

Germany Facing Starvation

An American Writer Tells of Effects of Blockade

Early last summer the Chicago Tribune sent one of its best women reporters, Madeleine Doty, author of *Society's Misfits*, to Germany with orders to carefully observe conditions throughout that country and then return to the United States and write her story. This was done to avoid the censors, first in Germany and second in England. Had she written her story in Germany the German censor would have eliminated all that was objectionable from a German standpoint, while in England the British would delete whatever they wished removed.

To an untrained observer and writer the task assigned Miss Doty would have been almost impossible of fulfillment but to a trained observer and writer it is comparatively easy to carry away vivid and accurate pictures of actual conditions. Miss Doty was particularly well qualified for the task as she had made a big name for herself as an investigator of social and economic conditions at home, especially work connected with prisons, slums and general relief.

She was sent to Germany with an open mind. She was neither pro-Ally nor pro-German, but was to investigate conditions and faithfully report what she observed. This she has done. At least her paper, the Chicago Tribune, vouches for her ability, her truthfulness and her faithfulness on all other assignments. Her story reads like a true tale; the faithful portrait of an observing careful investigator.

The first letter dealt very largely with her voyage and landing in Germany and finding "Hamburg with deserted streets and a harbor devoid of all life."

The following extracts from her second and third letters indicate that Germany is seriously feeling the pressure of Britain's blockade. Food and peace are the words on the lips of every German woman:

ARTICLE II.

I awake to find myself in Germany. With quivering excitement I spring from bed and creep to the window. Beneath lies an empty courtyard, quiet, still, no sign of life. I press the electric button and order breakfast. A pale, worried little man arrives with a tray.

There is the same undrinkable coffee of the night before, a tiny drop of blue, watery milk in a doll's pitcher no bigger than my thumb, no sugar, some black, sour, uneatable bread no butter, and a small saucer of marmalade.

Irritation seizes me. How can I spend weeks in Germany without proper food?

We decide to make a tour of the city. It is a gray, sunless day. The weather increases the gloom of the city. Only a few persons are upon the street; old people or very young people and tiny children.

But occasionally we pass a silent, dejected group lined up before a meat shop. It is a meat day. Working women with babies in their arms, or tiny children carrying baskets, or old decrepit men and women clutching a government meat card patiently wait their turn. The shop door flies open, three or four are admitted and a miserable half pound of meat portioned out.

Except for these food purchases the city seems actionless. We enter a book shop and ask for a map. But to sell a plan of Hamburg is verboten. So many things are verboten. Perhaps that accounts for the inactivity. Store windows present a fine display, but inside the shop is silent and empty.

Little Life in City.

Even in the business section there is little life. We find a small boat that makes a three hours' trip about the harbor, and take it. The great wharves are peopleless, no hurrying men, no swinging derricks, no smoke issuing from smokestacks or funnels.

In the docks lie big and little boats, rusty, paintless, deserted. The great Imperator, like a towering monster, commands the centre.

The paint is peeling from its sides. Its brass is dull; some dirty stained blankets flap on an upper deck. Like a thing alive it seems stricken with plague. Its proud title "Imperator" is gone and in its place is the word "Cap Polonia." Except for our tug and two others, no vessels move upon the water. There are no whistles, no chug-chug and swish of passing boats, no vibrant, thrilling life.

Hamburg Seems Dying.

Hamburg is a city of sleepers. Its big hotels, its many stores, its impressive buildings stretch out endlessly, but within all is still. All that modern industry and the ingenuity of man can achieve has here been flung upon the land and then the force that created has vanished, leaving these great monuments to rot, to rust and to crumble. The tragedy of unused treasures is as horrible as rows of dead. A city seems visibly dying.

Faint from want of food we leave the boat to seek a restaurant. We find one directly opposite the Hamburg-American docks, on the hillside. We seat ourselves on the outdoor porch which commands the harbor. As we do so we notice a long line of women and children filing into the big Hamburg-American buildings. Each bears a pail. When they emerge it is with steaming contents.

Docks Become Kitchens.

The docks have been turned into big feeding kitchens. When the women leave a whistle blows. Then from every direction come old men and young boys. They come running, hopping, jumping, each striving to be first driven by hunger, or by fear that the last may have nothing. The police keep them in order. They file into the big building to eat.

The meals furnished us is scanty, but after this scene it seems beautiful. There is soup, fish, meat, vegetables, fruit and cheese. The bread and meat are to be had only with cards. Like the day before, the food is watery and tasteless. It is such food as is served in institutions.

Prison diet does not promote health or strength. One can live on it, but patriotism and temper suffer.

From the monument we go to the residential quarter. We try to get a taxi, but there is none. I saw just three during that day. It has become tea time. After a short walk we enter a popular cafe. Here at last is a large group of people. There are many well dressed women, retired officers or officers home on leave, and some slightly wounded soldiers.

The tables in the big building or scattered about on the sidewalk are all occupied. A band is playing gay music. On the surface all looks well. But a line of Whitman flashes through my mind:

"Smart attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under the breastbones, hell under the skull bones."

