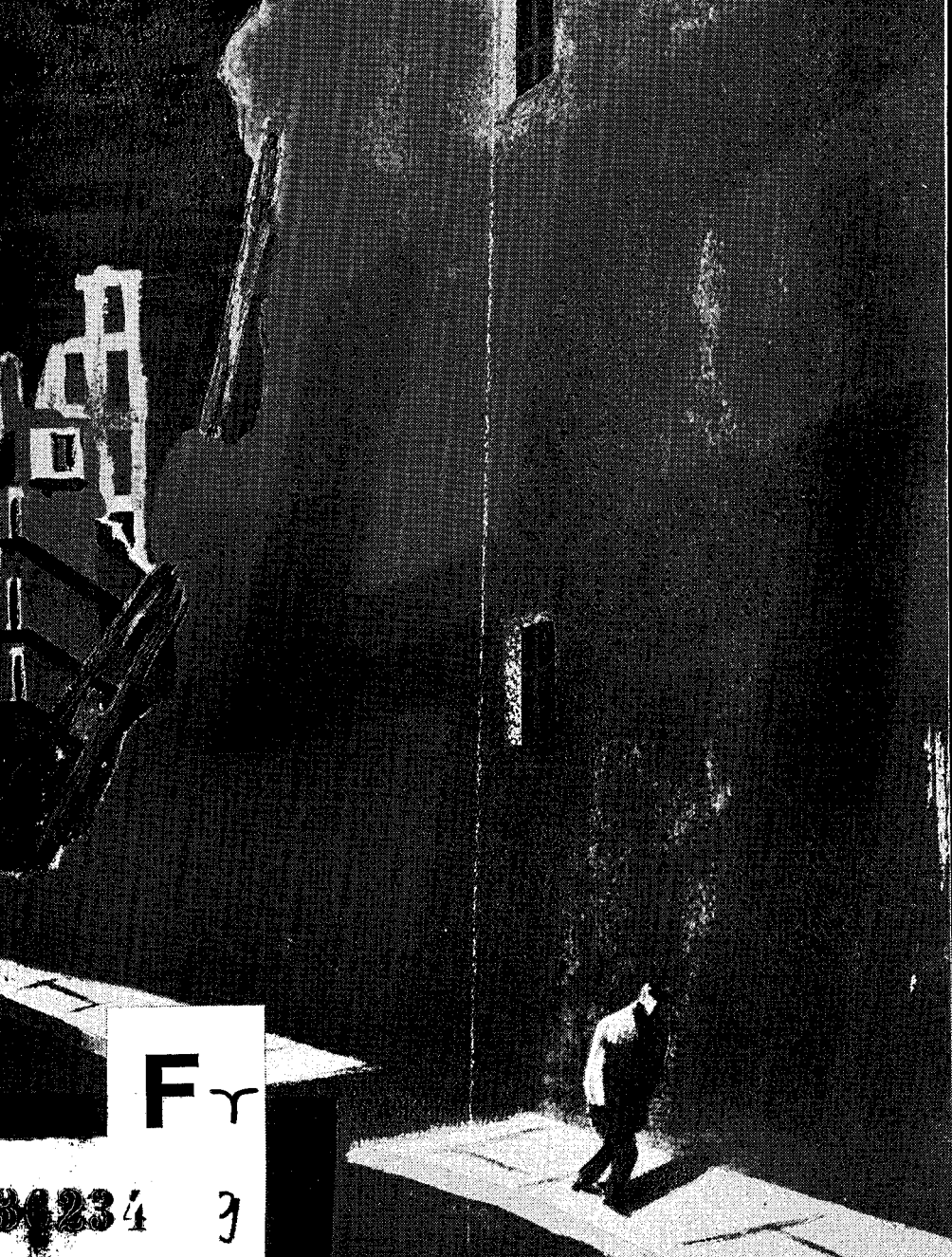


# A WORKER'S DAY

## UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION



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ORD BY JIM GRIFFITHS M.P.

## TO THE READER

*What you will read in these pages is no figment of the imagination.*

*The material was obtained by searching through decrees and announcements issued by the Nazis in Poland, from newspapers, both legal and illegal, and from documents and papers smuggled out of Poland by the workers' "underground" movements. Part of the story has been told by persons who have escaped from Poland.*

*Out of this material we have pieced together a working-day, a day of living, toiling and struggling on the part of Jan Kowalski (the Polish for John Smith), a worker in Warsaw. Jan is a native of Warsaw, capital of Poland, where, in the hub of Nazi-occupied territory, the life of the worker stands out in greater relief than anywhere else in Poland.*

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Slavery Under Hitler's New Order 1d.

