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SLAVERY UNDER HITLER'S "NEW ORDER"

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With a foreword by
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FOREWORD

The writer of this pamphlet enumerates the iniquities inflicted upon the workers of Poland. He describes them quite objectively. There is no need to do otherwise for the facts speak for themselves. Over all of them lies the dark shadow of a ruthless dictatorship. Has there ever been in history a more diabolical method of enslaving a whole nation?

Hitler seeks to impose upon the world a universal feudal system in which the Nazis will be the overlords of the conquered nations. This is what the New Order means, whatever camouflage may be used. It is scientifically planned. For each invaded nation a special technique of domination. For Poland, however, prostrate at the feet of the foe, no mercy! A contemptuous calculating degradation; the destruction of all the liberty which Poland had created for herself!

With impartiality the writer does not hide the fact that Governments in Poland sometimes employed authoritarian methods. But the fact remains that before the war Trade Unions existed in Poland. They belonged to our International Federation of Trade Unions. We, the British, often conferred with them. On occasions we gathered together in their country at Warsaw and other places. Their representatives came regularly to meetings of the I.L.O. at Geneva and freely spoke their mind at conferences there. These Unions have all been suppressed. The Gestapo has confiscated their property. To-day the Polish workers are completely without the protection of their organisations, and as a consequence a flood of social evils and inhuman conditions has rushed in upon them.

One day these wrongs will be redressed, and the lost countries restored. That will be when the Nazis' military power is broken to pieces. To help forward that purpose is the duty of all men and women who cherish the freedom of the human soul.

WALTER CITRINE.

Secretary of the
British Trade Union Congress.

SLAVERY UNDER HITLER'S "NEW ORDER"

Polish workers' life under German occupation

THE future of Europe under Nazi domination, should Hitler's dreams of conquest materialise, has been much discussed both in conversation and in the newspapers. The expression, "Germany's New Order in Europe" means very little to anyone who has not been afforded a glimpse of the methods adopted by the Nazis in the countries which they have already overrun and subdued. The only design of the Nazis is the complete subjugation of all free peoples, the abolition of their rights and the conversion of their territories into a larder for a future rich German Reich. This fact clearly emerges from the following outline of German activities in Poland.

Nowhere is the enslavement of the workers in German-occupied countries so much in evidence as in Poland. The first country to be subjected by the Nazis to military attack, it has become the actual testing ground for their "New Order."

The Polish worker has been reduced to a state of serfdom, robbed of his political rights, deprived of his Trade Unions and other protective organisations. All that, by dint of long and untiring effort, he had achieved in the way of social reform and improvements in his standard of life, has been ruthlessly swept away.

Something like a million Polish workers have been deported to Germany as forced labour. The Germans themselves admit the figure of 798,000. Those remaining at home have to work at starvation wage rates, for the benefit of the German overlord, in a Polish industry which is now part of the German war machine.

RUTHLESS EXPLOITATION

The policy of enslavement of the Polish workers is only a part of the general scheme designed by the Germans to transform Poland, and indeed all other conquered countries, into subsidiary economic units. They become part of the "Lebensraum" of the Greater Reich and perform specific services for the benefit of Hitler's Germany.

The policy the Germans are pursuing in Poland is based on both a short-term and a long-term plan. The former is nothing better than ruthless exploitation, the latter, to be applied after the War, one of co-operation with the "New Order."

The short-term plan was outlined in a circular issued by Governor-General Frank on January 25th, 1940. This circular emphasised that the plan, drawn up under instructions from Goering, had, as its main object, the economic exploitation of Poland to the absolute limit.

A million deported to Germany.

The transfer of a million men and women to work in Germany, states the circular, is an essential part of this plan, as is also the appropriation of all Poland's natural resources, the aim being to make Poland a granary and a source of man-power for the sole benefit of the Reich. Food rations for the Poles must be so reduced that large surpluses of grain and other foodstuffs can be made available for the needs of the German Army and Administration. Forest lands must be stripped without regard for their future, in order to feed the Reich war-machine with its timber requirements. Industrial plants, of no immediate use to Germany, are to be scrapped to provide iron for the German blast-furnaces.

