

Front Page

MY BATTLE FOR 'MEIN KAMPF'

By CHIC YOUNG

On Sept. 28, Helman—the OPC man in the Gestapo—announced a battle to me. I had two things to say: "I don't know why you're so interested in this book. The Western Secretariat had appointed me to pass over papers into the Gestapo. Each document had been given before. But with two or three exceptions, the comrades who had tried to carry them out came to grief and sudden death."

"Impossible," he said. "I am too stupid."

Helman shook his head. "You will find the ground prepared. Be assured. You will have cooperation. Our competitor is always on the lookout for bright young men. I'll take time—and patience. And cool blood."

"How?"

"The point is not to make an outright offer. Nothing that clings to or suggests the problem is to bring the competitors to a point where they'll come and invite you. 'Hello, I'm bright. Understand?'"

I showed Rudolf Heitman the document I had written. He transferred from the penitentiary to the concentration camp. Printed on blood-red paper was the legend:

ORDER FOR PROTECTIVE CUSTODY

The bearer, prisoner..... has been returned to K.O.-L.F. because he endangers the peace and order of the State Penitentiary.

Of the Gestapo: PAUL KRADES. "There you are," I said, "official recognition.... chains...."

"That's fine," Helman countered. "A man in chains is likely to do anything to get rid of the shackles. You have run away for years. You have given up the old life. You are ready to capitulate. That is your line. It is no harm to fool people who think they're all-powerful."

"What would be the procedure?" I asked.

"Ask for permission to read Mein Kampf. The always ask. Then appear to be shocked by the mass shootings in Russia. Since you know the pavement, thousands have been shot, all ages, all nationalities. Let them know, somehow, that you're looking for a way yourself in conflict with the firm. Then wait for results. You'll win if you're lucky. How long have you been in the bunker?"

"Nearly three years," I said.

"Long enough to be a man break with his past," Helman growled. "The thing is to be lucky. Luck counts for more than mathematics."

"I'll think it over."

"Look here," Helman smiled grimly. "I'm in a jam. And I'm alive just the same. He said, 'I'll, more to reassure himself than to cheer me on."

I paced the cell all afternoon. Night came, and I did not sleep a wink. I was hungry, cold, and cold. Every inch of me was as fever and upward. From the beginning I knew that this was an easy business, the most dangerous, the most difficult, the most deadly assignment of my career. I did not think a successful termination of this mission within the scope of possibility. I was firmly convinced that by embarking on it I was bound for certain death. I asked myself: "Are you still good Bolshevik?" Half the night I fought with myself to arrive at an affirmative answer to the question of a cigarette smoldering in a wraith guard on the tier disturbed me. But before the next morning bell sounded, I decided to go ahead. I told myself that the wraith, surrounded by desolation, with nothing to rely upon except myself.

I asked the guard on duty for permission to read Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf.

This guard was new on the tier. Guards were changed every few weeks to prevent them from becoming friendly with the prisoners. He daily refused my request.

I let two days go by, of course. I had read the book before, but for two reasons, it was essential for me now to get it. One was that the Gestapo kept a close record of each prisoner's correspondence and reading matter. Imprisoned men who seemed to spend much of their time over official Nazi literature were generally considered as being at odds with their former Weltanschauung. The second reason was that I wanted to acquire a thorough knowledge of National Socialist conceptions and philosophy in order to be able to meet the Gestapo chieftains on their own ground at some date to come.

On the third morning I asked to be led before the Lager-kommandant.

"For what reason?" the guard demanded.

"I wish to make a statement," I said.

"A personal statement? Nothing else?"

"A political statement, Herr Wachmeister."

The guard was impressed. He went off with clanking boots, and ten minutes later he returned and took off my shackles. "Step out," the Kommandant wanted to see you."

