

TOTAL WAR
and the
HUMAN MIND



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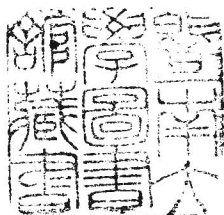
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TOTAL WAR and the HUMAN MIND

*A psychologist's experiences in
occupied Holland
by*

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M.D., F.R.S.M.

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TOTAL WAR
and the
HUMAN MIND

By the Same Author

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE

HOMO MILITANS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONVERSATION

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PAIN AND SORROW

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INTRODUCTION .

THIS study of psychological warfare differs from others published in this country because it was thought out and prepared in occupied territory. The author lived for more than two years under German oppression, and it was especially the sense of moral and intellectual isolation which urged him and others to study. He took part in various study groups, and this book may be considered as the result of such team work. It stands to reason that in the circumstances it has a certain emotional flavour, though it is perhaps none the worse for that.

There is one important theme which needs to be emphasized, the theme of "Lest we forget." Men have on the whole such short memories, and human imagination is all too liable to fail where past misery is concerned. Between 1918 and 1939 people forgot too much. Because they had forgotten the nature of Man and his capacity to err, they did not understand what was taking place in the world. Even now our imagination is insufficiently exercised. Even now we do not realize to the full that certain vicious roots in human character may send up shoots which will wreck civilization.

When we are at peace again we must not allow ourselves to overlook the part played by men's characters in the conduct of war. The politicians are too inclined to forget men's secret motives and their passions. This must not happen again.

We ought to have a more profound knowledge of Man both as individual and as part of a community. This book deals, from a social and psychological point of view, with a few out of the many problems of war. After the conflict is over, these ideas and many others will have to be worked out fully, and hammered into the minds of men, so that they will never forget.

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Two Days in Occupied Holland

I

THE telephone is ringing in the pitch darkness of a winter morning. Will the doctor come at once, please, because Mr. X has been found unconscious in bed, breathing rather queerly. It's the same old story, I tell myself, getting out of bed: another suicide, probably with a sleeping draught.

Fortunately it is past four o'clock in the morning, so I am allowed in the street. The motor-cycle, for a wonder, starts right away, and I grope my way carefully through the blackout and the drizzling rain. Half-way there I am stopped by a German patrol, but my papers are in order, and they let me pass. A nasty moment, for one can never get used to those green-uniformed individuals.

When I arrive I find that I am too late. For hours we fight for the patient's life, administering antidotes and other treatment, but there is no helping him. Why did he do it? Well, he was just one of those who had no more strength, could no longer resist the strain of daily life, all the horror and tragedy around him. He was Jewish; he knew that things could only get worse for him, and he made his escape. The doctor's lot is not an easy one in such circumstances. We are used to fighting fate, but the German whip is too heavy for us.

At 8.30 I go home. It is a chilly, desolate morning, and still dark, for we live under German time. The streets are full of pedestrians making their way to their offices by the light of little torches, shuffling along the pavement, shadowy figures in the blackout. There are very few bicycles, for the Germans have confiscated most of them. The trams are crowded.

At home my little black-haired dog greets me with a joy which knows nothing of present miseries. There is much for me to do, so, having hastily swallowed two thin slices of dark wheat bread and a cup of substitute tea, I go out to the hospital. It is getting light and the greyness is lifting from the city.

Many people would be surprised at the kind of work we have to do at the hospital, touching as it does on many questions normally outside the doctor's province. We advise on all types of personal trouble, on how to cook wartime food, on what to eat, and there is no point at which the war does not enter into our problems.

There is, for example, the problem of food. We are short of all foodstuffs. We are getting only about sixty per cent. of what the human body really needs, and the additional food must come from somewhere. It is not so much a question of immediate starvation, as of prolonged under-nourishment which affects the tissues and undermines resistance to disease. Before the war there were few illnesses which could be attributed to lack of vitamins, but now we begin to come across cases of beri-beri, "inflammation of the nerves," and indications of scurvy and pellagra, a state of affairs which was accelerated by the terrible cold at the beginning of 1942 when supplies of butter, potatoes and vegetables were held up. For special cases such as diabetes or kidney trouble, it is still possible to apply for an extra food ration, but the extra allowance for abnormal loss of weight has long ago been abolished. By now most of us would qualify for it.