The peasant must be forced to supply a fixed quota of his products to the German authorities. The worker must work longer hours.

The ultimate object was to reduce Poland to a backward, agricultural hinterland for Germany. This scheme was modified, however, when the British R.A.F. activities began to be felt in the German industrial regions of the west. The Germans then began feverishly to re-equip the Polish war industries and these are now utilised extensively for their war effort. A number of German engineers and supervisors have been sent to Poland for this purpose.

Thus the entire economic system of Poland has been adjusted to the needs of the German war-machine, and, in the event of a German victory, there can be no hope of any amelioration after the war, since Poland will have been denuded of its vital industries and will remain an agricultural country, producing under German supervision for Germany's sole benefit. The Polish slave will be allowed only the minimum of food and other requisites to maintain life and keep him at work.

TRADE UNIONS SUPPRESSED

When the Polish Republic came into being in November, 1918, the first Prime Minister, the Socialist leader Ignacy Daszynski, announced an extensive programme of social reforms. In the first few months many far-reaching measures were adopted for the benefit of the workers, including a 46-hour working week, liberal Trade Union legislation, factory inspection, compulsory health insurance, etc. Later, in 1921, the Constitution prohibited work by children under 15 years of age and holidays with pay were voted by Parliament. Employment of women and young persons in industry, especially in mining and transport, was limited by law. Expectant mothers had the right to absent themselves from work during the critical period and were not allowed to be employed for a period of six weeks after the birth of the child. They were also entitled to medical assistance and to 60 per cent. of their pay from the Health Insurance until they resumed work.

In the later stages of the Pilsudski regime, the Governments endeavoured to curtail the rights of the workers, especially the autonomy enjoyed by the health insurance institutions. The week-end six-hour day was abolished and a full 48-hour week introduced. Efforts were also made by the authorities to establish Trade Unions of their own. A semi-Fascist electoral law deprived the workers of their vote. Despite all these moves, the Socialist Party and the free Trade Unions withstood all pressure and stoutly defended their rights and the reforms they had gained. Much of the progressive social legislation achieved in the first few years of the Republic remained intact, only to be ruthlessly suppressed by the Nazi invader.

The Trade Unions were among the first victims of Germany's policy of persecution in Poland. They were immediately suppressed, their offices seized by the Gestapo and their property confiscated. The membership of the Polish Trade Unions had been nearly one million, the greater part belonging to the free Unions, affiliated to and co-operating with the Socialist and Labour Parties and the I.F.T.U. The Polish Trade Union movement was extremely active and well-organised, despite difficulties arising out of the antagonism of the undemocratic regime. The Germans have crushed all these Unions, not even attempting to "Nazify" them as in other occupied countries.

Underground activities.

The Workers' Movement went underground the moment Poland was occupied by the Germans. This was no new thing for the Polish worker who, in his long struggle for independence and social justice, had created a very ingenious system of underground activities in Czarist Russia. The famous *Robotnik*, the Socialist daily paper,

which, up to the time of the creation of an independent Poland, had been widely read as an illegal publication, which in free Poland had led the fight for democracy and the freedom of the workers, and which, during the battle of Warsaw, urged the workers of the capital on to resistance, no longer exists. Its printing offices were destroyed by German bombs and shells and no workers' paper, as indeed no independent Polish paper, may any longer be published legally.

Machine-guns against strikers.

Any organised Movement is now impossible. Prison, the concentration camp, even execution, is the Nazi reply to any attempt to improve the lot of the workers by organised or strike action. Some strikes broke out in July, 1940, but were suppressed. A bigger one began in December in the tramway workshops in Warsaw, when the workers, provoked by extremely low wages, insufficient to support the needs of life, came out in protest. The workshops were surrounded by S.S. guards and, under the threat of being machine-gunned, the workers were forced to yield. Two managers and forty workers were arrested and deported and their ultimate fate is unknown. They have never been seen again.

