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pillar tracks. "My tanks," he said, and made a zzzzz sound, like a child playing with a toy aeroplane, to show how they went. I began to inspect the cabin. Medals from yacht clubs, plaques and pennants decorated the walls. Copies of the *National Geographic* lay on the shelves. The only other books were on navigation.

A rack held a few pipes, but Vito Dumas mostly smokes cigarettes. "Cigarettes, every day, but now, no Argentine cigarette." He looked wistful. I put my hand to my pocket. "No," he said, catching my arm, "no good."

"Did you have many storms?" I asked. "Storms? What is storms?" "Hurricanes," I suggested. Immediately he was waving his arms about. "Hurricanes, cyclones, tornadoes; every day, fwahoo!" He made whirlwinds with his hands. "Like this?" I pointed to a picture of the familiar kind showing a ship almost swallowed up in mountains of sea. "Yes, like that," he said, and waved his hand in front of him as if to say "forget."

### Music and Girl-Friends

I remembered that one of the yacht club members had asked what he did without a radio, and that Dumas said "I my own music." So I asked what songs he sang. This brought back happy memories, and with a gleaming smile he told me "El tango," and then began a voluptuous song of unrequited love, in a light tenor voice. Thus reminded, he showed me photos of "girl-friends."

I put down the dictionary I had been using all the time and carefully placed it on one of the scraggy sprouted potatoes I had taken from the "farm." "No, no," he cried, and snatched it away, muttering in Spanish, "Tidiness, tidiness." I was afraid I had offended him, not merely by that, but also with my rough Spanish, shorn of the many polite expressions which are conventional in conversation. But he produced a book, like a French novel with uncut pages, a blue cover, a photo of the author at the tiller, and the title "Alone, Making for the Southern Cross." "For you," he said. There was another for the commodore, who had promised to call in a dinghy at the appointed time, and we went on deck, bolting a grille across the hatch, which Dumas explained had become necessary when a man tried to stab him at Rio de Janeiro.

Soon we were called for and taken ashore. While waiting for another friend, a French linguist, Senor Dumas inscribed our copies of his book (which describes a journey he made from France to Buenos Aires in 1932).

Two girls passing by heard our gibberish, and realised who the stranger was. They asked for autographs. One was a Maori, and I told Dumas so. "Aha!" he said. "Kia Ora is it not?" General merriment all round, and soon we were alone again. Dumas told me that the Maori features closely resembled those of the native Indians on his estancia—the Guarany Indians in the north of the Republic.

In the tram I had Dumas' book on my knee. A man beside me asked, "Is that the chap that came on the yacht?" I showed him the photos and maps. "Ah, well," he said, "we all have kinks, I suppose, some of us go sailing alone, some get drunk, some play football. But a tramcar will do me for getting about."

—A.A.

# GUNS PLUS STARVATION

## Science Is Blunting The Edge Of War's Deadliest Weapon

(Written for "The Listener" by A.M.R.)

**F**OOD—the Vital Factor is the title of a Penguin Special so recent that I have not yet seen a copy. Presumably, however, its opening notes will be those that closed my recent article on medical advances in war—namely, that privation, and especially deprivation of nourishment, has been and remains war's deadliest weapon; that it may decide this war as it almost decided the last; but that science is at work on both sides blunting its edge.

The German Undersea Fleet, which in 1917 brought Britain to within six weeks of starvation, has less hope now than it has had of doing that a second time. Britain is still the world's most vulnerable victim of blockade—supposing, of course, that it can be applied.

### Wheat or Meat

In 1940 Britain was still importing two thirds of her diet, measured in calories, and actually had  $4\frac{1}{2}$  million acres fewer under plough than in 1917 to feed  $6\frac{3}{4}$  million more mouths! However these shrunken farms were so well organised and scientifically run that Britain had, per worker employed, the largest output in Europe. In one essential commodity, sugar, she had risen from purely round figures to producing from beet a quarter her peace requirements, half a pound per head per week.

