

Germany Today---Living and Its Cost

By Edward Wm. Towler

A RECENT letter from an English resident in Germany gives an interesting sidelight on the cost of living in Germany today. It appears that at no period of the war was she in such dire straits for foods and commodities than she now is.

In the first place it must be stated that the mark, holds good in Germany as a standard mark, and European exchange rates do not cut it down in its own borders. Its purchasing power stands the same as in old pre-war days.

There can be no doubt that throughout many of the larger centres there runs a decided undercurrent of Russian Sovietism. My correspondent informs me that since the "Revolution", (the words are his) the working classes are practically masters of the situation. Notwithstanding the tremendous cost of everything, they can, through the high wages prevailing, afford to buy anything they require, except rationed foods. They go about clad in silks, satins, everything of the best; while the worst off are those who have medium fortunes.

High Rates and Weekly Rations.

Today, one spool of sewing cotton costs a dollar of our money. In England it is 15 cents. A pair of children's boots costs \$45 and an adult's \$75. Dress stuffs \$18 to \$20 per yard. The government ration by card is as follows: 1 oz butter, 7 lbs. potatoes, 3 oz. meat, 4 lbs. of bread and 1 pint of milk for children under 4 years of age. All the foregoing is the ration for one week. Other vegetables and fruit are so dear as to be in reach only of the very richest. There is hardly a house with a fire as the city is without coal and when the letter was written freezing temperatures were being experienced. Owing to the coal shortage, no gas worth speaking of is being manufactured, therefore all gas ranges are cut off from supply from 8 a.m. until 4.30 p.m. Sometimes a small coke fire is allowed from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. provided you are lucky enough to have the coke.

The Housing Problem Solution?

Housing is so much of a problem that according to the size of your house people and families are billeted with you. This is a compulsory law and everyone has to abide by it. Many strange anomalies are seen thereby as the rich who had their exclusive mansions are now forced to give up so many rooms to whoever may demand. Some of them having been forced to provide accommodation for whole families of former servants.

The Melting Pot of War.

During the war, every house was stripped clean of all copper, aluminum, gold, silver, pewter and leather. Every place was systematically searched and routed out, and woe betide he, or she, who hoped to save some cherished piece of jewelry or heirloom, by hiding it. Condemnation was the punishment. The price paid was so ridiculously small that the whole thing was simply a commandeering raid, carried through with true German disregard to feelings, and the things taken without a "thank you". Dinner services of old pewter and silver, almost priceless, went into the melting pot of war. Nothing was sacred, the "Deus ex Machine" of militarism demanded sacrifice and upon the altar of war the household gods were immolated.

Is Germany Crushed?

It would seem that Germany is by no means the crushed country we are led to believe she is. Everywhere work is proceeding at a feverish pace. That there can be no unem-

ployed is proved by the enormous wages being paid and the tremendous prices that range for every day articles. The proof, therefore, is undoubted that labor is in such demand as never before. In pre-war days, the writer visited Germany often and then wages were far below the lowest wage scale then existing in England. In a factory that I visited, a foreman bossing some forty men or more was paid at the equivalent of \$6.00 per week for a 12 hours day, and for that sum had to put a certain amount of time in on Sunday morning.

Shall Inviolable Germany Surprise the World?

Since the war, or rather the Revolution, the whole of the old system has been swept away and with the advent of the rule of the People a new regime is holding sway. They are being paid what they demand and the demand is evidently high. Notwithstanding all that, work is proceeding all over Germany at a high tension voltage—for what? She has not been war swept as was France and Belgium. Her factories, her industries, her mills, are inviolate. It would appear upon the face of things that Germany, who has no time for strikes or labor disputes, is making her supreme effort, even as France made hers when Bismarck staggered her with his war indemnity after the debacle of 1870-71. That debt was to place France under the heel of Germany for generations, yet it did nothing of the kind. France was herself again within a few short years. If history repeats itself, and we are taught that it does, then it is probable that the staggering war indemnity the Allies have laid upon Germany may not be so staggering after all. In an era when money has lost all attributes of old values, when today, countries, Dominions, Colonies, are asked to raise sums ranging from billions down to our own last Victory Loan of \$600,000,000, and do raise them; money appears, as I have said, to lose its value—or shall I say, our conception of its value. In Germany before the war, if you paid \$2.00 for a pair of shoes that was a fair price. Today that price is \$60 or \$70. Now if the money is raised to pay that price, and it is, is it not, probable that the staggering war indemnity we have laid Germany under, may not be so staggering after all, in the face of the new value money appears to have?

Is Germany Playing a Wily Game?

We read in the Press of Spartacans, Bolsheviki and anarchistic riots taking place in many of the great centres of Germany. My correspondent is strangely silent upon that. Germany is too busy for strikes. She is too busy for incipient revolutions. It is a German "canard" given out for German political reasons and to give the Allies the impression she is a broken and divided nation, hopelessly split apart, so rent and torn with internal dissension that she can never be a composite whole again.

Germany is pursuing today tactics that will undoubtedly allow herself to be a stronger and more powerful and rehabilitated nation in far shorter time than we give her credit for. Her trade emissaries are already in England, and in France seeking raw materials, and a statement in the money market columns of the Press the other day said "France is openly dealing with Germany because she is getting a better rate of exchange for the franc than can be obtained in the States."

What About Trading With the Enemy?

During the war how many fervid speeches were made in the English House of Commons, the French Chamber and other legislatures stating that never would we trade with Ger-