FORCED LABOUR

Labour compulsion was one of the first decrees imposed upon Poland by the Germans. Hardly a month after the occupation of Warsaw, compulsory work was introduced for all men between the ages of 14 and 60. This was soon followed by restrictions upon the free movement of workers from one employment to another. They were directed by the authorities to factories and workshops where they might be most needed and no worker might take a post or leave it without a permit. Fines without limit or imprisonment may be imposed where wage increases or improvements in conditions are either requested or promised.

Registration of all males was immediately carried out, followed by the registration of unemployed women. By the middle of 1940, all males born between 1915 and 1924 had been registered.

The so-called "Gouvernement-General" (Central Poland, approximately one-quarter of the territory of the Polish Republic, with a population of about 14 millions) was included in Goering's four-year plan. One million Polish workers were to be recruited in this area for work in Germany, three-quarters for agriculture and one-quarter for industry. The "Gouvernement-General" was split up into a number of regions, each of which had to provide its quota of workmen. **Efforts at recruitment failed, Polish workers refusing to enlist for work in Germany in spite of their being unemployed and the promise of higher wages in Germany.** From

time to time the police and the Gestapo arranged "round-ups" in the big cities, arresting thousands of passers-by and raiding houses, each time collecting and deporting several thousands of able-bodied men for labour in Germany and imprisoning hundreds of recalcitrants in concentration camps. Those who tried to escape were simply fired upon.

Poles as slaves and outcasts.



In Germany the Polish worker is treated as a slave. On his left breast he must carry a yellow mark in a violet frame embroidered with a large P, and Germans are open to punishment for showing even the slightest sympathy. The newspaper "*Duerener Zeitung*" of April 23rd, 1941, quoted by the International Transport Federation, states that a farmer of Eschbach, near Frankfort, was sentenced to two months' imprisonment for having sent a friendly letter and some presents to a sick Polish prisoner of war who had worked for him. The "*Völkischer Beobachter*" recently reported that a German woman at Überlingen, near Constanz, was sentenced to 30 months' hard labour because she decorated a Christmas tree for the Poles who worked at her parents' farm. The "*Allensteiner Zeitung*" of February 1st, 1941, reports that the wife of a German baker at Allenstein was fined for giving bread to a Polish civilian worker.

Numerous contributions are deducted from the meagre pay of the Polish worker in Germany, including a 2 per cent. deduction for the Nazi "Labour Front," although the Poles are not admitted to it and enjoy none of the benefits accruing from membership. In addition to their ordinary share in taxation, Polish workers in Germany have to pay an additional 15 per cent. of their wages as super-tax.

No better is the lot of Polish workers in the territories incorporated in the Reich (Western Poland with approximately 11 million inhabitants). Not only are they exploited to the utmost, but very often deported to Central Poland (the "Gouvernement-General") or to Germany. Those allowed to remain at home are paid 20 per cent. less than the Germans, in industry and commerce. Agricultural workers work one hour and a half longer each day than the Germans. Germans are paid 0.45 mark per hour overtime and even other foreign labourers receive 0.22 mark, but the Poles receive nothing. The wages of the Polish agricultural worker are only two-thirds those of the German agricultural worker.

Any protest against these conditions is severely punished. Death sentence is often passed for "crimes" such as striking a German farmer or employer. Such a case at Poznan was reported in the "*Ostdeutscher Beobachter*" of May 7th, 1941.

Germans—the masters.

