

people. Hence, the sector being quiet, and time hanging heavily on his hands, he gladly took the chance of a "chat" with such an important "herr" as I must undoubtedly be.

"Yes," he continued, "the English are not fools, and they won't risk losing all in such a heavy gamble. But tell me, what do you think?"

"Well," I replied, "I'm not at all up-to-date in English news. I was captured in November, '41, and since then I have had news from Axis sources only, and have heard no British propaganda whatever." (This was quite untrue, because I had been listening in to the BBC broadcasts in Italian on an average of twice a week for the past three months. However, I couldn't tell my Nazi friend that: it would have meant grievous complications for friendly Italians who accepted the news from Radio Londra as absolute Gospel.) "In actual fact, therefore," I added, "I know far less than you do about what is going on."

He persisted: "But you are British and will naturally draw a different conclusion than us from the same facts. What do you really think?"

"Frankly, I think the Allies will try to invade," I replied, remembering how every broadcast showed how deeply committed we were to this fateful step. And though I had no wish to go over to the offensive, I felt impelled by some quirk of patriotism to add "And what's more, they'll get ashore too."

These "Fiendish Terror Raids"

"So," he mused. "Well, I hope they do try. We Germans will welcome it, because we know that they will be thoroughly defeated, and then we will be free to devote all our attention to the Russian front . . . And now about this bombing, these fiendish terror raids? I had always heard, and had understood, that the English believed in 'fair play.' But the wilful killing of women and children and the destruction of civilian property, particularly in the Ruhr: is that British fair play? Or is it the Americans who are doing this dirty work? It's a filthy, bloody business," and here he relapsed into what seemed to be some very expressive German.

I shrugged my shoulders and did not answer, although every instinct urged me to point out what Goering's Luftwaffe had done to the people of London, to Rotterdam, to Warsaw, and to Belgrade. But I managed to restrain myself: after all, I was his prisoner and the setting was not propitious for a debate on "Who started it first?"

"Never mind," he continued, "it won't be for much longer. The Fuehrer tells us we now have a secret weapon which is amazingly effective against aeroplanes. Very soon now we will just be clawing all your bombers right out of the sky," and to add emphasis he stretched up his right arm and tore down a couple of handfuls of Lancasters. "And then, we will strike back, and it will be the Allies who will be on the defensive."

What Was Behind It All

At this stage I suddenly realised what was at the back of his mind, and why he was so anxious to hear what I thought about things — he desperately wanted reassurance. He was an intelligent man, and, I imagine, a good Nazi. He had faithfully absorbed all the propaganda poured into him, but some part of his brain was beginning to demur a little, and, without knowing it, he was starting to doubt if Germany really could win the war. Goebbels had found in him fertile soil for the sowing

of his lies, but he somehow could not accept everything. Perhaps the information in the "Italian Weekly News" (a paper printed in German for the soldiers of the Wehrmacht in Italy and delivered regularly over the front-line every Monday morning by our planes) had shaken him a bit, but whatever it was he was being nagged by a little devil of doubt, and devoutly hoped that he would find in my attitude or in my opinions something which would put it to rout.

The next question was if I had ever been to University, and on learning that I had, he initiated a discussion on University topics. We passed a not unpleasant 30 minutes talking of Kant, Goethe, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, etc., but sure enough, the subject soon reverted to the present war. He confessed that the Italian front was quite a rest-cure, and that fighting the British was as much as could be asked for in a war. Neither side indulged in any unfair practices, prisoners were treated reasonably by both parties, and, all told, it was a reasonably clean war. "Not like the Russian front," he resumed. "There it is terrible. The cold, and the emptiness and hugeness of the country, and the vicious Russian soldiers—they're brutal." He must have felt strongly on this last point, for he repeated "Yes, very, very brutal. War is hateful there, fierce and savage. I was at Orel in the winter of '42, and only just managed to get out when it fell in July, '43. The Bolsheviks are merciless and cruel; no, it is a dirty war in the East, and candidly, I'm not at all sorry to be here in Italy. Have you ever been in Russia?"

"No," I replied, thinking of how the Russians must have put the fear of death into the whole German Army. "But I fought in the desert, and that wasn't so pleasant either."

The telephone rang. He answered, and rose, saying, "I must go, Herr Hauptmann. You will be taken to Rieti tonight: don't try to get away because we won't let you slip through our fingers a second time. Good luck and goodbye." With a smile he extended his hand, I shook it, and was then ushered back to my cell, reflecting that here at least was a German who seemed a decent fellow and could easily have been British or American.

Looking Back

Here I may mention that I did not follow his advice about not attempting to escape, and that thanks to a very lucky break I was free of the Germans for the last time not more than two days later. The gods unfortunately did not smile on Alec, who was not taken north in the same convoy with me, and after I returned to the Allies it was with great regret that I learned of his recapture.

In the days that followed I often thought of this almost unique conversation. Certainly I had spoken to Germans whom we had taken prisoner ourselves in Africa, and they expressed similar sentiments, but I had then put it down to defiance and a natural desire to keep their ends up before their captors. And yet, here were exactly the same feelings displayed by an intelligent man in circumstances diametrically opposite. All of us had heard that German soldiers spoke in this strain, but I was amazed to find a Nazi officer, one of the haughty ones of the earth, unbend in such a fashion to one so completely in his power.

My interrogator felt his first few doubts somewhere round April last. Since then in Italy alone the Germans have retired 300 miles. The invasion was a complete success, the Fatherland is itself a battleground, and the Allies, with grim intent, are pressing from West, South and East.

I wonder how many doubts he has now!



STAMPS

SEND 1/- for Monthly Bulletin of Stamp Offers.

PIM & CO.

310 Chancery Chambers, Auckland.

ISSUED BY THE



DEPT. OF HEALTH



Personal Check-up

Can you say 'NO' to all these questions?

- Have you got that tired feeling?
- Do you feel depressed?
- Do you get that can't-be-bothered feeling?
- Is your appetite poor?
- Do you lose your temper readily?
- Are you troubled with constipation?



If you have answered 'Yes' to ANY of these questions, it is quite likely your diet is lacking in the ENERGY vitamin—Vitamin B-1. Local surveys indicate that most people get only two-thirds of the daily requirements of Vitamin B-1 needed for buoyant health. Refined cereals, plus excess sugar and fat in the diet, increase the need for this vitamin, which helps the body to use these foods. If you want to get back that good appetite, healthy digestion, and steady nerves, see that you get your proper share of Vitamin B-1.

Get your supply of B-1 (and other nutritive elements as well) from THESE FOODS: whole grain cereals, wheat germ, wholemeal bread, liver, kidney and other glandular meats; bacon (keep in mind for the future that pork is rich in B-1); milk—fresh or dried, whole or skim; peas—fresh, green, split or dried, beans, lentils, peanuts (when available) and other nuts; oysters; brewery yeast or yeast extracts; potatoes, green and root vegetables (don't use soda when cooking because it destroys Vitamin B-1).

Children and adolescents need more Vitamin B-1 than adults. Women need it during pregnancy and to help breast-feed the baby.

YOUR BODY WON'T STORE VITAMIN B-1 SO YOU MUST GET YOUR QUOTA EVERY DAY

106

FOR A HEALTHIER NATION