

# Where Women Wait

By P. Phillips

THE following is an extract from a cable of Ben Hecht's, Berlin correspondent of *The Globe and Commercial Advertiser*:

BERLIN, March 11:—A noisy, good-natured crowd waited outside the sun-flecked walls of Moabit prison this afternoon;—men, women and children—they had been waiting since morning.

Moabit—dreary symbol of a corrupt state and system—Moabit, whose blood-flecked walls have now become an eternal monument of shame, erected by the brutal hands of those traitors to the cause of international brotherhood.

Of all corners of Berlin the most fitting for slaughter. Scene of a million tragedies and unmentioned persecutions, it is not at all strange to us who know it, to have it selected by a band of cowards as the stage for the greatest horror of them all.

From the above cable, one might be led to believe that the clock had been turned back five years—to that glorious spring of 1914, say, when the world still laughed. "Women and children waiting since morning—good-naturedly"—what else could it have meant—but a happy crowd on a holiday? On its way to the dear, old Circus Schumann—perhaps? Or out for its spring "lauf-partie" (walking trip) into the beautiful Gruenewald forests, dear to the hearts of all Berliners—Gruenewald with its tall pine trees, its dark blue lake, and fathomless blue sky. Its myriad beer-gardens tucked away here and there in democratic disdain of all citizens who would not walk to its cool glades. Here one got beer for ten pfennigs—and a song for a smile.

Nonsense. We are in the year of terror, 1919—thought, pregnant with poison. Year crimson with the blood of millions of martyrs. And this particular cable from Berlin is the report of the slaughter of 220 Spartacans in Moabit prison by the majority "Socialists" of that unhappy city, whose satanical leader is Herr Ebert.

Two hundred and twenty German men—Socialists, manacled together like so many helpless oxen in a stock-yard, and forced to march in front of machine guns—manned by the hands of those who a few short months before were clasping theirs in comradeship on the field of battle. Blown into eternity by these their own countrymen and "Kamerades"!

The Paris Commune pales before this shrieking barbecue of blood. The cruellest South African savage is not half so diabolical as "civilization" in its hour of re-action.

Significant, that in that crowd of "good-natured" murderers there were German Women—"waiting—for what? . . . Blood.

One recoils involuntarily at the very thought of such a thing. Hideous, that women must be added to the list of insatiates.

Even I, who have lived with German women, turned cold from horror and despair when I read Hecht's account of the death of those Spartacans. I hated them for their cruelty—I branded them outcasts—and yet I had known the tenderest of them.

Then as if by magic, I seemed to feel the lips of a German Mother on my cheek—I saw the burning eyes of a German wife, lifted to mine in mute appeal—imploping me to *think* before I *judged* her, and her sisters.

A great pity stole into my heart for the women of Germany—even for those who had waited in cold blood. I realized that some gigantic force had been steadily at work for five red years, undermining their bodies and brains. I thought of the story that a wonderful Southern woman had told me not long ago, of the terrible number of dope fiends that had sprung up in South since prohibition went into effect there. And of a meek and decent citizen, who, deprived of his daily beer, had taken to drinking Peruna—Vanilla extract—hair tonic—anything that would help to buck him up after the day's work. How one night after several drinks of a variety of these poisons, this same law-abiding citizen had imbibed, and not in the least responsible. At a bad point in the road his machine got stuck, and a kindly farmer ran out to help him in his trouble. The drunken driver took out a pistol and shot the farmer dead. His horror, when he came to several days later—in jail—for murder, was unspeakable. He had no recollection of anything that had occurred that night.

I compared the women of Germany to this demented creature and I realized that they too were the victims of hideous circumstance. The blame must go rather to the system that had turned them into blood-thirsty mockeries of their former selves. I remember them as I had seen and known them, before the war, when they had been just kindly and comfy "hausfrauen". Not famous for their good-looks, but always happy, not brilliant always—but kind, honest and motherly. I saw them again as I had times without number in the past. Groups of them, standing on the corners of small towns of cities, broad, beaming and invariably busy preparing some goody or necessity for some member of society—husband, son or parent. Red-cheeked, smiling, contented. That was it. Contented—above everything. The curve of their broad backs suggested contentment. The smoothness of their cheeks and hair exhaled peace—patience—almost dullness in many cases!

I saw them handing out huge cheeses and wursts to hungry humanity morn, noon and night. Cheerful, unimaginative and unselfish. I remember all this about them—and then I was filled with a burning hatred for the German government and for that hideous cancer of our times *Capitalism*.

I saw its loathsome eyes peering triumphantly down upon the Moabit scene inspired by its doctrines. And heard its ghoulish chuckle at the sight of the once meek and mild German women turned into fiends by its hellish persecutions.

Then too, I knew just what these same women had lived through for the last five years.

This "waiting" is not new to them, for they have been waiting for these many months. It is any wonder that they have become hardened?

I saw them when first they waited—way back in August of 1914. Then, they were waiting for their men to pass by, with proud boasts—and rose wreathed helmets. Smiles on their young lips—and victory in their hearts. How carelessly did the flower of Germany's manhood wave to their "waiting" women—as they passed down Under den Linden on their way

to . . . Paris! How gaily they marched to the strains of the Radetzky March and that favorite tune "Ich hat ein Kamerade." I still see their young faces—red-cheeked from the soft sun that touches those who live in the Rhine-land . . . tenderly. The blue of that river in their eyes—and laughter on their lips. They knew more about the trees and fair-haired Gretchens than they did about this business of war! And above all they knew that their women would be waiting for them when they returned.