This is the application of the policy outlined by Gauleiter Greiser in a recent speech at Wielun. "Our task is not merely to administer these Eastern areas but to win them over so that they may belong to Germany for all time. Never again may a 'foreigner' possess property here. **Only the Germans shall be owners and masters and the Poles forever our servants.**"

In the "Gouvernement-General" itself, a new form of forced labour has been recently introduced under the name of "Baudienst" (Building Service). Under this rather euphemistic title of "building service," the Germans tried to mobilise entire classes of young men for their various needs, including even work of a military character. Young men between the ages of 16 and 25 are the most in demand. The working hours are extremely long and in every way the service resembles military conscription.

In order to assist control of the labour market, the Germans introduced special labour cards on December 1st, 1940. This is a kind of passport, without which no work or ration-card may be obtained. The system covers the entire population, except agricultural workers, municipal employees and domestic servants. These identity cards facilitate labour compulsion and transfer of workers. Very frequently a period of forced labour is added to a fine, especially in the case of peasants, for such acts as collecting wood from the forests.

SOCIAL LEGISLATION DESTROYED

In theory most of the old Polish laws are still in force. In practice they are not applied.

The 48-hour week has been abolished. On paper, the old law still holds good, but in fact the men must work at least 10 hours per day for the same amount of wages as pre-war, despite the fact that purchasing-power, as a result of higher prices, has considerably decreased.

Polish workers formerly enjoyed the right to holidays with pay. By a law passed in 1922, all workers were entitled, after one year's continuous employment, to eight days' holiday with pay and after three years of continuous employment, to 15 days. Non-manual workers—office employees, clerks, shop assistants and the like—had one month's holiday with pay annually after one year's continuous employment with the same firm. An employer refusing to give a holiday was liable to a fine or even imprisonment. **The Germans abolished the right of the workers to a holiday and left it to the discretion of the employer to grant it or not.** Such a holiday, not to exceed six days, may be granted after three years' continuous employment.

There was also in existence a law providing for two weeks' notice to workers in industry and three months' notice to clerical and supervisory staffs. This regulation has also been repealed by the Nazis.

Of special importance to the workers in Poland before the war was the law concerning factory inspection. The factory inspector combined the offices of inspector and conciliation officer and was really the good friend of the worker, to whom the latter could turn for advice and assistance where his work was of an unduly arduous or hazardous character, or where his employer was not acting in compliance with the law. **All inspection of factories has been stopped by the Nazis and the powers under the old law have been vested in the German administration.**

The pre-war Government of Poland respected the right of collective bargaining by the Trade Unions. The system of fixing wages and conditions by agreement between the Unions and the employers was very widespread. All this has been suppressed by the Germans and special wage-tariffs have been instituted. These tariffs vary greatly as between Germans and Poles. A Polish unskilled labourer in Warsaw and Cracow is paid 5d. per hour, a foreman 10d. This latter rate is exactly the wage paid to German unskilled labourers under 21. **The minimum for the Germans is double that for the Poles.**

Germans employed by Municipalities or other public services, in addition to their much higher normal salary, are entitled to a special rent allowance of £2 10s. per week. Compared with this, the average, inclusive wage for a Pole in the public services is about £3 per week. Generally speaking, the average wage of a Pole is only 44 per cent. of the comparable German wage.

It should be noted that, whilst all collective bargaining has been eliminated, the Germans have retained in force all agreements concluded before the war. **The intention is to maintain wages at the pre-war level, in spite of the greatly increased cost of living.**

Such invaluable bodies as the Joint Industrial Councils for Industry and Agriculture have been completely swept away. The Industrial J.I.C. was a body called in cases of big disputes and its decisions were subject to enforcement at the discretion of the Ministry of Labour. The Agricultural J.I.C. held a statutory meeting each year to settle, for the different districts, wages and conditions for the ensuing year.

One of the first acts of the German occupation authorities was the abolition of the Labour Courts, a useful institution to which were submitted all cases of litigation arising out of conditions of employment. These Courts had been authorised to formulate decisions in all disputes regarding wages, holidays and conditions

of work, and were made up of a chairman and a representative from each side. The workers' representative was selected from a panel submitted by the Trade Unions. Legal costs were greatly reduced by the use of these Courts, as it was not necessary to employ counsel. This most effective means of protecting the worker against exploitation by the employer has also been removed by the Nazis.

