

Europe: The New Dark Continent: The task of restoration is ...

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"Hitler filled Europe with all the horrors envisioned centuries before in the Book of Revelation."

Drawing by William Sharp

Europe: The New Dark Continent

CAIRO (By Wireless).

EUROPE is today the Dark Continent. It has become a problem to every human being—in Capetown, in Kansas City, in Brisbane, in Lhasa. The world's leaders plan its future, and their task must be made more difficult by the realization that Europe is perhaps entering its darkest phase.

When Hitler defied himself and set out upon his imperial quest, in true Germanic fashion, he brought about his own Goetterdaemmerung and also filled Europe and its peripheries with all the horrors envisioned centuries before in the Book of Revelation. Famine, disease, death and destruction have long been familiar to this world, but the Fuehrer gave them a modern touch with scientific efficiency and mass production.

Europe is in a condition which no American can hope to comprehend. Virtually every ancient hatred has been revived with new intensity. Frenchman, Italian, Russian, Pole, Czech, Serb, Greek, Belgian, Netherlander, Rumanian—each in his own way hates the German with a personal frenzy.

But worse, and not to be ignored, is that hatred, renewed by the present war, of Greek for Bulgar, Serb for Croat,

The task of restoration is formidable, yet amid horror there is the old vital spirit.

By C. L. SULZBERGER

Rumanian for Hungarian, Frenchman for Italian, Pole for Russian, which has developed among many population groups basically and broadly united in the final effort to crush their common German enemy. And worst of all is that fratricidal hatred of Greek for Greek, Frenchman for Frenchman, Serb for Serb and Pole for Pole, based on differing social and political conceptions fostered and encouraged by chaos and unleashed by the war.

HATRED can be a meaningless word to one who has not seen the things that breed it. This correspondent remembers a photograph of a Serbian corpse surrounded by a group of Croatian Ustachi who had hacked the body to pieces with knives. Store windows in France and North Africa are full of photographs of Maquis' bodies mutilated by the Gestapo and in some cases by French collaborators.

He remembers talking with a Russian sergeant who had been picked up wounded

by a German patrol, and tortured, beaten and finally shot but not killed; he remembers screaming women in Solnechnogorsk staring at the grave of their executed menfolk; he remembers a Greek peasant woman beating her head on the ground and pulling out her hair when she learned that her two brothers had been slain in the recent civil war and her parents killed as hostages.

He remembers also the silent horror mirrored in the eyes of the tattered inhabitants of a rock-bound village in southern Albania when the headless corpse of a bombing victim was lugged into the main square—and dropped in its own blood when Italian bombers reappeared above. He remembers going into the catacombs on the outskirts of Rome on the day an entrance was blasted and the first of more than 300 bodies of persons machine-gunned in cold blood by the Germans was uncovered by gendarmes and workmen clasping handkerchiefs to their faces and reverently gathering to-

gether such pathetic mementos as a ring, a handkerchief, a bloodstained letter.

He remembers listening to a Dutch naval officer in a London night club as he described watching, helpless and in hiding, while a Nazi truck driver deliberately smashed a small boy's arm in the door of a truck. He recalls in Palestine hearing a middle-aged Jewish business man from Rumania describe the rape, beating, torture, starvation, subjugation and callous slaughter which he witnessed in a trans-Dniester concentration camp for his co-religionists established by the Germans and their Rumanian lackeys—so abject and horrifying a scene that when an Italian infantry unit marched past, these down-at-the-heel Fascists divided their food surreptitiously with the sufferers, who, after all, were human beings.

THESE things engender hate. The soul of Europe today represents a Luca Signorelli Day of Judgment fresco; it is warped, twisted, agonized and not even yet surfeited with blood-letting.

There is not yet any way of knowing just how many Europeans have slaughtered each other or been slaughtered in the disaster of the second World War now drawing to its (Continued on Page 50)

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close. It is entirely likely that military fatal casualties alone have topped 10,000,000.

Direct and devious German brutalities designed to reduce inimical populations either by organized slaughter or planned famine and disease have eliminated perhaps two or three times as many people, including women and children, during Hitler's sanguinary career.

WHOLE blocks and racial groups have been eradicated with typical German efficiency, aided by German science and directed by German madness. Only a fraction of Europe's Jews are today alive. Practically the entire race of Balkan gypsies has been exterminated, for no reason except that Dr. Alfred Rosenberg considered them an inferior race. Vast masses of Slavs have been slaughtered or driven to slow starvation in Nazified labor camps.

Famine, which might have been prevented by any conqueror more humane, has been permitted to atrophy the populations of Greece, Yugoslavia and Poland. Guerrilla bands, inspired by faith in freedom but often confused in their definitions thereof, have ambushed and annihilated both their common enemies and one another.