Much can be done with good advice, however, and the doctor in wartime has to be an accomplished cook. So I tell the mothers how to prepare a delicious porridge with bread and saccharin for their children, how to boil potatoes in their jackets to get all the benefit from them, how to make the most of the dried fish which, though very expensive, can still be obtained. I tell them about the nutritive value of the onion, try to get them to experiment with vegetables which they never thought of using before, such as the stinging-nettle, and persuade them to give up the traditional geranium in their little gardens for the sake of vegetables. Even so, a lot of thought is required to make both ends meet. There is not enough fuel to prepare properly even the food that is available. But whatever the problem the doctor has to think up an answer.

More difficult still is the advice which has to be given in cases of nervous troubles, troubles which arise not from "imaginary" causes, but from concrete disasters. There is the patient who has lost his wife and daughter and all his possessions in the bombing of Rotterdam. He opened a baker's shop with his two sons, which did not bring in much money, and which in a few months was seized by the authorities as a Jewish concern. After that his sons were sent to a concentration camp, and when he received notices of their deaths he came to me completely broken. What can one say or do? Another patient has had a letter instructing him to go to the police. A month ago he was detained for three days, undergoing cross-examination. I advise him not to risk it, which means that he must become a fugitive, dependent on friends for his safety and his sustenance. Then a mother comes to ask me what shall be done with her daughter, who is keeping company with the German soldiers. Towards the end of office hours I get a visit from a man who was injured in the street fighting during the war. A nerve in the arm was touched, and now, after a year's treatment, it is beginning to function again.

On my way home for the midday meal I pass a group of German soldiers marching through the streets and singing. They are not supposed to do this, and it always has an infuriating effect on the people. Some of the passers-by make a few critical remarks and are promptly set upon by some heavily booted members of the W.A.,¹ the military organization of the N.S.B.² Their enthusiasm leaves several victims among the citizens.

When at last I get home, bitter at what I have seen, it appears that the central heating has given out. The compressed mud which is called peat by courtesy has finally refused to burn. My wife has had to empty the radiator system, and for the time being we shall have to put up with a small wood-burning stove.

¹ W.A.=Weer Afdeeling—the armed and uniformed section of the Dutch Nazi Party.

² N.S.B.=Nationaal Socialistische Beweging—the Dutch Nazi Party.

My office work will have to be done by the heat of an electric coil. On the other hand, there is something to be said for camping in one's own room, and when we have stopped shivering we notice the pleasant smell of burning wood. We eke out our meagre lunch with a little supplementary stew, and recall the camp fires of better days. Misfortunes seem to improve the atmosphere. We cheer ourselves up even further when we get the London news through some friends of ours. We ourselves cannot listen because our neighbours are not too reliable. But it is something to know that the Germans in Russia are even colder than we are.

In the afternoon some Jewish friends visit us. They have heard that there is likely to be another comb-out among them, and have come to take refuge. There will only be a cold guest-room for them, but it will at least be safe. When the danger is over, they will be able to go home again. Not many patients come. It is too cold in any case for a proper examination to be made.

All kinds of rumour are in the air. People say that more hostages will be taken, that doctors will have to join the Doctors' Guild, otherwise they will not be allowed to practise, that the butter ration is to be reduced again, that half the city must be evacuated at once because of the second front. Discussing these things we can never for a moment forget the state of siege in which we live. Meanwhile it begins to snow, and darkness falls, the darkness of a blacked-out city.

The woman of the house is famous for her soup. She makes it with tins of cream of tomato, with some "maggi" cubes, with a few bones wheedled from the butcher, and with grated raw potato to bind the whole together. After that we have mashed vegetables, potatoes in their jackets with kale and powdered milk. The great event of the evening is a pudding of old bread and potato meal with some hoarded raisins in it.

At seven o'clock we are off to visit some friends, at whose house a meeting is to take place. We put on everything we have in the house in the way of overcoats and sally forth into

the snow, carefully avoiding those unfriendly objects in a blacked-out city, the lamp-posts.

This is the greatest moment of the day, to be among our own people, talking freely, and forgetting the misery around us for a little while. One of the circle starts a discussion, and the rest of us join in, each of us warm once more with the sense of unity, friendship and sympathy, now more than ever necessary.

The hostess treats us all to excellent hot peppermint tea with little cakes (my diagnosis reveals a good deal of chalk in them), and she rounds off the evening by playing Mozart, the composer who of all others brings courage to faint hearts.

