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Czechoslovakia

We have received detailed reports about the terrible plight of the people in the so-called Protectorate. The following are some extracts:

"And Still Others!"

The Terror which the Germans are perpetrating in Czechoslovakia is indescribable. Considerably more people are shot than is generally known, for every list of those who have been shot, which is made public in Prague also, always concludes with the words: "And still others". In the main the Germans single out the intellectuals as their victims. Day after day well-known doctors, dentists, solicitors, directors of banks and of well-known trading concerns are shot. Their property is of course confiscated. The reasons given by the occupation authorities for these executions are wide and varied: The possession of arms, going out without an identification card, suspicion of having approved of the assassination of Heydrich, listening-in to foreign broadcasts, spreading of foreign wireless reports, these are the customary charges.

The police carried out a search in the house of a highly respected citizen in Prague and discovered a Flobert rifle. This was sufficient reason to have the father, mother and their 12 and 14 year old sons shot; their married daughter who lived in Brunn, and was expecting a baby was also shot, together with her husband.

During his stay in Prague a friend of mine went to a dentist for treatment. He had an appointment to go again the next morning. When he was on the point of going there, he was informed that the dentist had been shot that very morning. Reason unknown.

Deep Hatred and Fear

The people are filled with a deep and bitter hatred because they feel completely deprived of any rights. For all they know to-day or to-morrow they may be shot. It often happens that people are stopped in the street and never come home again. When two Czechs speak to each other in the street it may happen that they are suddenly arrested and have to submit to a cross-examination with

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the purpose of finding out what they had been talking about. If their statements do not entirely agree they run the risk of being shot. For this reason Czechs, the moment they start speaking to each other, agree what is to be the subject of their conversation.

Where is the R.A.F.?

A certain amount of bitterness is felt towards England, because the Czechs have the impression that no reprisals have been made for the acts of violence committed in their country. The people expected the R.A.F. to carry out reprisal raids over Germany.

Heydrich

It is said in Prague that Heydrich [1] was shot not by a Czech, but by the Germans themselves. In support of this assertion attention is drawn to the fact that the Czechs could not possibly have known which way Heydrich would go, as this was always kept secret. Furthermore so many S.S. men and police were stationed on the way he was to take, that it would have been impossible for the culprit to escape.

Germans First!

Bohemia and Moravia are crowded with Germans. The food shortage is especially great there. Fruit and vegetables can be sold to none but Germans and only then on presentation of their pass.

It is rumoured in Prague that in the near future a decree will come into force whereby the Czechs, as in the case of the Jews, will only be able to buy food between 11 and 1 o'clock, which would actually amount to not being able to buy it at all.

The shops are as a rule empty. There are still goods on show, there is however nothing for sale. The people have the feeling that the intention is to exterminate them systematically.

Women from whatever class in society are stopped in the street and, if they are unable to prove that they are working, they have to do heavy charring work in the barracks or in government buildings. In these cases no account is taken of age, old women have to work side by side with quite young girls."

The following is a report given by a Swiss about the past winter:

Transport and Trade

"The trains were very unpunctual, it was a common occurrence for them to arrive three to four hours late. Many travellers have reported cases of even greater unpunctuality. - In the company of a Sudeten German director I visited various firms in Bohemia and Moravia. The acceptance of private orders is practically out of the question, because the necessary workers have either been sent to Germany or have been removed to the armament industries. I was very surprised to observe

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the following facts: The amount produced in a certain foundry, in spite of the fact that it had been enlarged, was only 75 % in comparison with the pre-war level. In one colliery production was even decreased to 15 %. In another firm only 10 % of their former workpeople are still employed there. The other 90 % consist of members of ten different nations. The difficulties encountered through this diversity of languages can be imagined, also the effect on the productive capacity of the firm.

Nutrition

Food ration cards were distributed in the hotel, and only for eight days at a time.

