



It's an old Nazi trick: German agents—aided by unthinking dupes—de-  
vise and spread vicious rumors in a deliberate attack on American morale

## Don't Believe a Word of It!

By Henry F. Pringle

CARTOONS BY CARL ROSE

War always breeds rumor-mongers—and they're at it again, reporting fake flu epidemics in Army camps, false wholesale desertions, etc. The object is to destroy the morale of the Army and the faith of the public in it. Let's not be too gullible

ONE night late last fall—the nation was still at peace—the telephone rang in the broadcasting studio in a Southwestern city. A voice asked why the station's news summaries had suppressed accounts of a violent pneumonia epidemic in a near-by training camp.

"Hundreds of the boys are sick and there are already forty-two bodies in the morgue," the voice said.

Similar reports were received that night in the city room of the town's morning newspaper. The radio station and the newspaper sent investigators to the camp immediately. Not a case of pneumonia had developed and the camp "morgue," wholly devoid of bodies, was being used as a sewing room by some lady war workers.

This was duly published and broadcast, but the rumors continued for several days. In due course they were traced to statements overheard in busses and lunchrooms in the town, but nobody knew who had started them. It was not long, however, before the soldiers at the camp were receiving frantic telegrams, letters and telephone calls from their parents.

The employees of a munitions factory in New Jersey reported for work, as usual, on a morning last summer. The machinery hummed on vital defense orders, but soon a wild story was being passed from bench to bench and from one part of the plant to another. Florida had been bombed! A force of hostile aircraft had passed over the state during the night dropping tons of bombs and killing hundreds of men, women and children. Over what part of Florida? What cities had been destroyed? Nobody knew. Nobody knew where the mad story had come from, but work on defense orders in this New Jersey factory was violently disrupted for the day.

Be on guard against such rumors. There will be more of them now that the United States is in the war. Circulation of them has been going on for at least a year and they are part of Hitler's plan to soften and break down the democracies which he despises and pro-

poses to conquer. It is a barrage of half-truths and lies spread over the nation; its purpose is to undermine the morale of the civilian population and the armed forces. The rumors are initiated by radio from Berlin, Tokyo and Rome, by pro-Axis newspapers published in the United States, by pamphlets and by paid agents. They are spread by the agents, by members of the various Bunds and by the fractional minority of Americans who still believe in peace-at-any-price. They are sometimes spread by bitter-end haters of President Roosevelt. These people would recoil with horror at the idea of helping Hitler or Japan. They consider themselves wholly loyal. But some of them still can't imagine that a policy advocated by That Man in the White House has any merit.

### Playing It Adolf's Way

These dupes who play into the hands of Hitler were more active before we got into the war, but a few still talk and talk. Typical of them were two ladies on a streetcar in Washington, D.C. It was close to September 15th, when another income-tax payment would be due.

"I think I'll send my check direct to the British embassy," said one of the ladies. "All our money goes to England, anyway, under this Lend-Lease law. Why not mail it to the British ourselves?"

Her companion nodded in agreement. "They can use it to pay for their parties at the Carlton Hotel," she added bitterly. "Why, do you know, my dear, they throw champagne parties at all the big Washington hotels and every penny of the cost—every penny, my dear!—is charged to us! Why, I even heard that some of these visiting Englishmen entertain actresses and chorus girls and we pay for that, too!"