Underground Poland Speaks 1d.

Workers' Protective Legislation in Poland 3d.

## FOREWORD

By JIM GRIFFITHS, M.P. (Llanelli)

*Suppose Hitler won—what then? Would it make any difference to the life of the worker? To plain John Smith—and his wife and children? Does any John Smith in any part of Britain still imagine that it would make no difference? That he would go on living just as before? Then let him read this pamphlet. It describes a day in the life of a Polish John Smith—and his family—in Warsaw. Warsaw that was blasted by Nazi bombs. Warsaw whose heroic people resisted the Nazi hordes to the end. In these pages you will hear what has happened to the workers of that City. It will reveal starkly the difference Hitler's victory has made to their lives. In this pamphlet you will find a sentence that sums it all up. Here it is :—*

*"The Germans regard all Poles as a slave race—whose only mission is to supply muscle and brawn."*

*That is the Nazi war aim—to enslave the people of Europe and harness their muscle and brawn to the yoke of the Herrenvolk (the master race). It has been plainly revealed as their aim. This is how it was expressed by Dr. Funk, the Nazi Minister of Economics. . . .*

*"The peace-time economy must guarantee the Greater Reich a maximum of consumption of goods in order to increase their welfare. European economics must be directed to that end."*

*The people of Europe are to work to minister to the welfare of the Greater Reich. This pamphlet will tell you, in plain words, what that has meant to Jan Kowalski—and his family—in Warsaw. It is what would happen to John Smith of London—if Hitler won.*

*When you have read this story your heart will go out to the brave Polish workers who are suffering under the tyrant's heel. And you will renew your vow that this foul thing shall be swept out of Europe. And that when that is done Jan Kowalski and John Smith must unite to build a free Europe—where justice and social security shall be firmly established.*

Socialist Workers' Party  
Don't let the  
Party be  
Banned

## A DAY IN GERMAN-OCCUPIED WARSAW

**I**T is time to get up for work. In the bedroom-sitting-room-kitchen—call it what you will, for it has to do service for all—the cold is intense. During the siege of Warsaw all the panes were blown out of the windows. The gaps have been partially boarded up, but this provides little protection from the cold outside. The draught finds its way through the many cracks and crevices, damp seeps through the walls and moisture drips from the ceiling.

There is no hope of getting the room warm. True, Jan has his fuel coupons, but they are mere useless paper since there has never been but one distribution of coal. Almost all Polish coal has either been sent to Germany or issued to Germans in Poland for their dwellings and offices. **There is not a scrap of fuel for the Poles.**

Jan troubles little on his own account, but it is a terrible ordeal for his wife and children, who have to go barefoot and ill-clad in the bitter cold. The Germans have laid their thieving hands on all stocks of leather, some of which has been issued to German residents. There is no rubber for soles and heels and **the Poles are driven to wearing wooden clogs as a protection against frost and snow.**

As for clothing, all that was any good had to be bartered long ago for flour and potatoes.

### A POLISH AND A JEWISH GHETTO

Jan would have liked to move from this room to a warmer and more healthy one somewhere near his work. But the Germans have taken over control of all dwellings and strict regulations are in force relating to Poles and Jews. German sanction is required to let even a single room and Poles are forbidden, on pain of ejection, to give accommodation, even for one night, to a Jew.

Before the war Jan lived in another part of Warsaw, only a few minutes by tram from his work. Soon after the beginning of the occupation, he returned one day from work to find a police notice ordering him to quit within twenty-four hours. Bad as that was, he had reflected at the time that he was more fortunate than the poor wretches in Poznan, Pomorze and Silesia, who were given only thirty minutes in which to pack one bag and get out, leaving behind the house-key and all their belongings for the benefit of German settlers brought from the Baltic and other states.

The Germans had decided to convert all that part of Warsaw into a ghetto for the Jews. Half a million Jews were driven into the



Clothing sold in the streets of Warsaw to buy food

district, which was then surrounded by a high wall so that the Jews could not get out nor the Aryans get in.

Jan remembers the widespread anger amongst the workers over this incident. At one of the secret printing-houses, a proclamation was drawn up **denouncing the barbarian Nazis and confirming the solidarity of the Polish and Jewish workers.** The leaflets were strewn about or stuck up on walls in thousands. Not content with issuing leaflets, at night, under the very noses of the German police, some member of the revolutionary workers' movement **tore down a part**

of the ghetto wall. When the police arrived in the morning, they found, floating proudly over the ruins of the wall, the red and white flag of Poland.