There are hundreds of thousands of Europeans today who do not know what their nationalities are. In all contested border areas, such as eastern Poland, Alsace, Schleswig, Malmédy, Vojvodina and Tyrol, are innumerable families who are not yet aware what the fate of their traditional homeland will be when the map is redrawn; there are many, moved in by Hitler's imperial-minded minions, who do not know whether they will stay or whither they will go if removed.

Forced Germanization or forced Italianization, for example, has brought forth a problem without precedent. If, to cite one instance, the Italian town of Bolsano becomes the Austrian Bozen, will the Tyrol family which became Carezza by Mussolini's decree again become Karersee?

THERE are thousands of European families today who have no idea where their various members are: Some last heard of on some long-forgotten front, some believed to be in a forced-labor internment center, and, worst of all, perhaps, a daughter taken away and, according to rumor, sent to a Nazi soldiers' brothel.

What of the millions of war prisoners scattered in America, Australia, India, the Soviet Union and various ends of Germany? Nazis in Allied camps have not been by any means indoctrinated with democratic ideas, and when a battalion from an American prison camp returns to the conquered Reich it will possibly be

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far less convinced of the disaster to Hitler's philosophy than those who were able to see doom roll forward from the east and west and burst down out of the skies.

The problem of supervising the migration of millions of prisoners within the Reich—either captured soldiery or seized workers—to their various homes is enormous in itself. And what authority will arrange their return, who will rebuild their shattered homes, who help them find their dispersed families?

WHO will be called on to journey into the rugged Dordogne country of southern France and inform the band of Cossack and Hungarian desperadoes left over from Hitler's foreign recruits that the war is ended? And where will they be sent? What will be done with Gen. Draga Mikhailovitch's remaining companies in the forests of the sanjak region, and in which direction will the remaining Elzas bands in Rumelia and Epirus turn?

When one thinks of Europe's economic problems as they exist today they can only be described as a statistician's headache and a humanitarian's heartache. There is not a single land either in Europe or bordering it which is not suffering from varying and tremendous degrees of inflation. The cost of living—if living is possible at all to the masses—is exorbitant. Most national currencies are valueless except where they are propped up by Allied financing. Wages are nowhere nearly sufficient in relation to prices; markets do not exist in large areas because of ruined communications systems; raw materials and machinery shortages make consumers' goods unavailable.

TODAY the well-to-do Frenchman—who belongs distinctly in the minority—exists on butterless bread, coffee made of barley or acorns, strictly rationed meats and vegetables, soup and one packet of bad cigarettes weekly. His wine costs him many times what it did before the war. He has no heat and his electricity, if there is any in his town, is limited by local authority. His soap is a mess of grit; his transport, usually his feet or a bicycle. And yet France, traditionally perhaps Europe's most prosperous country, with the best-balanced economy, is better off than almost any other Axis-ravaged land.

A tin of butter or a sweater in many countries is worth a small fortune in pre-war terms. In France official prices rose 120 per cent between 1939 and the liberation, while in the black market prices are up between 1,000 and 1,500 per cent.

About 60 per cent of Italy's industrial capacity has been destroyed and production is virtually at a standstill. Prices are spiraling upward except on Allied control rationed markets. An ordinary Fiat car, which cost 40,000 lire new, sold for 150,000

lire the day the Allies entered Rome, and now is priced at 350,000 lire. Italian currency circulation has increased 1,150 per cent and the country faces complete bankruptcy.

In solid little Belgium it is estimated that when what might be termed relative post-war stability commences, wholesale prices will stand at 200 per cent of their pre-war level and salaries at only 180 per cent—leaving a dangerous gap. Although 850,000 men and women are employed on special jobs by Allied military authorities, another 300,000 are completely without work.

Even in England, never occupied, whose economy has been marvelously stretched to meet wartime exigencies, wholesale prices have risen 70 per cent, and inflation threatens. Bank deposits stand at twice their pre-war level because of vast Government expenditures, note circulation has doubled, while gold cover for note issues has almost vanished.

IN Spain, which actually only bordered the war without ever having been truly sucked in, the cost-of-living index is four times what it was in 1936, while wages have risen less than half as much. The rationed price of potatoes is up more than 400 per cent. Olive oil, which is the standard fat of Spanish workers, is so tightly rationed that they are forced to buy on the black market at a premium of about 65 per cent.

Sad as these figures may appear to the economist, and heart-breaking as their true meanings are to the little man of Europe, at least some order and system exist in the inflation and misery they mathematically describe. Still uncharted in human terms is the result in Greece, where for a piece of meat a housewife had to pay a weight in paper money greater than the weight of the meat she bought, although million-drachma notes were being printed. American demolition experts in the mountains had to carry their money in huge sacks on mules.