During the first weeks I found the food insufficient since I was used to a diet richer in fats. I received per week 2,250 grammes of bread (including flour etc.), 35 grammes of butter, 400 grammes of meat, 100 grammes of fat. (1,000 grammes equals slightly over two pounds). The soup did not require any ration cards, but contained very little nourishment. There were hardly any vegetables. In the way of salads there was only sauerkraut and potato. Fish and game require no ration cards, and hares are very expensive. Fruit is only available for children once a month. The milk is skimmed. A quarter litre (1 litre - 1¾ pints) was allowed daily per person. The price of a meal consisting of soup, vegetables (potatoes and salad) and meat (100 grammes including bones without fat) is 8 to 10 d. With the addition of a hors d'oeuvre of tunny fish and a desert of hard plums the cost is 1/8; garnished roast goose costs 7/- to 8/-.

An official told me that he gave his meat ration to his son and had therefore to live chiefly on dry rolls, which were at least fresh, and that in order to keep up his strength he took to his bed immediately he came home from work. No similar cases have come to my notice.

The Germans are better off than the Czechs.

Clothing

All material is rationed. Ration cards are only distributed when proof is given that new clothes are necessary. This is done by means of house inspections. Many Czechs shrink from these house inspections and prefer to wear the same clothing on Sundays as they do on weekdays. As a rule families with many children come off rather badly.

Radio

In all restaurants silence must be kept during the news broadcasts, so that no one is prevented from hearing them. There is a great contrast however between the interest shown by the listeners there and in Switzerland. I had the feeling that announcements were neither listened to nor believed. In this respect I have observed members of the forces, officers and soldiers, as well as Gestapo officials and civilians, and always I had the same impression. Many soldiers from the front were very annoyed by certain reports which they stigmatised as 'rubbish'. From all that I saw I came to the conclusion that propaganda is overdone and that it arouses little or no confidence. Foreign broadcasts are listened to in spite of the death penalty.

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Gestapo

I cannot complain of my treatment by the Gestapo. However, they kept a strict eye on me. My room was searched in my absence. Information about certain Czechs has been voluntarily given to the Gestapo, often even by other Czechs who wanted to secure some advantage or pay off some old score. In a hotel my attention was drawn to a waiter who it was hinted was a spy and an informer. I often talked with this man in order to observe him more closely, and gained the impression that he was a weak and unreliable character with a strong urge to play an important role. Such people are dangerous especially if they are greedy for money.

In conclusion I realise that we in Switzerland live in a paradise without knowing it. In the eyes of the Czechs, Switzerland presents itself as a heavenly ideal, although in my

view we Swiss scarcely live up to this."

Alsace

A simple Alsatian peasant woman writes to her relations in Switzerland at the beginning of July 1942:

"My dear Friends, a long time has passed since we wandered together in the woods looking for mushrooms. In those days we lived in paradise compared with the present time. We know now that we are groping in the darkness of Hell and living devils are always prowling around ready to pounce on an innocent victim. Unfortunately there are also spies amongst the Alsatians.

Here, force is the rule of the day. No book would be large or thick enough to contain all the oaths and curses which have already been thrown at the heads of these fanatical godforsaken people. Were it not for our undaunted courage and our trust in God that these criminals must go in the end, we should be driven to despair. We know that France through her disregard of the danger which was threatening committed a grave crime. She tolerated all the rascals, and these fifth columnists who were active everywhere have betrayed the country. Some of our own people whom you know personally have now received high-sounding titles, for example Obergruppenleiter (Section leader), and Peasant Leader and God knows what. All this is very profitable to them. We have lived for nearly two years now under this intolerable oppression, and for the slightest remark which reaches the ears of the authorities the penalty is several weeks in a concentration camp. When the unfortunate people come out they are so intimidated that they remain silent as the grave. Later on, they always say, when all is over we will settle accounts. It is no wonder that so many young people of both sexes go to Switzerland. For this reason we now always talk of Switzerland as the

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"Wartegau" (Waiting room).

When we recall the time when those swine first came here we think of how they bought up and plundered everything and we could do nothing but look on. In France itself they also plundered all they could lay hands on, and the people there are still worse off than we are. After they had confiscated everything they took our money and devaluated it to five pfennig to the franc. Everything became terribly expensive and we could earn nothing. You can imagine dear friend, what this meant to us. Now we are glad if we can always manage to earn just enough to make both ends meet. There is no point in saving German money. Would you be so kind therefore as soon as you get the opportunity and tell your nephew not to send any more of his hard earned money to his parents; if possible you can even forward this letter to him. He should leave his money where it is. It would be a pity to send the money here because this lot of thieves would only take his good money away from us and give us some of their rotten paper in exchange. You can no longer buy anything, everything is lacking just as in the much praised Third Reich. They want us to tighten our belts still more, and if we had to live on our rations we should starve. But the stricter the rationing becomes the more people resort to the black market and the bartering of goods. We have no longer property of our own, and we have to furnish an exact account of everything we have. All milk must be handed over to the authorities. In spite of this I and many others carry on an exchange of goods. All old trees in the meadows are marked, and have to be cut down by a certain date. Every little shop including our own must have a German inscription on

the outside.

