

NGUEN SPECIAL

PAUL EINZIG

Europe in Chains

Many people are asking :

***What difference would
it make to me if Hitler
won?***

**This book answers that
question.**



EUROPE IN CHAINS

BY PAUL EINZIG

This book gives the reader an idea how Nazi conquest affects the bread-and-butter of the ordinary man in the countries which are defeated or which surrender to Germany. The experience of Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Scandinavian States, the Low Countries and France shows that the Nazi conquerors systematically exploit, impoverish, and enslave the population of the conquered countries. They deprive the vanquished peoples not only of their political rights and individual freedom, but also of the possibility of earning a tolerable living. Nations defeated by Nazi Germany are condemned to slow starvation or to slave labour for the benefit of the conquerors.

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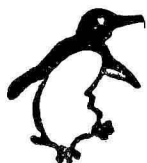
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A PENGUIN SPECIAL

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PREFACE

THE object of this book is to give an account of the exploitation of the conquered nations by Nazi Germany. Its facts are largely based upon material published in the Nazi Press or announced on the Nazi-controlled radio stations of the various conquered countries. To some extent they are based on accounts by neutral Press correspondents, or by refugees from the conquered countries who left their native land some time after the invasion, and had had first-hand experience of the methods of Nazi exploitation. Such unofficial material has been selected with care, and generally speaking has not been used unless corroborated from several independent sources. In the majority of instances the methods of exploitation described by refugees coming from various countries showed such a striking degree of similarity that there could be no doubt about their authenticity.

Reliable unofficial material was easily obtainable from Czecho-Slovakia and Poland, as until comparatively recently citizens of these countries were allowed to emigrate. It was less easy to obtain unofficial first-hand information from Denmark and Norway, though some has trickled through via Sweden. It was even more difficult to obtain direct information from Holland, Belgium and France, and the facts published concerning the Nazi measures taken in these countries are mainly based on official German material.

Statistical data concerning the exploitation of conquered countries by Germany is practically unobtainable, since the German authorities, while announcing some of the measures taken in order to seize the economic resources of their

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victims, take good care not to supply the world with figures regarding the results of these and other measures. Nevertheless, it is possible to ascertain from accounts given by reliable eye-witnesses that as a result of Nazi exploitation economic conditions in all occupied countries have deteriorated to a very considerable degree, and their further deterioration is only a matter of time.

The methods applied and results obtained in various conquered countries were to a large extent similar. In every instance, food and raw material reserves owned by the Government or by large commercial concerns were seized, while the stocks of retail shops were depleted by officially encouraged private German purchases. In every instance such payment as was made by the Germans for these goods assumed the form of forced loans from the conquered nations and led to the inflation of the currencies of these nations. In every instance the occupation authorities embarked upon a systematic readjustment of the economic system of the conquered countries to suit the military and economic interests of Germany. To that end the German authorities did not hesitate to sacrifice the interests of the agricultural and industrial systems of the conquered nations, leading to a permanent deterioration of their standard of living. In every instance a policy was adopted which was calculated to deprive the conquered nations of their stocks of goods, and which will leave them with inflated volumes of money. In every instance the working classes had to carry out forced labour for the conqueror as an alternative to severe penalties or starvation. In every instance the population of the conquered countries is threatened with famine in the not too distant future as a result of the seizure of their reserves by the invaders.

This is the true picture of that "Golden Age of Europe" which, according to Dr. Goebbels's propaganda machine, has been inaugurated as a result of the German victory. Judging from the facts concerning the systematic exploitation of every conquered country, it is amply evident that for the

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nations concerned nothing could possibly be worse than the application of Hitler's scheme. Even the restoration of the pre-war system, defective as it was, would constitute an immense improvement on Hitler's "earthly paradise." This does not of course mean that no attempt should be made to improve on the pre-war system; it means that those idealists who want to improve the fate of the nations to be liberated should not lend themselves unwittingly to play Goebbels's game by presenting the Nazi scheme as if it were in any sense a constructive effort which calls for a rival scheme. The truth of the matter is that the Nazi "New Europe" is the worst form of exploitation ever applied upon European conquered nations by their conquerors in modern times.