There is no chatter, no laughter. The faces are lined with sadness. Except among the women there is no youth. All are shrunken, listless, distraught. Coffee "ersatz" (coffee mixed with a substitute) and tea "ersatz" is being served. There is no milk and no sugar. The few cakes are made of unknown substance. I try one, but cannot swallow it. Only the music is cheerful. There is a revival of band playing in Germany. It is needed to hide the lack of laughter and talk.

Life is Mere Existence.

There are only two topics of conversation — war and food shortage. That is the whole of life. There is little business, no trade, no reforms, no scientific discoveries, no creative work to discuss. Life has become mere existence—a prison existence. Mind and bodies are shrinking from a shortage of intellectual and physical nourishment.

This first day in Germany is the worst. Fresh from war-free countries the impression is vivid. After a little I became adjusted. All who live in Germany get adjusted.

The changes have come gradually. One month sugar stops. When this is an old story then one must learn to do without milk. Herr Smyth fails one week and Herr Bauer weeks later. This slow decline binds Germany to what is really occurring. But the total, seen by a stranger, is appalling.

In May, 1915, I spent ten days in Berlin. Then English could not be spoken with comfort. Flushed faces and angry looks were the result. To-day English is tolerated. Occasionally eyes follow me questioningly; the official class resents it but the people are always friendly.

Hate for America Dying.

A year ago there was bitter hatred of America. "American bullets" were flung in one's face everywhere. To-day the average person is pathetically eager to be friendly. Slowly the people are awakening. For months the newspapers have fed them on the triumphs of Germany and the perfidy of other

er nations. But these stories of glorious German victories have resulted in what? A lean and barren country, undernourishment, death, the hatred of other nations. The people begin to doubt their leaders.

To call these people "barbarians" is an outrage. They are like ourselves, just folks kindly and generous, deceived and brow beaten by a ruthless military group.

The young woman in the railway carriage belongs to the well to do bourgeois. She is eager to talk. "Why," she asks, "does the world think we're beaten when we have soldiers in Belgium and France?" So often this question is asked.

Boasts Things of Past.

Boasting no longer exists. Instead comes the plaintive query: "Why are we beaten and why must we suffer?"

We gaze out of the window as the train speeds on. We pass great stretches of desolate, barren, juiceless land. It is sandy and difficult to cultivate. It is the worst portion of Germany. A tear is in my companion's eye.

"We have got to have food," she avers, and then a moment later: "O, why can't we have peace?"

It is early afternoon when we reach Berlin. I leave the train slowly. When I reach the station entrance the taxis and carriages are all taken. An aged porter with a push cart volunteers to conduct me to the Adlon. It is Sunday. I follow the push cart through the silent streets, but as we pass the Thiergarten a great throng of people is visible. They flow in and out about the Hindenburg Denkmal. That figure is made of wood and covered with nails. You pay a small sum and hammer in a nail. In this manner patriotism and Hindenburg devotion is inculcated and the government gets the money.

If ever there were a systematic smashing of Denkmals it would create a busy day for Berlin. There are so many of them. The Thiergarten strasse is lined with ugly monstrosities of royalty. Many figures are portraits of English nobility who intermarried with Germans. Evidently whatever comes to Germany becomes German, for all are decorated with wreaths and flowers.

But the Sunday crowd that moves about the Thiergarten is not happy. As in Hamburg and elsewhere, the men are old or young, except for the sprinkling of lean, pale, nerve racked soldiers.

Poor People Pay the Price.

So on the surface there is bustle and action; life somewhat resembles normal. But it is a queer, limited, down at the heel activity. People are upon the streets, but the stores are nearly empty. There is a shortage of things to buy. The rich still purchase, but cheap things are only to be had with government cards.

That is the tragedy of Germany — the sore spot that festers. The pinch has come, and the rich protest themselves at the expense of the poor.

It is marvellous with what ingenuity the big hotels conceal deficiencies. That is why visitors and reporters fail to see the underlying truth.

Salvation From Within.

But I go to bed tormented by the lean and shrunken people I have seen. Is it not foolish to starve out Germany? This procedure does not hurt the governing classes and the rich. They will not suffer until the rest of Germany is dead.

Starvation kills off the poor but leaves the militarists intact. This is not the way to crush militarism. It cannot be done by pressure from the outside. Regeneration always comes from within. Revolution or evolution, not smashing, is what is needed.

ARTICLE III.

As I start to leave the hotel I pause in the entrance to gaze up and down the famous street Unter den Linden. Thin streams of people are passing and repassing. It is Monday, but the atmosphere is that of Sunday. German week days now are all like Sunday. A little group of people is pressed against a big glass window. Here the latest war bulletins are posted. People always assemble at two spots — war bulletins and food shops.

Food Packages Are Fakes.

It is uncanny to see tragic eyes gazing into pastry shops and fruit stores. Meat is not displayed. I wondered why the butter and cheese stores were ignored. I tried gazing in one. They put up such a good appearance with their shining tinfoil packages.

Then I discovered the reason. The packages are fakes. Each holds a block of wood. There is no butter or cheese in window or shop. Twice a week