We are entitled to 60 gr. bacon or fat per month. Our butter ration is 1 lb. per month, but if you are only two people it is hardly sufficient. If you could only hear my best friend complaining from morning till night - what anxious moments I have gone through in the fear of his being overheard, for the consequences would be terrible. How many families have already been driven away from their homes for this reason; and yet we must continue to cry "Heil Hitler".

We hardly ever get any wine. We should of course be willing to sell red wine to the Alsatians. But we are only allowed 10 litres every few months. Everything finds its way across the frontier. We, who used to have so many fruits from the South that we didn't know what to do with them all, now have none. I have to get your sister to send me some lemons now and then. Still we are not yet starving. We have already secretly slaughtered three calves and have preserved all the meat. Other good folks were only too glad to get what we could not make use of ourselves. We all help each other. We received not a single egg during the whole winter, but nevertheless, I always managed to have new-laid eggs at 3 Marks per dozen. I have been able to buy already five litres of oil. We have now had 10 to 15 lbs. of bacon more than once, but not from the butcher. Butter I also get now and then. It is very hard to manage when a man has to do heavy work and is always hungry and what is more we are reckoned together with the larger farmers as self-supporting although we only have a few litres of milk. For this reason I get sugar coupons given me in exchange for the milk because my ration would

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not be sufficient for preserving. In this way the Alsatians stand by each other almost to a man. No matter how long and loudly the lying propaganda about the enthusiastic support of the Alsatians is proclaimed in the press, we know when this happens it is under compulsion or in the hope of reward. Recently the word went round that the police were going to search our cellar. Within a few minutes four people had come to warn us, because one is not safe even in one's own house. But everything is well prepared. What a lot of writing has to be done. For every little piece of work done there has to be an endless amount of writing and filling up forms.

How sad the case is of my poor brother-in-law who would like very much to retire, but is not allowed to as long as the war lasts in spite of his poor state of health. He was denounced right at the outset by a fellow worker for insulting Hitler and for being antagonistic to Germany. (He of all people who practically never opens his mouth!) When he refused to admit anything and challenged the rascal to come forward he was told that his accuser was anonymous and that therefore the charge would be dropped. All the same, he has to report to the police now and then. The slightest offence would mean "Dachau" for him.

By now, my dear friend, you will have got some idea of the slavery under which we live.

May God protect both you and us from yet still greater misery. I am almost ashamed to tell you what a sensual type of teaching they try to give the youth here. I feel like a relation of mine who wrote recently that when she heard the bells of Basle ringing a deep homesickness came over her, and once again she could not repress her tears. Just now there are reports that the terrible green car is about again for the purpose of fetching people away. One can never be at ease, one lives in a continuous state of fear.

We pray for God's help!

My sister-in-law S. is very badly off. They have much less than we do, and live in a town. All those who live in the large towns are much worse off.

And now God be with you. I pray that these lines may reach you."

W.G. Eichler

Editorische Anmerkungen

1 - *Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942), Politiker (NSDAP), Beitritt zur SS (1931), Sturmbannführer (1934), zusammen mit Himmler Aufbau von SD und Gestapo, Leiter der Gestapo (1934), führende Beteiligung an der Ermordung hoher SA-Führer (Röhm-Putsch, 1934), Organisator der antijüdischen Ausschreitungen in der „Kristallnacht“ (1938) und - beginnend mit der Wannseekonferenz 1940 - der „Endlösung der Judenfrage“, des Genozids an den europäischen Juden, Chef des Reichsicherheitshauptamts (RSHA) (1939) und gleichzeitig stellv. Reichsprotektor in Böhmen und Mähren (ab 1941), Attentat (1942).*