But the years have gone by and most of them have *not* returned. Those women have been waiting ever since. It is maybe this same hideous waiting that has changed the women of Germany so *terribly*. It is easy for those of us who have waited—ourselves at some time or other to realize just what havoc it can play with the nerves—and spirit.

Their waiting has been all in vain. Something has snapped in their hearts and heads. They cannot think or act rationally any more. That went with all the peace of the past. Despair has claimed them—and now after years of agony and blood—what wonder if they have ceased to think in any terms but hate and blood? Blame those inhuman masters who foisted this war and never ending agony on to the women of Germany—and on to the workers of the whole world—and you will be doing right. Let us remember just how enormous a debt of blood we owe to those who have taken the sunlight from us. Remember that the women of Germany were once kind and contented—they bore strong children—for their Kaiser's cannons to be fed on—and possibly they feel that their whole race may as well be exterminated as not—they have little to live for—but debt—through this Peace that the auto-crats are planning for the world. The women of Germany no longer can hope to be happy—nor to rear strong babes for strong young fathers. The new system—with Kaiser Ebert at the head—is as bad—if not worse—than the old. They killed—and were killed under the old regime—they are still now murdered under the new. So why not have a hand in doing so themselves? Their sons were taken from them by the former Kaiser—their hope has been taken from them by Herr Ebert—and his cohorts. On with the slaughter! Let German women have a hand in the killing—now they cry. They have grown accustomed to the sight of blood. They are hungry—they must be fed—both the women—and the cannons. Not for many a moon will the smoke curl contentedly out of small and cosy cottages—in star-filled valleys—nor the pigs play about in the gardens as they used to. There are not many men folk for the women to wait on—nor many babies to raise. There is nothing, but this huge debt to the Allies—and back-breaking labor.

May the wives and mothers of those 220 murdered men who filled Moabit prison with their "howls and sputterings" hold tight against the time when the new dawn—the red dawn—shall break.

Let them carry on the great work started by their men—and their faith in the ultimate Victory of the Workers of the World be so great that it will urge them on to new deeds worthy of their martyred men—and to the reddest revolution that the world shall know. Then we will be able to say that the 220 and Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg have not died in vain.

## Unemployment and the Bolshevik Menace

THE pages of the bourgeois papers publish many articles purporting to show the possibility of Bolshevism penetrating and establishing itself in the United States. It is supposed that there is fertile ground here for Bolshevik ideas capturing the mind of the people. These articles sound a note of "warning." And the authors appeal to the prudence of the employers, pointing out that it is necessary to modify the "present conditions" lest the entire social structure should collapse.

According to bourgeois experts, the workers in the United States are exhibiting a great spirit of restlessness. The chief cause of their discontent is the increasing unemployment, which exists not in the imagination of the workers, but is a stark reality. The reports of the Federal Labor Bureau also deal with the spread of unemployment. Beginning with December 1918 the market situation has changed greatly in a direction unfavorable to the workers. Previous to that time the demand for labor exceeded the supply. But since then the supply has exceeded the demand. This unemployment has been growing daily and is not continued to one or two localities—it is everywhere throughout the cities and towns of the country: in Buffalo, thirteen thousand are unemployed; in Albany, four thousand; in the state of Massachusetts, fifteen thousand; in Cleveland, fifty-five

thousand; in Toledo, ten thousand; in Dayton, seven thousand; in Detroit, thirty thousand; in Minneapolis, four thousand; in San Francisco, eight thousand; in Oregon, seven thousand, etc. It is stated in the reports of the Federal Department of Labor that there is now a total of two hundred and ten thousand out of employment. Yet this figure is far below the real one. As stated by the War Community Service, in New York alone there are fifty thousand unemployed and this number is added to daily by ten thousand persons. The rapid growth of unemployment is due greatly to the demobilization of the soldiers.

In the main, the government of the United States is very inattentive to the problems arising from the demobilization of the army. The soldiers are frequently discharged without sufficient money even to pay for transportation home. The American government is demonstrating in this matter less generosity than the government of Great Britain. There the discharged soldier receives thirteen dollars for the purchase of civilian clothes or the right to order them in a specially selected store. Here the soldiers are being discharged in uniform. Those soldiers lacking money to buy civilian clothes with are often refused work simply because the employer objects to the uniform. Perhaps they feel that the "respect" for the uniform will prove an obstacle to the exploitation of

the soldier as a worker. The unemployment situation is fast making itself felt in the wages of the occupied workers. Many employers beholding the streets teeming with unemployed, begin to lower wages, thereby provoking dissatisfaction among the workers. The degree of the restlessness of the workers can be judged by the fact that at a recent banquet held by capitalists in honor of the Secretary of Labor, the latter did not fail to warn most seriously the employers against such tactics.

But the esteemed Secretary has evidently forgotten that where capital foresees profit there it loses its far-sightedness and all its common sense. The possibility of reaping huge profits in Europe is very problematical—Bolshevism from Russia is extending to Germany, England and France. Who can guarantee that this "red wave" will ever stop? Therefore the manufacturers turn from the unpromising situation, and in their attempt to obtain the utmost possible today, they "squeeze" as much as they can out of the American workers heedless of the consequences. But the consequences can prove a surprise to the capitalists. For, again, who can guarantee that under stress of starvation wages and unemployment the American worker and his brother in uniform—the uniform he cannot discard through lack of money—may not follow the "dangerous and contagious example of some of the European countries"?