The scope of this book is limited to the economic exploitation of the victims of Nazi aggression. While it gives the political background of economic development in various countries since the German conquest, it does not aim at giving a detailed account of the Nazi acts of oppression except in so far as they interfere with the material welfare of the conquered population. The atrocities committed by the German soldiers and Gestapo agents, the suppression of the freedom of the oppressed peoples, the attack on their culture and the efforts to break their spirit, has been adequately covered by the growing literature on the subject. On the other hand, very little has been said so far on the diabolically clever methods with which all classes of the conquered nations are reduced to poverty and slavery. The object of this book is to fill this gap.

P. E.

London, September, 1940.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE great majority of British people realise clearly that in our fight against Hitlerism they are fighting for everything that makes life worth living. They are fully aware that their position in the event of a Nazi victory would become unbearable. For a freedom-loving people to be subject to the domination of a brutal and ruthless oppressor is worse than death. To live without political rights, without freedom of speech, without being able to rely upon impartial justice, under the perpetual menace of the Gestapo and concentration camps, would be an existence to which most people in this country would prefer to die in the last ditch in defence of their freedom.

There is, however, a minority, small but not negligible, which does not adequately realise what is at stake. For them freedom is less important than their bread and butter ; for some of them it is even less important than the luxury into which they were born, or to which they have grown accustomed. They do not realise the extent to which a Nazi victory—or, which is the same thing, a surrender to the Nazis—would affect their individual welfare. They regard the subjection of Great Britain to Germany as a mere change of régime, and assume that under German control their lives would continue more or less in the same way as before. A letter recently published in *The Times* quotes an opinion characteristic of those who think on those lines : a pensioner told the writer of the letter that

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from his point of view it would not matter if Hitler conquered Britain as he would anyhow continue to receive his pension.

Fortunately, the number of people who hold such views is small. Nevertheless they should not be ignored. They can be encountered amongst every class. Many of us have heard poor people argue on the following lines : " What is the use of our freedom and rights if we can barely exist on our earnings ? We could not possibly be worse off even under Nazi domination." They do not realise that however poor they are they can be made poorer by the greedy exploitation of a hostile conqueror. At the other extreme some rich people often arrive at a similar misguided conclusion. They say, " Anyhow, the Nazis would respect private property ; they would do away with Socialism, and would remove the danger of Communism." They are unaware that the difference between Russian Bolshevism and German National Bolshevism is merely a matter of degree even in Germany, and that the sanctity of the private property of the conquered simply does not exist in the eyes of the Nazi conquerors.

It is to be hoped that neither the poor nor the rich will ever have an opportunity in this country to discover by direct experience how utterly mistaken they are in assuming that Nazi domination would not substantially affect their material welfare. They have ample opportunity to learn from the experience of those unfortunate people who are already under Nazi domination. While people in the country which was the first victim of German aggression had an excuse for failing to realise what German domination would mean, after the experience of a number of Continental countries there can be no excuse for ignoring the truth. A wealth of facts concerning the effect of German domination on rich and poor in Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries and France, is at our disposal. All we have to do is to grasp these facts in order to realise without a shadow of doubt what would

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await rich and poor in this country if ever it came under Nazi domination.

The experience of France shows how important it is that everybody should fully realise what Nazi oppression would mean not only to the freedom and political rights of the conquered, but also to their material welfare. While in Great Britain the proportion of those who are not aware of the truth is small, in France it was substantial before the collapse. One of the main causes of the disastrous defeat of France was that a relatively large proportion of the French people did not realise what German rule would mean to them in terms of their daily bread and butter and how it would affect their standard of living. With an amazing short-sightedness, millions of French Communists saw little or no distinction between their political opponents at home and their mortal enemies across the German border. They regarded capitalist domination and exploitation of their ranks as intolerable, and believed that any change through a German conquest could not possibly be for the worse. Embittered by the arrest of the Communist leaders after the outbreak of the war, they set out to undermine the morale of the French army and of the civilian population. They succeeded only too well. Yet they had ample opportunity to learn from their Polish comrades who managed to escape from German-occupied Poland, and to find their way to France, that there was indeed a difference between being oppressed by the reactionary Polish régime of Smigly-Rydz and by the conquering armies of Nazi Germany. It amounts to the difference between existing somehow on the subsistence level and being condemned to slow death from starvation.