As Jan walks along, he thinks what a difference there is between the dwellings of Poles and Jews and the bright and healthy houses in another part of Warsaw, occupied by Germans and their families. This part of Warsaw includes parks, river embankments, administrative buildings, theatres and other places of amusement. No Pole can obtain permission to go and live there.

### A HUNGRY FAMILY

The worst time for the worker is the morning. Jan finds it impossible to keep his eyes from the drawn face of his wife and the ashen cheeks of the children. His wife gets more low-spirited every day. Yesterday she stood all morning in a queue, only to return empty-handed from the shops. The children, lacking good food, seem day by day to be wasting away. Often a bad fright will hasten the process.

Thus, yesterday, two of the children returned from school, weeping and terrified. Between sobs they related how, after the second lesson, German police had entered the school and locked all the doors. German doctors had then examined each child, choosing the most robust and taking from each about half a glassful of blood for transfusion into the veins of wounded German soldiers. The teacher had tried to protest but had been quickly silenced by the threat of the concentration camp.

If they are to regain their strength the children must have more food. But how is Jan to get it for them? The Germans have taken most of the food, either to send to Germany, or for the consumption of German officials, soldiers, police and civilians. The best food is issued only to German shops which are barred to the Poles. How often has Jan passed such shops, their windows laden with white bread, rolls, cooked meats, preserves and fruits—but all for the Germans, even the Polish children may not have so much as a crust.

### EVERYTHING FOR THE GERMANS

There is a wide difference between the rations of food allowed to victors and vanquished. For the week ending October 18th, 1941, Germans under six received 4½ oz. of margarine and all over six, 9 oz. Against this no margarine was allotted to the Poles. The sugar ration was 2½ lb. per head to the Germans but only 9 oz. to the Poles. In addition, Germans received rations of oatmeal, sago or potato flour, jam, soup cubes and pudding powder, none of which was allowed to the Poles. The Poles did get 4½ oz. of synthetic honey per head.

People who have some money are able to buy in the black markets. Jan simply can't afford it. Two pounds of sugar on the ration-card cost about 8d. In the black market the price would be about 21/-. Similarly for bread and potatoes, even a bottle of vinegar costs 7/6d.

At times when the pangs of hunger refuse to be dulled, Jan longs for a meal in a restaurant—but even if he had money to spare, he could not get food there, as most of the restaurants and hotels are exclusively reserved for the Germans.

### CHILDREN SUFFER MOST

The youngest child has been born since the war began. In peace time the Health Insurance Society would have provided proper treatment for Jan's wife, both before and after the confinement. There would have been a period of convalescence in a well-equipped home. Under the Germans there is no such treatment and the child is thin and sickly.



Starving Polish children seek for scraps after the market

A doctor friend who has examined it several times only shakes his head. The child needs better food, more fresh air, ought to go to the country. Jan laughs bitterly at this. Before the war he could not only afford good food, but could easily manage to send his family for the whole summer, either to the seaside or into the mountains. There were children's holiday camps supported by the workers' clubs. Now, all these clubs have been closed. **Even recreation grounds are forbidden to Polish children. Notice-boards bear the words "Only for German children."** Swimming-pools, sports-grounds and playing-fields, all are reserved for Germans.

Even if he had the money, Jan could not send his children to the country. The people there have insufficient food for themselves. Then, **all Poles have to get a special permit to travel.** They must produce evidence of necessity and abase themselves before the Germans, often only to be insulted and refused. Better drop the idea, the less one has to do with the German authorities the better. **For the Jews it is even worse. They may not use the railways or steamers at all.**

The two youngest children attend the elementary school, but derive little benefit from it under the Nazi system. In the part of Poland incorporated in the Reich the Germans have closed all Polish educational establishments. The Poles now have to send their children to German schools, paying high fees only to have them educated on Nazi principles. Better to let the children run wild than that they should grow up Germans.

Jan sends his children to the German-controlled school but **they are taught secretly, in private houses, Polish language, history and geography.** The Germans vigorously persecute those responsible for these private classes and not a few teachers have been deported to Germany. But the fight for the soul of the Polish children still goes on.