The Kommandant of Camp Philadelphia lounged behind a battered desk. His office was overheated and cluttered with files and papers. Portraits of Nazi leaders lined the walls. The Kommandant was a slender, graying man with solitary features. He wore the black uniform of a first class guard, down to his mouth, a souvenir of a few years in the French Foreign Legion. When I entered the office, he waved several dictaphone operators and Miss Gant, a blonde of the room. For some time she looked me over. I stared at her, but she never blinked. The man whose regime in Camp Philadelphia was a many of my com-

rades had perished. Finally he snapped: "You are here?"

"To like permission to read Mein Kampf," I said.

"I thought so," he growled. He had probably expected something else. Then he smoked thoughtfully. After a moment he said: "Who should a traitor like you want to read the Fuehrer's book?"

"Who?"

"The man is much alone. He starts to think, Herr Kommandant," I explained. "I said I had to make a political statement. I desire to read the book. That, sir, is a political statement, Herr Kommandant."

The Kommandant leaned forward. "You are not turning Nazi, are you?" he asked innocently.

"No, sir."

"You are still a Communist?"

"I thought so," he said. "Communism in Germany is dead, sir. That's tough luck," night with."

I nodded. I continued to stand as rigidly as I possibly could. In all that time of the camp, my manner, no gesture was permitted in a prison.

"The hardships of camp life are not conducive to Communist morale, are they?" the Kommandant asked.

"I don't mind the hardships, sir," I answered.

"Hardships make men. Those who crumble under hardships are not worth bothering about. Just what put you in the camp, your political views?"

"I have been irretrievably destroyed, Herr Kommandant," I said. "I have no intention of becoming a Communist. I want to read Mein Kampf. I know that it is too late. But I know that I belong to an army which has been beaten—definitely beaten."

"Beaten?"

"Anihilated," the Kommandant said. "Go on."

"Anihilated," I admitted. "It was a strong army and it has been annihilated by the Hitler movement. That is why I want to read Mein Kampf. Herr Kommandant. I am curious and anxious to understand what gives National Socialism such annihilating strength."

"You should have done that in 1930," the Kommandant observed. "At that time I was blind, sir. And you are still blind?"

"No."

"I don't believe you. You seem to me a Keri who'd beat his head against a stone wall rather than admit that you're wrong. You shouldn't start crawling."

"I do not crawl, Herr Kommandant."

The Kommandant tapped his desk. He looked at me and said: "You are in a situation where honesty is the foe of loyalty, my friend. The Communist Party is rotten from top to bottom. Always was rotten. The fact that very few Communists stick to their guns even in hell proves it."

"I cannot profess loyalty to a cause which has ceased to exist," I countered.

"So you wish to read Hitler's book?"

"Yes, sir."

"Request refused. I'll have you chained twenty-five times around the yard instead."

The Kommandant pressed a button. A trooper clanked in, stood at attention. The Kommandant issued an order.

"That ended the interview. I was taken out into the yard by two guards who made me run 25 times around the perimeter. I was firmly convinced that by embarking on it I was bound for certain death. I asked myself: 'Are you still good Bolshevik?' Half the night I fought with myself to arrive at an affirmative answer to the question of a cigarette smoldering in a wraith guard on the tier disturbed me. But before the next morning bell sounded, I decided to go ahead. I told myself that the wraith, surrounded by desolation, with nothing to rely upon except myself."

any number of sheets with his writing; the only condition is that he delivers to his guard as many sheets as he has received.

I wrote a flaming denunciation of the Communist cause. I declared that I had heretofore severed all my connections with the Communist cause. I concluded this letter with the sentence, "I am a German. I realize that he who embraces Communism accepts the bequest of his fatherland as a part of his duty to Moscow." I added that I agreed to the publication of this declaration in the Nazi press. The Gestapo liked to publish such declarations, most of which were obtained under torture, on the assumption that they would do much toward demoralizing the remnants of the "underground" opposition.

