

The Stitchers Beneath the Stukas

By PIERRE HAMP

Translated From the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Zurich Liberal Daily

YOU look down these rows of hundreds of girls and women in a French factory, monotonously stitching miles of coarse, gray material into sacks, to be filled with sand and used as protection against the unceasing bombs of the enemy.

They work with the dull and dispiriting skill of women who perform the same movement day after day, night after night, thousands of times. You address them, but they do not look up from their labors:

"How many sacks a day?"

"Two thousand, seven hundred in ten hours, *m'sieu*."

They say nothing of the fact that, when the bombs rain in their vicinity, most of them remain at their task of stitching the bags that are to serve as defence. They say nothing; perhaps because their heroism is born of necessity. They become as dully unconscious of air raids as of the coarse, gray bags, two thousand, seven hundred in ten hours.

On Sunday afternoon, a bomb falls at the entrance to the sand-bag factory. For seconds, the air is full of glass, splintered wood, dirt, falling brick, and screams of women—but not of the bag-stitchers, two thousand, seven hundred in ten hours. Anti-aircraft fire barks at the enemy planes; one woman says, with mild interest, she thinks she can distinguish between the anti-aircraft salvos and the crash

of German bombs which rock the ground, the factory, this little world. That's interesting, unusual; she must have sharp ears.

Once the "all clear" sounds, the women go outside and glance at the sky. A few heads appear from jagged windows; eyes turn to the clouds, but interest is indifferent. Now the groups of workers outside are lost to view in the whorls of dust which rise where the closest bomb fell. You hear them chatter: Will we be able to work tomorrow? Has the factory been disabled? Will we lose a day's labor?

In two minutes, they are back at the coarse, gray material, stitching two thousand, seven hundred in ten hours. Dead fatigue and exhausted nerves stiffen their shoulders and arms; the Germans have bombed incessantly for two days and two nights. Other workers set to with brooms, and sweep up the glass and the brick and the dust. The bomb blew the factory door through the walls; it won't be replaced, since the gaping hole makes it easier for greater numbers of these women to rush to their shelters the next time—if they have warning, and if they care enough to run underground.

Early the next morning, the Germans again are wheeling overhead, only a few seconds after the factory siren has brought the women to their stitching. There are fewer of them.

Why? It seems a fifth of them lost their homes in yesterday's raids and they can't work today, they must scrub around in the blood and filth to find their children, their surviving pots and pans; or they are stuffing old newspapers into broken windows, or cardboard where a bomb splinter came into the kitchen and decapitated Cousin Emile, neat as can be. But they straggle back to work, half asleep, unfeeling, broken in pieces but somehow whole. Able enough, anyway, for two thousand, seven hundred in ten hours.

Outside the factory there is unwanted activity—dangerous, because that may lure the Stukas—but the glaziers must install new windows for

the Germans to splinter. In the street, the parade of funeral carriages becomes commonplace and perfunctory; in three days the bombers came over 350 times, and isn't it obvious enough that some people must get killed? But the women, if they can't avert their glances, make the sign of the cross. There is work to do, two thousand, seven hundred bags in ten hours, and there is the blacked-out night in which to sleep, if you don't have to spend it lying over your kids because past raids shook up the old ceiling. And maybe in the next raid at night it will come down, not so fast as the bombs, but in deadly chunks, for all of that.

CENSORSHIP OF OPINION

They have been talking of compulsory press censorship. Yes, even the censorship of opinion has been discussed!

If there had been censorship of opinion, the meddling Chamberlain Government would still be in power. Freedom of newspaper opinion is as vital to the winning of the war as is freedom of Parliamentary speech. Robbing us of either of these would be a betrayal of the bastions of liberty for which the nation is fighting.

Yet, while they thus talk, a prominent Minister, a Tory, confessed to me that it was the Daladier censorship that was one of the causes of the collapse of France.

"Now, you would not have known of that," I replied, "if I had not come back from Paris with all the facts of how news had been suppressed and criticism stifled—and printed them."

Yes, had there then been censorship of opinion here, it would have been suppressed on the ground that it was criticism of an ally!

—Hannen Swaffer in the *Daily Herald*, London

One Englishman notes its conquest
over all its proverbial defects

A General Surveys Modern Turkey

By BRIGADIER GENERAL SIR WYNDHAM DEEDS

From *Daily Telegraph*, London Conservative Daily

UNLESS I had gone to Turkey and seen for myself, I would not have believed it; I did not believe it when I was told by the few who had seen it.

I could not be persuaded that the corruption, inefficiency and procrastination which characterized the Government of the country in which I had served a quarter of a century ago had wholly disappeared, and that the revolution had "changed all that." But so it is; it has all been swept away, and a new Turkey has appeared in which I can recognize nothing of the old Turkey—except, of course the same hospitable, simple and attractive people.

Of all the revolutions which have taken place since the end of the Great War, not one, I venture to assert, has accomplished what this one has, and broken so few heads in the process.

Let us look first of all at a few of the surface changes. In old days when I thought of Turkey, my mind always went to brigands! For example, I re-

member the days when I lived in a suburb of Smyrna, and, as a gendarmerie officer, was called on to provide an armed escort for the "carriage convoy" of girls and their partners going to a dance in town. And I remember the night when the brigands pounced upon a young Englishman, took him to the mountains and demanded £10,000 ransom for him.

Those were the days when foreigners going up country for a summer holiday obtained a *laissez passer*—not from my gendarmes, but from the brigands who, incidentally, treated them with great courtesy. All that—both the picturesque and the perilous—has gone. There are no brigands left except, perhaps, a few in the Vilayet of Sert, away in the southeast.

Then, again, casting my mind back twenty-five years, I think of epidemics. I never travelled up-country without encountering cholera, smallpox or typhus. I remember sleeping one night in a wayside *Han*, the principal guest-room of which seemed to be un-