### NO EDUCATION FOR THE POLES

The eldest boy is Jan's most difficult problem. He is capable, studious and intelligent. He had always hoped to be a doctor. He was always regular in attendance and punctual and was highly commended by his teachers. In two years he would have finished high school and might have got a scholarship to a medical school. But all his hard work has been in vain. The Germans regard the Poles as a slave-race, whose only mission in life is to supply muscle and brawn. An elementary school and a short term at a low-grade technical school is enough for the Polish children. **The Germans, therefore, closed all secondary schools, universities, technical colleges and theological schools. Warsaw University is occupied by the Gestapo and other educational buildings by the S.S. and German police.**

And so all the boy's efforts and all the sacrifices Jan has made to help him on have been wasted. He now mooches around, workless and in ever lower spirits and his mother is mad with anxiety lest one day he should be kidnapped in the street by the German "press-gangs" and sent off to Germany for forced labour.

Jan walks on. It will soon be time he was at work. He no longer goes by tram, although the alternative is a walk of some three miles. Anyway that is better than witnessing some of the things which happen on the trams. **There are separate compartments for Poles and Germans.** Often, when the trams are crowded, Germans squeeze into the Polish compartment and even the women have to give up their seats to them. How many times has Jan seen women and even children thrown out of the trams by German soldiers!

### RICKSHAW

Before the war it was a pleasure to walk in the streets of Warsaw. They were always filled with a gay and lively throng. Now the streets lead through a barren, desolate waste of demolished houses.



This is Warsaw's "taxi" to-day

The debris has been cleared away, but at every step ruined walls stretch upward in mute appeal to the skies. There are no streams of cars in the road, only an occasional car filled with German officers, or sometimes a horse-drawn cab, a vehicle which before the war had almost disappeared. **But mostly one sees only rickshaws. These are drawn mainly by Polish students and it is almost their only means of livelihood. They have attached trailers to their bicycles and go out plying for hire. Taxis are no longer to be seen.**

Jan misses the old familiar din of the streets, the music and singing of street musicians. When the Germans came these musicians, instead of singing popular songs as before, wandered from street to street and courtyard to courtyard, playing and singing only Polish national and folk songs. In the end the Germans, remarking the enthusiasm evoked, forbade it altogether.

Some of the streets have been entirely destroyed and new roads made. Jan can't bear to look at the street names. The old Polish plates have been removed and German names given to all the streets. Even the most beautiful square in Warsaw is now called "Adolf Hitler Square."

Jan goes into a shop, not very hopefully, for cigarettes. The shopkeepers are a prominent Warsaw scientist and a well-known poet. The latter, with his author friends, abandoned their writing as they could not bring themselves to submit their works to the German censor. Both doctor and poet prefer to trade in matches, cotton, anything they can get hold of.

There are no cigarettes, as Jan had expected. As he goes along someone offers him a newspaper, the *Warsaw Courier*. Jan brushes it aside and spits. **Although it is in Polish, he knows this paper is issued by the Germans. He can't read German lies and anti-Polish rubbish.** He will wait until night when he can read an authentic Polish paper.

### A ROUND-UP

Suddenly, instinctively, on an impulse born of much experience, Jan dives into a narrow alley, springs through the first doorway, races up the stairs and crouches in a dark corner. Outside, police whistles can be heard, accompanied by foul German expletives and shrieks of women. A round-up.

**Jan knows that all male captives will be loaded into cattle-trucks and sent to Germany to work. A worse fate awaits the young women.**

A few days before Jan had received a letter from his sister in another town. She wrote how, together with some five hundred other girls, she had been called to the labour office. They had been forced to strip naked and examined by doctors, who then operated on them. After being ill for three days, she had received a card to prepare to go with a train-load of other girls to Germany.

When, laden with disease, these girls return from the German soldiers' camps, they are ruthlessly shot by German machine-guns.

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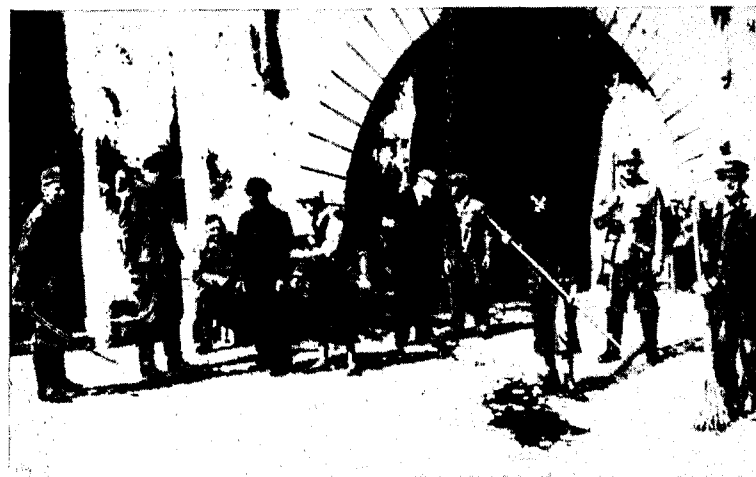
Jan waits for what seems an age. Then all is quiet and he emerges from his hiding-place. With quickened step he hurries on to the factory, he is afraid he will be late.