THE small middle class in Greece, Yugoslavia and Poland was literally wiped out by organized Nazi financial pillaging if it escaped the tortures of battle, civil war, imprisonment, famine or disease. This very economic fact has served to stimulate the craving for a new social order, which is especially strong in the eastern parts of the Continent but which embraces all of Europe and most strongly expresses itself in communism.

And when one considers only Allied and liberated or neutral areas, one ignores perhaps the core of the entire puzzle—Germany and its rapidly crumbling industrial structure.

The mind of Europe has in large degree lost its contact with that education and culture which is the Continent's historical pride. The system of schooling erected by the dictatorships, whether in

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Germany, Italy, Rumania or the nations overrun and occupied by the Axis, dedicated its instruction to the worship of force, to preparation for fighting, to racial hatred and intolerance, and to personal indoctrinations and immoralities which biblical philosophers would have associated with Antichrist.

FREE learning in the Continent, whose universities provided so much of the world's most profound thought, was crushed save in a few nervous islands such as Switzerland or Sweden. Parents, fearing the teachings which were promulgated in occupied lands, sometimes refused to send their children to school. In other cases the youngsters were suddenly needed to eke out the barest existence on land whose mature workers were dead or imprisoned far away. And in still other cases boys who in the United States would even now at best be in junior high school are marching about or hiding in forests, carrying guns instead of kites.

In Paris a black-clad woman asked this correspondent, "How can I ever get my boy to school again? He is 15 years old and has been with the Maquis for more than a year. Before that he had not been at school for two years. I don't know whether he has killed anyone. When I talk of school to him he says he is not interested."

And what of the pedagogues themselves? In Germany most free-minded instructors and professors are either dead or in exile. In Greece the schoolmaster of Kalamata led a particularly bloodthirsty guerrilla band. In Poland teachers who had faith in free learning were punished by the Germans and those who prostituted themselves to the Nazis are marked for slaughter by the patriots.

WHAT can be done about Europe? It is the obligation of the world today to try to heal this wounded continent whose missionaries, whether cultural, religious, artistic or philosophical, have spread what is known as civilization to the far corners of the globe. This obligation rests not only with the victorious European powers themselves, such as the Soviet Union, France and the smaller Allies or repentant cobelligerents. It is a duty recognized by the United States and Britain, who, months before victory was in sight, began to draw up schemes for the restoration of European order and to devise mechanisms such as the UNRRA for the Continent's immediate first aid and rehabilitation.

Diplomatically the great powers among the United Nations have already worked out initial schemes for some form of European stabilization. Their blueprints were drawn up at Teheran, at Dumbarton Oaks and at Yalta. Broadly speaking, they are determined by force and the policeman's tactics to prevent future threats of domination and dis-

aster emanating from Germany, which for two centuries has been an intermittent source of disaster.

Politically they hope to establish some form of shock absorber between rival social and economic concepts originating in the west and in the east, stemming from seventeenth and eighteenth century France and England and America or from nineteenth and twentieth century Germany and Russia, from capitalist democracy and from Marxism.

Physically they hope to readjust frontiers in such a way that blocs of oppressed minorities will be reduced if not removed; to inspire and encourage stability and lift the European community of nations once again to their own feet.

Economically they hope to aid by technical and financial means in the enormous task of rebuilding homes, cities, railways and power plants which were ruined when Europe's factories turned to destructive output, and to reconstruct those factories supplying new machines which will create goods for the world's markets.

Psychologically—and here, perhaps, is the deepest and toughest problem—they hope to give miserable European peoples once again a faith in the future and a desire to develop a harmonious community among themselves. These well-intentioned experiments must succeed if the world is to avoid still worse catastrophes.

IT will take a combination of intelligence, industry, benevolence and true humanity on the part of both Europeans and non-Europeans to avoid these catastrophes. Europe's psychic condition can be started on the road to health only by swift justice, serving as a purgative, and economic restoration as fast as possible. Whether a new quest for religion will arise among the disillusioned masses, it is impossible to predict, but there are signs in some areas, notably in the Soviet Union, that the people who have suffered in this vast catastrophe need spiritual solace more than ever.

Many Europeans today think they might well look more to their own early traditions for the formulae by which to reconstitute their life than to foreign systems. Thus, for example, there are many signs that the ancient Slavic tribes' cooperative "Zadruga" is achieving some form of rebirth of agrarian landworkers' and peasants' movements at the present time.

Regarding the Dark "Continent" at this moment, one might naturally be inclined to complete pessimism as to its future. Certainly tens of thousands of Europeans hope to migrate abroad and begin new lives—with scant chance in this well-filled world. But clearly hope prevails for a new period of tranquillity. A continent which could recover from the Thirty Years War and the Black Plague has enough vitality to repair even this, the world's greatest disaster.