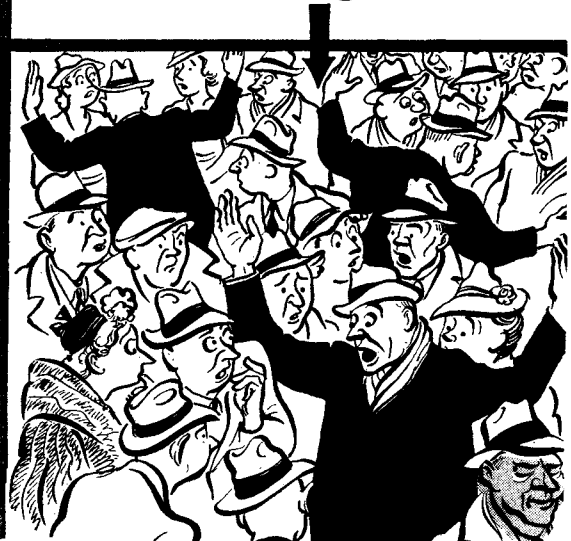
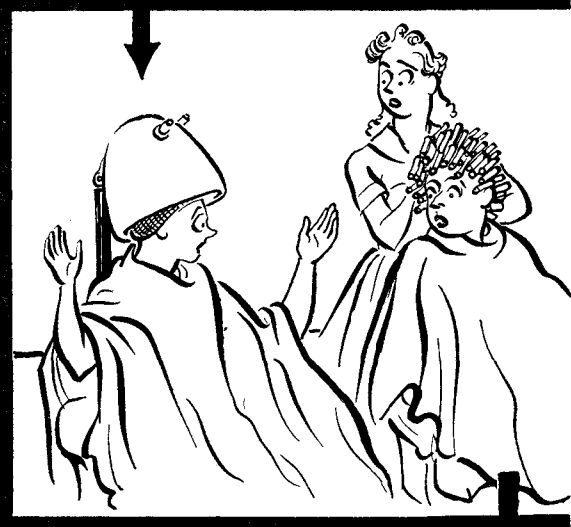
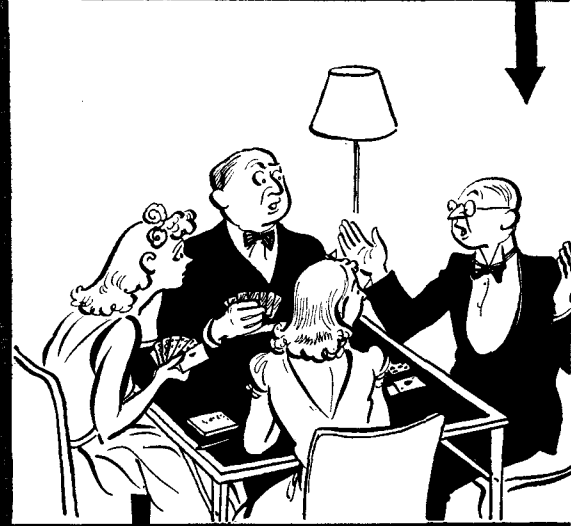
Uncle Sam is well aware of the activities of these traducers, but they aren't easy to catch. A newly created Special Defense Unit of the Department of Justice is keeping careful watch over pro-Axis publications. The Federal Com-

munications Commission has an even more gigantic task on its hands. Through four strategically located listening posts the FCC makes a complete record of every word broadcast by short wave from every foreign country—an appalling total of 600,000 to 900,000 words every twenty-four hours, seven days a week. This is translated and digested, and all relevant portions are rushed by teletype to the White House, the State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (G-2) or other government agencies. A number of arrests have already been made by the F.B.I. Military Intelligence, and the Morale Division of the Army is seeking to run down the rumors which spread through the cantonments and among parents of the soldiers. The rumors continue, though. By their very nature they are hard to trace.