### AN UNDERGROUND PAPER

At the works, he goes into his shop and dons his overalls.

In his hip pocket something rustles. He smiles to himself. They have done it again. For the moment he feels quite happy. **His comrades, actively engaged in spreading secret communications, have already got a new leaflet through to him.** He will read it to-night. And he must not forget, before leaving the workshop, to leave in his drawer his contribution to the publishing fund. This money will be secretly collected by some unknown person and handed to an equally unknown treasurer.

The money is urgently needed. The Germans have requisitioned all stocks of paper. They have even stripped the stationers' shops of nearly all their books and sent them to the paper mills for repulping. That is where the Germans get the paper for their noisome publications. So the "underground" workers have to send a long way for their supplies. The cost runs into large sums. Then the presses must be moved from place to place constantly.



Compulsory work in the streets of the Polish capital under supervision of armed German soldiers

Recently the Germans discovered one such place in Warsaw. When they knocked and received no reply, they threw in hand-grenades and machine-gunned the house. Two comrades were killed and a woman was wounded and died later. But there was a fight and the Germans did not have it all their own way.

But no one grudges his share of the cost and the "underground" activities are growing day by day. Round-ups, concentration camps, even executions provide no deterrent.

Jan gets on with his work but soon begins to feel tired. His limbs ache and feel like lead. Insufficient food and work greatly speeded up by the Germans are too much for him. In order to get the maximum output to fill the gaps made by the R.A.F. in the west, the Germans have abolished the 8-hour day and the workers must do at least 10 hours. All holidays have been curtailed and the granting of them is left to the discretion of the employer.

### STARVATION WAGES

Wages have generally been maintained at pre-war levels although the cost of living has gone up by about 500 per cent. For the same job the German workers in Poland get not less than twice the pay of the Poles, plus a special living allowance which in itself amounts to as much as the total wage of a Pole.

There was a factory owner recently who declared himself ready to raise the wages of his Polish workers. When the Germans heard of it they immediately threatened to close his factory and put him in prison. The Germans have issued a decree **forbidding, on pain of imprisonment, any increase of the wages or improvement in the working conditions of the Poles.** Nothing is allowed for overtime and any worker who asks for an increase may be fined or imprisoned. **The worker has no protection, his trade unions have gone, the leaders have been killed or imprisoned and all the funds appropriated.** Strikes are out of the question. Machine-guns are the Germans' reply to any such action.

### GO SLOW WORK

Jan and his comrades have to be very careful in their work. There is a German decree which provides heavy penalties, not only for bad workmanship, but also for "failure on the part of the worker to show goodwill." All day and every day Jan and his pals run this risk. It is not their intention to deliver good workmanship. They make as fine a show of work as they can. But all the time they are wasting precious minutes, adjusting machine-parts which need no adjustment, over-scrupulously examining materials, repeating, as though unconsciously, the same operation, dropping their tools and retrieving them only very slowly and

generally delaying the work as effectively, yet as unostentatiously as they can. Thus the German effort at intensification fails. **The workers have become very skilful in this form of sabotage and even the German supervisors can find no tangible proof of it.**

From time to time the Germans become so infuriated that they choose at random a number of workers and send them to concentration camps. Many are executed—but this does not intimidate the victims' comrades.

Not the least active in sabotage are a number of workers who have been brought to Warsaw from Gdynia. Formerly highly-experienced dock workers, here they can do only odd and labouring jobs for a miserably low wage. Ill as they could afford it, the other workers have assisted the families of these men with small contributions to save them from semi-starvation.

\* \* \*

### CONSTANT FEAR

The working-day is over and Jan is on his way home. The curfew hour is drawing near and the streets will soon be quite empty. Even munition workers, waiters, doctors, nurses, those who have German permits to be abroad after this time, prefer to get indoors. Many times it happened that some worker, **diving his hand into his pocket for his permit, has been shot by the Germans who thought he was reaching for a gun.** Often people have been hit by stray bullets fired by the Germans who seem to be in constant dread even of their own shadows.