In the meantime it has stopped snowing, and the moon has come out from behind the clouds. We have to be home by twelve (at first it was ten o'clock), so we set out to walk the long way home. As we go we hear a familiar roar. The searchlights are up and the anti-aircraft guns are barking. The steady throb of engines goes on. It is the R.A.F. carrying out another raid, music to the ears of all Hollanders. This is the beginning of victory—Cologne, the Ruhr, then Berlin. The English are coming, and the Americans. They are carrying on the fight for us.

II

The month of May in Holland is full of fragrance and colour. The sky is transparent; everywhere, even in the city, flowers and trees are springing into new life. The early mornings are full of the song of birds, and pleasant scents are blown in through the open windows, with promise of summer.

On one such morning, while I was still in bed, the door-bell rang. It is not difficult to imagine the shock which goes through you when that sort of thing happens. It generally means a visit from the police or the Gestapo. The maid was awakened so that she could open the door and give me a chance to get dressed and take up a strategic position near the trap-door on to the roof. My wife smoothed the bed to make

it look as though it had not been slept in. It was not the police, however, but only an express letter from a friend with a taste for the macabre.

The maid was able to take her place in the marketing line early that day. Later on my wife relieved her. The reward for all this waiting would be a few lettuces, and perhaps something for some Jewish friends who would not be allowed to go shopping till after 3 o'clock, when there would be nothing left to buy.

Breakfast is a simple matter nowadays. There are no more eggs. The cheese we call "yellow rubber," for there is no fat in it. So that morning we had bread and home-made rhubarb jam, washed down with substitute tea. There are, incidentally, several substitutes for tea which are actually quite drinkable.

The maid came back with the news that there had been some window-smashing during the night, including the house of a neighbour. There is no question of indemnity unless one belongs to the N.S.B. (the Dutch National Socialist Party), and as it happened their windows were all undamaged. A friend of ours wanted to know which would be more expensive, to become a member of the N.S.B. or to buy new windows. The police detective, with a wink, said he thought a membership in the N.S.B. would be more expensive in the long run. It is not an easy life for the police now. They have to work for the traitors, whether they like it or not, and if they show any signs of resistance they are fired, and that is hard on their families.

Breakfast was soon over. There was no morning paper, and if there were it would only be full of German propaganda. Letters from friends are rare, because of the domestic censor. So we communicate by word of mouth only.

It was a day of anxiety for us, for we were waiting to hear what had happened to our friends who were officers in the army. For many days there had been notices in the papers summoning them to present themselves today at various centres. It was said that they would be coming back the same day. But I was not happy about it. There were rumours that

trains were standing ready to take them into Germany, and knowing Nazi mentality one could well believe it. I wanted them to go underground, but they argued that they ought to trust the word of General Christiansen, the German commander in Holland, and that he had promised they would be allowed to return home.

That night many women waited vainly at the stations; their husbands did not come back. Some officers of the Medical Corps escaped the round-up by claiming immunity under the Berne Convention, and they told us what had happened.

All those who had acted in good faith had been herded into the trains and carried off to prison camps. Meanwhile other rumours of further arrests were going round. It was clear that the Germans were out to round up all the potential leaders in the country.

What was going to happen? we wondered. How could a country carry on without its leaders? What was the next move? The next move, as it happened, was a further violent persecution of the Jews.

There was nothing we could do on a day like that. One walked up and down the house, clenching one's fists. One could not even smoke, for there were so few cigarettes. The only comfort to be found in such times is in books, and indeed unhappiness and anxiety have notably stimulated the desire for knowledge.

That afternoon some friends brought us news of a Court session they had attended that day. Twenty Dutch youths were before the Kriegsgericht (the Military Court) charged with resisting the German Army, an act punishable by death. These boys, most of them students, had already been in prison for more than a year, and had been acquitted of the charge by the Marinegericht (the Naval Court). Berlin, however, was out for blood, and the Gestapo were determined to get a death sentence. Their actual crime was that they had distributed anti-Nazi literature, and for this eighteen of them died. They went to their deaths proudly and without flinching. The mother of

one of them was a friend of ours. She did not cry, for what is the use of tears? But there was a longing for revenge in all our hearts. How is the world to be cleansed of this canker of injustice and cruelty?

So the day ended, in discouragement and in hostility that was the stronger for being silent. As we listened in the darkness to the anti-aircraft guns we wondered: "Will they ever understand out there in the free world what we in our prison-house have suffered?"