The short-sightedness of the French Fifth Column of the Left prepared the way for the defeat of the French armies; the equal short-sightedness of the French Fifth Column of the Right completed the work of destruction by engineering a surrender to Germany at a time when there was still a good chance of resisting the invasion at

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least in French overseas possessions. Before and during the war many of the French "Two Hundred Families" inclined to favour the policy of surrender advocated for years by MM. Flandin, Bonnet and Laval. They feared that fighting the war to the bitter end would mean the loss of their fortunes and privileges, and preferred to make use of the services of men with no political sense, such as Marshal Pétain and General Weygand, to carry through the ignominious surrender. They were under the illusion that in doing so they could save their wealth. Many of them have already realised how wrong they were, and the rest of them are certain to realise it before very long.

One would have thought that with such experience just across the Channel nobody in Great Britain could possibly continue to work under the same delusions which brought about the French collapse. Yet the teaching of the French experience was lost on a number of people in this country owing to their extreme insularity. As far as they are concerned the Continent might be another planet.

The number of those who fail to grasp the teaching of the experience of France and other victims of Nazi aggression is much larger in countries across the Atlantic and in other continents. Being further removed from the scene of the events, they fail to realise what being conquered by Germany really means. Moreover, to some extent at any rate, they have come under the influence of Nazi propaganda which presents a glowing picture of the "New Europe" to be organised under German leadership. Not being sufficiently acquainted with the hard facts of the experience of nations under Nazi domination, many people all over the world are inclined to believe that after all there may be something constructive in Hitler's scheme, and that for the countries reorganised against their will the change need not result in intolerable conditions. Many people hold the view that the result of Hitler's victories will be merely the establishment of new régimes in the conquered countries in place of the old. The truth is,

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however, that it is a matter of indifference to Berlin what régime is in existence in the countries under German control. Those in France who, like Marshal Pétain, thought that by simply proclaiming themselves to have become a Totalitarian State they could escape the worst consequences of the Nazi conquest must have realised by now how utterly mistaken they were. To imagine that the final aim of the Nazi policy of world conquest is merely to assure that the régimes of all countries should be identical with that of Germany is to misunderstand the fundamental character of the German race, of the Nazi system and of Hitler. He and his adherents are not fanatical religious reformers who, being convinced that their faith is the only true faith, want the whole of mankind to benefit from it. They are not interested in mankind except in so far as it can serve their purpose by contributing towards the increase of the power and welfare of the German race.

The first object of Nazi policy is military domination, with or without actual occupation, of the countries under German control. Indeed, the difference between the control over countries which are actually garrisoned by the conqueror's army and those which are simply defenceless in face of the ever-existing menace of invasion, is merely one of degree. It will not take a long time before Frenchmen will realise that the distinction between occupied and unoccupied France is largely fictitious. Countries which have not yet been trampled on by the Nazi hordes are beginning to realise, one by one, that they have to obey Berlin's dictates to the same extent as if they had been actually conquered. And even if the German troops were to be withdrawn from the conquered countries, in existing conditions this would make but little difference to the completeness of Germany's political and military control over them. They would be left crippled and defenceless, always exposed to reoccupation almost without effort by the German armies.

Is the acquisition of political and military control over

foreign countries the end itself, or merely the means to an end? Undoubtedly the power and glory of enslaving other races does give Germans and Nazis immense satisfaction for its own sake. Nevertheless, the Nazi leaders are too realistic to want to conquer Europe and the rest of the world merely for conquest's sake. The ultimate object of their policy of conquest is economic exploitation. To the satisfaction of being able to mark Europe on the map as "Deutschland" and the whole world as "Grossdeutschland" they are determined to add the satisfaction of improving the standard of living of the German conquerors, by means of exploiting the conquered whose sole rôle in the German scheme of things would be to provide for the requirements of the "Herrenvolk," the race of "Nordic" warriors.

The object of subsequent chapters of this book is to prove by cold facts of experience that the picture painted by German propaganda of a Europe prosperous under Nazi domination is entirely false; that the Nazi pretence to look after the welfare of the conquered as well as the conqueror is sheer hypocrisy; and that in reality under Nazi domination the victims of German aggression are reduced to a state of extreme poverty and slavery. Judging by the experience of those nations which have already been conquered, those who are exposed to Nazi conquest have no right to expect from their potential conquerors anything but the most ruthless form of exploitation. The system of which they would become part in the case of a Nazi victory would mean for them forced labour on subsistence level, and even below subsistence level; they would be deprived, for the benefit of their rulers, of a very large part of the fruits of their labour; their right to a tolerable standard of living would disappear with their political freedom.

It will be seen in subsequent chapters that wherever the German army entered a régime of exploitation of the local population was promptly established. Even Austria did not escape this exploitation, for although Austrians are a