Jan walks as fast as he can. Fear for his family spurs him on. To-day, as every day, he is haunted by the fear that he will be met by one of his neighbours bearing dreadful tidings—the children have been carried off—his wife has been arrested or deported. In the few moments before he reaches home Jan dies a thousand deaths. He breaks into a run and arrives at the door sweating and exhausted. Is everyone here? Are they all all right?

And so day after day, there is the constant suspense and the fear of disaster.

Jan recalls the happy days before the war. Tired but cheerful after the day's work, there was always a glass of beer, a bit of gossip, perhaps a lively debate with his pals in the pub. Jan had a fair amount of leisure and he and his wife liked the cinemas. They never go now. All educational and instructional films have been banned and the films which are shown either caricature the Polish army and authorities or vaunt the "heroic" deeds of Hitler's hordes.



Monuments destroyed in Poland. The statue of Adam Mickiewicz, Poland's greatest poet, desecrated

### VODKA INSTEAD OF CHOPIN

No self-respecting Pole will go to the theatre or a concert. All serious plays, all Polish national and classical music, the immortal works of Chopin and Paderewski have been banned. The Germans suggested the playing of jazz and the presentation of reviews of a particularly low class. Not content with starving the body of the Pole, the Germans aim also at destroying the national soul and demoralising the Polish race. In country districts many public houses have been opened and vodka is on sale at absurdly low prices. This is to encourage drinking, whilst in Warsaw the

Germans opened a gambling-den, a place never seen in pre-war Poland, in order to get money and encourage vice.

Jan and his wife were fond of reading. There were excellent lending facilities at the local library. The Germans, after closing all the libraries, reopened them later with a new catalogue from which all books on Polish political, economic and national history had been removed. More than 1,500 authors had been eliminated including Joseph Conrad, also all books in English, even dictionaries, except American editions. No book was included which had in its title the words "Poland" or "Polish." Parliamentary debates, speeches by prominent leaders such as the Socialist Daszynski, even studies of the constitution of Poland had been excluded. All poetry, novels and plays with a national flavour shared the same fate. It is even recounted how the Germans excluded a book on gardening entitled "Pests and their Destruction"—perhaps they thought it referred to themselves.

The ban on books has ruined most of the Polish firms of publishers. Those still carrying on can barely make both ends meet since no book, periodical, even musical work can appear without permission and this is almost unobtainable. The Germans have ordered that every bookshop shall display in its window a copy of a book "Die Polen vor Berlin" (Poles at the Gates of Berlin), a satire intended to taunt and mock at the Polish people. The banned books can only be circulated in secret. They pass from hand to hand amongst friends and are read if anything, much more eagerly than before.

### LISTENING-IN TO LONDON

After supper there is a discreet knock at the door. The neighbours come in bringing books. They talk and read and their worries are momentarily lifted from their shoulders, their eyes take on a new light, shoulders lose their stoop, fists clench with heightened resolution. To-night there is a leaflet to read. It is a **Manifesto which is going out to the world, telling them Poland will continue the fight until victory is won.**

The hour of broadcasts from London draws near. Jan's wife goes to the door and listens. They have to be careful. Only recently, the Germans caught the occupants of a nearby house listening to London and sentenced them to twelve years imprisonment. Jan gets out the receiving set and tunes in. He adjusts the headphones and listens. "Hush, the English News—Last night British Aircraft of Bomber command bombed Hamburg, Cologne and Berlin. In this attack Polish pilots took part. All our planes returned safely to their bases . . ."



Fortified and cheered, the party breaks up with a fraternal handshake. Instead of a good-bye, they repeat the war-cry of the great underground workers' movement: Freedom, Equality, Independence.

So Jan and his family retire to rest. Jan stirs uneasily in his sleep. To-morrow the anxiety will begin anew, there will be again the dread of the catastrophe which lurks just round the corner ready to pounce.

But though many may perish in the struggle for freedom, many more will survive and terrible will be the retribution which will one day overtake those fiends out of hell, whose only joy is the misery and wretchedness of others.

This will be the day of the defeat of the evil forces now trying to dominate mankind; the fulfilment of the aims and longings of all the Jan Kowalskis and John Smiths of the world—**FREEDOM, EQUALITY, INDEPENDENCE.**

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