The extensive insurance schemes in Poland have also been abolished by the Germans and the Polish worker deprived in great measure of the sickness insurance and other benefits which he enjoyed under the pre-war compulsory insurance schemes. He had been entitled to free treatment in hospitals owned and administered by the insurance concerns and to free dental treatment in centres also owned by these institutions. During any period in hospital, he received 10 per cent. of his wages from the insurance institution, a further 25 per cent. being allotted to his family. Under the schemes his family also were entitled to full medical advice and treatment. Almost all this has gone—free hospital treatment and allowances, everything—although both employer and employee must continue their contributions at the pre-war rates. Even the free daily allowance of two pints of milk to nursing mothers has been stopped.

These were not the only benefits enjoyed by workers under Polish law. In addition there were old age pensions at 60 or 65, invalidity pensions on a very liberal scale, premium-free insurance against accidents and occupational diseases providing for substantial benefits both for the injured or sick person and his family. These, with other protective insurances have been either eliminated or seriously curtailed by the German authorities.

STARVATION WAGES

The German wage policy has been to stabilise rates, as far as possible, at the levels ruling during the few weeks prior to the war. These wages now represent only about one-third of their pre-war purchasing power.

A Warsaw tramway employee at present earns about £2 per week, the present purchasing power of which is only about 13s. Railway shopmen's wages have been reduced to about 24s. per week, workers under public works schemes about £1 per week.

The worker eats much less than formerly, but any surplus earnings can no longer be spent on other necessities. **Food is strictly rationed and bread and potatoes are the only items of food regularly obtainable, and these in insufficient quantities.** Poles are not entitled to butter or lard and rarely obtain meat.

The Germans discriminate against the Poles in food distribution. Germans are allowed much more food than the people to whom the country rightly belongs. A table published in "*Litzmannstädter Zeitung*" of May 15th, 1941 (a German paper published in Lodz, the biggest industrial town of Poland, renamed Litzmannstadt by the Germans), shows the rations for Germans and Poles for the current week, as follows:—

<i>GERMANS.</i>		<i>POLES.</i>	
Meat—Adults	17½ ozs.	Adults	8¾ ozs.
Children	8¾ ozs.	Children	3½ ozs.
Fats	8¾ ozs.	None	
Butter or marg. ...	4¾ ozs.	None.	
Eggs	2		1
Sugar	17½ ozs.		8¾ ozs.
Flour	17½ ozs.	None.	
Soup-cubes	2	None.	

These rations, as far as Poles are concerned, are not always available. Hard-working labourers only are entitled to 4¾ ozs. butter and 4¾ ozs. margarine, as well as 17½ ozs. meat.

* * *

This is a brief but illuminating picture of German designs for all conquered countries. It is not within the scope of this short survey to deal with more than the economic and social aspects of the matter. To go into the intense suffering of the Polish workers as a result of the complete suppression of their political and cultural freedom, religious rights, etc., would entail considerably more space.

So far, not all German-occupied countries have been so cruelly treated as Poland, probably because the Nazis still hope for their help in waging war against the rest of Europe. Eventually, when the Germans deem their usefulness in this respect to be at an end, the other countries will suffer the same fate as Poland.

Governor-General Frank said to his subordinates, at a meeting of German officials in Warsaw in January, 1941, "The administration of the 'Gouvernement-General,' the officials of which have become experts here, is a training-ground for the future tasks which the Reich must face. The 'Gouvernement-General' is the first country annexed in Europe as a 'Nebenland'—an auxiliary territory for the Reich."

In plain English, this means that Poland is to be a German colony, and the experience gained in Poland will be used to convert all Europe into a colony of the Greater German Reich.



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