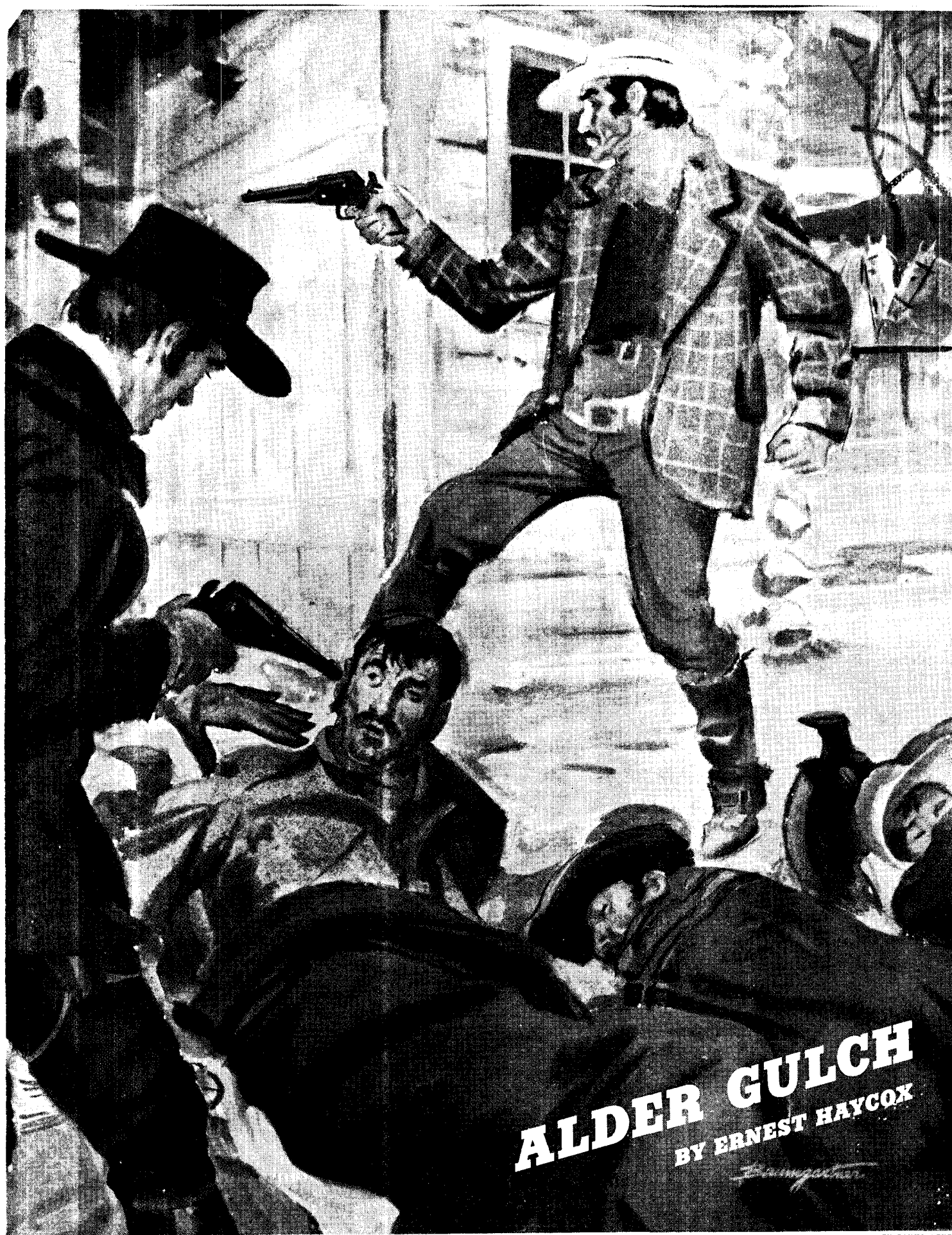
The system whereby Hitler and Goebbels seek to soften America—no one doubts that their activities continue even now—is well understood, on the other hand, and some of the details can now be told. If Americans don't realize what the Nazis are up to, it is their own fault. Extremely competent studies have been made and published. The Committee on National Morale, a voluntary organization with headquarters in New York, has issued a volume called German Psychological Warfare in which, among other Nazi leaders, Rudolph Hess is quoted. Hitler's one-time closest aide, now a prisoner in England, said four years ago that "in the past, people migrated from place to place; today ideas migrate from people to people. We are in the midst of an ideological upheaval of unprecedented magnitude."

The Committee on National Morale shows how the Nazis accelerate this migration of ideas—Nazi ideas—from one part of the United States to all parts. German fact-finding agencies locate what they call "Stoerungskerne," kernels of disturbance, in this country—minority political groups, frustrated and defeated politicians, aliens in economic

(Continued on page 53)







The posse spread out, circling the sleepers. One man sat up. Pierce swung his revolver on him, softly saying, "Sit still." The man's face turned to him, blurred by the heavy shadows

guitars bearing down heavily on the accent. Stags lined the walls, waiting their turn. One of the dance committee, Neil Howie, moved around the couples, sprinkling more wax on the floor, and at this same moment A. J. Oliver and X. Biedler were escorting a gentleman to the door, he having started his evening too early at The Senate. Oliver shrugged his shoulders, not liking the display, but the short and powerful Biedler seemed to enjoy this physical contact. He stood by the door to make sure the drunken one did not return. He said to Pierce: "Shouldn't be walking through town alone, Jeff."

Wilbur Sanders wheeled by with a lady. He was a slight, cool Eastern man short of thirty with brown hair and beard, and practiced law in Bannack. Pierce talked a moment with Biedler, meanwhile noticing that a long lunch bar had been set up in the adjoining dining room. He moved that way, sliding through the steady crowd of men. In the dining room's doorway he looked back and caught sight of Scoggins. Scoggins danced with Diana and both of them were laughing at something said, and the picture of the girl's face, so free and pleased, struck Pierce hard. He remained in the door, blocking it and stopping the drift of the men around him. Somebody touched his back, but he didn't move. Then Diana, wheeling nearer, saw him and the smile left her face and her chin rose and over that distance he caught the half-surprised look of her eyes. Scoggins, now discovering Pierce, also ceased smiling.