Ships continue to make the "Long Voyage Home", even if at present new buildings still lag slightly behind new sinkings. And in concentrated foods like bacon and butter one shipload can feed a fair-sized city. But each bulky shipment of wheat or potatoes means so many less weapons "to finish the job". By ploughing in 10 million more acres Britain might grow up to three-quarters of her wheat needs, and a good part of her best meadows she has so sacrificed. But every acre of grass that vanishes takes half a cow or four sheep with it, whose equivalent—chilled, frozen or dried into milk powder—must then be imported from somewhere. The quarter of Britain's bird and beast population who drew their fodder from abroad disappeared of course, in one fell massacre, over two years ago.

### Flying Start for Germany

The Germans, who announced "Guns Before Butter" as their policy, had in fact the flying start of being already 85% self-contained when war began. Moreover by choosing to grow the most efficiently produced foods (pork as against beef for example) they make each acre feed one man as against the 1.7 acres needed in Britain. Their peasant agricultural system can continue by its very simplicity as long as cheap labour, German or imported, is available. Local factories conjure nitrates out of the air, Alsace mines potash, armaments throw off slag, and until a few weeks ago France supplied phosphates. And, contrary to common belief, the average German on this regime in peace was the envy of all Eastern Europe. Only Britons and Scandinavians fed better than he.

Whether Germany's conquests reinforce or undermine her food position is doubtful. If rolling stock was not needed for "more essential" purposes than rushing Polish grass to save Danish cows (cut off from their overseas fodder) or to hurry Magyar or Ukraine wheat to starving Greeks or Belgians (whose fleets are feeding Britain) the answer would be certain. Goering's "New Order" in Europe is a workable conception—even, if only economics were involved, a desirable one. But, in addition to such triumphs as thousands of Finnish hectares bulldozed into farms, and Norwegian seaweeds and fish completely processed (since fish unlike pigs are dumb) to feed man and beast, Goering needs to complete his organisation two things now distant as the moon—North Africa and Peace. The Japanese new empire is a nutritive windfall—again provided they can steal from warfare time, men, and traffic to organise it. Meanwhile the *obe* (sash) is drawn as tight as the Italian belt. . . .

### Hidden Hunger

But if all the combatants succeed, as seems possible, in maintaining a calorifically adequate diet, their populations may yet wither from starvation—not the obvious superficial starvation of unfilled stomachs, but the more serious cell starvation which the lack of one vitamin or one mineral salt can cause. Accordingly the Germans, getting in first, decreed whole-grain bread only (for vitamin B), issued weekly rations of synthetic ascorbic acid (for vitamin C), eke out their chronic edible fat shortage with 50,000 tons yearly extracted from coal (for vitamins A, D, E, and K), and rotate certain simple "mineral-shot" stew meals which combine dietetic effectiveness with both cheapness and apparent variety. Britain early in the war "fortified" her bread with calcium and vitamin B, and encourages, in preference to back-yard breeding as in Germany, the private growing and preserving for winter of vegetables to replace the mineral-filled and vitamin-filled fruit which ships have no space to carry. America has initiated a great state-supported campaign of nutritional instruction, and two of her technical institutes have produced synthetic food mixtures that meet both "hidden" and "hollow" hunger at a cost of some cents per meal. The one is powdered skim milk, whole wheat and soya bean flour for bulk, shot with seven of the eight essential vitamins plus calcium phosphorus, iron and iodine. The second is a little three-cent pill (like the Family Christmas Dinner that baby swallowed) guaranteed to transform a porridge breakfast and a lean-meat dinner into The Perfect Diet.

The last war (competent authorities contend) killed more European civilians than soldiers and pushed  $12\frac{1}{2}$  million (at least) of Asiatics below the riceline by its diversion of labour from consumption purposes. It would be an amazing consummation should this war, in the course of similar "white slaughter", incidentally create the will, the knowledge, and the organisation at last to feed our race as the human frame and its full functions require.