazi agents who picked names at random.

Two years ago there were still certain skilled Italian workers who volunteered to work in the Reich. Those who came back told the story: they were treated by the "master race" like the millions of Russian, Polish, French, Yugoslav war prisoners who are forced to produce for the Nazi war machine. Far from home, cut off from their families, the Italian workers suffered hardships often as great as the workers from Nazi-occupied countries.

Slaves in Nazi Mines and Plants



Being "Allies" of the Germans, it was difficult for them to understand why they should be treated as inferiors, watched by special police, deprived of contacts with the natives, and given the most dangerous jobs in areas most frequently bombed by the British. In letters smuggled through the censorship, the writers begged to be called back to Italy "where conditions may be bad, but where at least one is among friends."

In Bombed Areas

Of the 400,000 Italian workers "imported" so far into Germany, 125,000 are employed in the heavily bombed Ruhr-Rhineland industrial districts. Most of them have been distributed among the Krupp works in Essen, motor works in Cologne, and Opel works in Russelheim, near Frankfurt; 25,000 Italians are working in Germany's technical plants, mostly in Garben at Ludwigshaven; in Bernburg, District Anhalt; at Deutsche Solvay-Werke and at *Ruhr Chemische A. G.* at Oberhausen.

There are 35,000 Italians in the German mines and 45,000 in the "building" industry. This last category has been sent by Mussolini, Hitler's *Gauleiter* on the Italian peninsula, to construct air-raid shelters in such cities as Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, and even Vienna, for use of Germans. This at the time when the need for such shelters in Italy was most imperative, as shown during the recent RAF bombings in Italy, where in Genoa alone crowded underground shelters caused the death of 354 persons.

Coal Shortage

Some 25,000 Italians work in German textile factories. Before the war, the textile industry was dominant among Italian industries. Today, coal shortages and lack of skilled labor have caused the closing of important textile plants. Germany has withheld the coal supply and has removed the labor. The Italian specialized textile workers are working in Leipzig, Chemnitz, Dessau, and Plauen. They not only are making clothes for the Germans while their own families are doing without, but they are working, too on parachutes and plane parts.

From Italian farms, where food production is inadequate, 90,000 Italians have been taken and put to work on German soil. In spite of this, Germany has forced Italy to return a "wheat loan," thus cutting down the Italian supply still further. Fifteen thousand Italians are working as servants in hotels, restaurants and private homes, serving their "Allies" in menial tasks. They are working mainly in Saxony and Bavaria as well as in large cities like Leipzig, Hamburg, Munich and Berlin.

Slaves in Nazi Mines and Plants

Italian Ration

At the beginning, when the first Italian workers went voluntarily to Germany, they were attracted by the apparently large wages. When the pay came through, however, so many deductions had been made for taxes, Winter Relief, etc., that little remained. In spite of their arduous work, the Italian laborers in Germany must live on the Italian ration, which, in the case of bread, for instance, is 200 grams, little more than half of that allowed German workers.

Rationing situation of the Italian workers in the Reich is the result of a curious arrangement called a "Compensation Agreement." Under this agreement, Italian workers toiling for the "mighty German Reich" are fed by the Italian government. This means that Italian workers in Germany receive only the Italian ration, while Germans in Italy continue to get German rations.

The Germans who are in Italy are, of course, mainly officials, agents of the Gestapo, and soldiers. As many of these Germans are very well paid, they are able to supplement this ration by extensive purchases on the Italian Black Market, and the Italian police has found it unwise to interfere with the special privileged position of Hitler's men in Fascist Italy.

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