Nothing happened for a week. The morning I was taking my tray, the food gobbled up from the floor, the banging doors and angry shouts and the screams of beaten men, the constant gnawing pain in my wounded wrists—all that remained the same. Different only was the manner in which I occupied my brain. I had more time to think. I had abandoned my usual grind of mechanical mental exercises. My brain was filled—even in its dreams—with but one train of thought: How can you best carry out the command of the Comintern? This central problem gave birth to untold mental exercises. My train of equally silent answers I had been stripped of most illusions. I had been stripped of most what it was. But I clutched at the task. I was afraid of emptiness. I had more time to think. It seemed to bring a purpose into my life again. At the end of the week I wrote another letter to the Gestapo. I humbly asked for permission to study Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler.

Early next morning, under supervision of two troopers, I was shaved by a stout-jawed, elderly Jewish prisoner.

"You are going to the Gestapo," a trooper informed me with a parting kick.

I was marched to the ground floor of the old prison, and stood nose and toes against the wall for several hours. To my right and left a long line of prisoners stood motionless and toes against the wall, waiting. At last I was hurried into the prison. As usual, I was overcrowded. But while the lurch rumbled through the streets toward the Gestapo headquarters, I realized that prisoners who were being carried to torture sessions in the latter part of the year were different from the militants of the first three years of Hitler power. There were more Jews, more Catholics, more Protestants, more Catholics, small merchants and others who never had belonged to the Party or the proletariat. I tried to draw one or the other of them into a discussion. But they were too frightened to speak. My thoughts turned to my own problems. "Why are you being called to the Gestapo?" I asked myself. My whole nature hinged on the answer to that question.

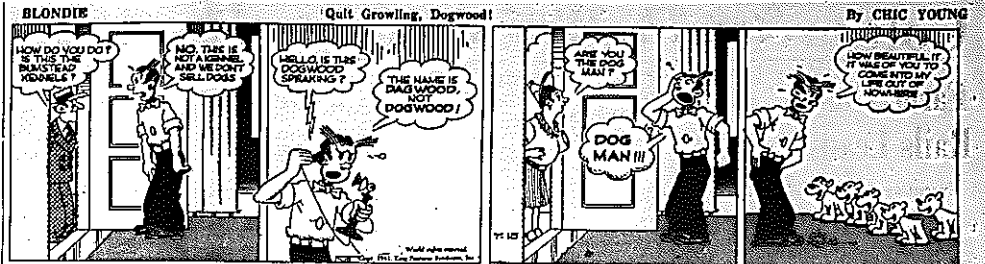
The truck reared into the yard of Gestapo headquarters, the yard which Karl Burmeister had died a thousand days earlier. I was not driven into the waiting-room of the question, I was led into the basement dungeons and locked into a closet which barely provided standing room. There was a small grill in the closet door. Through it I smelled the wondrous aroma of pea soup impregnated with pepper and fresh in the corridor, bearing brooms and mops and stacks of tin bowls. At last I was called into a room.

"I told myself."

A young Elite Guard handed me a book. It was Mein Kampf.

"When you have read it," he said, "give it to the prison library in Pootenmosen."

To Be Continued



GRIN AND BEAR IT

By Lichty

There was a special telephone line directly connecting the Kommandant's office with the headquarters of the secret police. I knew that over this wire my petition to obtain Mein Kampf had been communicated to the Gestapo. Each prisoner no matter how isolated, is always allowed to write to the Gestapo. The Gestapo writes to the prisoners. The more they write the more they bare themselves, the derrier—usually—they become. In this letter the thousand-and-one names laid out for enemies of the New Germany. The prisoner may cover up.

GOVERNOR Broughton To Review Army Unit

By Raleigh

RALEIGH, (AP) — Governor Broughton has accepted an invitation to review the 10th Cavalry Division at Fort Bragg on Aug. 1.

When he started a honeymoon in a Connecticut town was disrupted by the 10th Cavalry.

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"Let Snodgrass take over the Russian war news, Joe—he's had a lot of experience announcing names of All-American football teams!"

ROYAL CROWN BEER. MY CHOICE FOR BEST-TASTING! Omitious Brenda Marshall finds relief from her labeled cups and then writes a letter to the editor. This sample has won 5 out of 6 on a group taste-test in country over. Half of consumers say it's the best. Only 25¢.