PIERCE stopped at the big bar and got a cup of coffee; and made a sandwich from bread and a huge elk roast. Rounds arrived and stood with him, not saying much. Oliver drifted in with W. B. Dance. Presently Sanders came along and Stuart introduced him to Pierce. This group grew. Pfouts moved out of the ballroom. Pfouts put a hand on Pierce's shoulder as he talked and Pfouts looked around at the men near him until his eyes touched Ollie Rounds. Pierce, forever watchful, saw then a little change on Pfouts' face and he turned his attention to Ollie and noticed a sudden shadow come to Rounds' cheeks. In another moment Rounds drifted from the group. There wasn't anything more than this, yet it left its impress on Pierce. After a while he broke from the circle, had another cup of coffee and strolled from the dining room on through another door to the hotel's parlor. As he came into the parlor he saw Ollie and Ben and Diana before him; they were talking and all laughing and then, as before, Diana noticed him and grew serious. Pierce moved forward.

Scoggins said, "For an invalid you do a lot of spookin' around on bad nights." He grinned, and yet it lacked the old Scoggins cheerfulness. There was a little embarrassment on him, so that he was no longer easy. The music began again, a square-dance tune, and men moved toward the ballroom. Diana made a part turn to Ollie, as though to be his partner, but now Scoggins did a strange thing. He touched Ollie's arm and murmured, "Want to see you a minute, Ollie," thus taking Rounds away.

Diana gave Pierce one steady glance and turned from him to watch Scoggins (Continued on page 57)

#### The Story Thus Far:

SHANGHAIED in San Francisco and taken to Portland, Oregon, Jeff Pierce—acting in self defense—kills the captain of the vessel that had captured him, and, making his getaway, goes to Virginia City, where gold has recently been struck. He is accompanied by a runaway girl—Diana Castle, whose father has been trying to make her marry a man she does not love.

Arrived at the new mining settlement, Pierce stakes out a claim in rich Alder Gulch, and Diana starts a small bakery. As Pierce soon learns, a band of crooks and killers is operating in the Gulch area. Among the members of the band are: George Ives, "Rube" Ketchum (who hate Pierce); Bob Zachary, Steve Marshland, Jack Gallagher (a deputy sheriff) and Ollie Rounds (who happens to be a strong admirer of Pierce). At the head of the band is a man named Henry Plummer—the sheriff!

Plummer and his followers kill, loot, rob. Pierce is one of the few who dare to oppose them. He has one loyal supporter—none too courageous, but not afraid to fight: Ben Scoggins, a trader. Scoggins, it appears, is in love with Diana Castle; and so is Pierce, whom the girl (who has misinterpreted his feelings toward her) does not encourage.

"Bully" Sitgreaves, brother of the man Pierce had killed in Portland, arrives in Virginia City. Meeting Pierce, he informs him that he intends to kill him at a time that he, Sitgreaves, will choose. Pierce, who is armed at the time, does nothing.

Among the victims of the gang is Archie Caples, one of Pierce's neighbors. Caples is murdered in his cabin. Shortly after the murder, Pierce learns that the murderer is "Rube" Ketchum. He encounters Ketchum in the street, has an altercation with him, shoots him to death.

Ives, Gallagher and Marshland witness the shooting. They do not interfere, because Ben Scoggins (openly) and Ollie Rounds (much more subtly) make it clear that, if shooting starts, they will side with Pierce. Someone hidden in an alley, however, takes a shot at Pierce—and wounds him slightly.

Pierce falls to the ground. Then, after Lil Shannon—a free-and-easy big-hearted woman—tells Pierce that she loves him, Rounds and Scoggins escort him to his cabin.

Later, when the two men have gone, Pierce gets his shotgun; he slips out of his cabin; he seats himself at the edge of a canyon near his cabin. There, in the darkness, he gives himself up to somber, depressing thoughts.

#### VIII

PIERCE came into the Virginia Hotel around nine o'clock and found the ball in progress. They had gotten the musicians from The Pantheon, but otherwise this was strictly for the genteel. The chandelier was decorated with pine boughs and the bracket lamps were draped with green gauze, on which wax flakes had been scattered to imitate snow. All the available proper ladies of the Gulch, from Junction to Summit were here, their gowns looking sedate in contrast to eyes accustomed to the color and flash of the hurdy-gurdy girls. Some of the men, like Judge Lott and W. B. Dance and Wilbur Sanders, wore broadcloth, white shirts and collars. Otherwise it was straight Gulch costume and trimmed whiskers.

The music was a waltz, the fiddles and