

Germany's Business Spies at Work

Unscrupulous Methods Adopted to Further Plans for Trade Expansion



THE SYSTEMATIC way in which Germany uses her secret service department for trade purposes, or "economic penetration," is at present arousing the serious interest of the allies.

Investigations of the methods employed and of the extent to which the system has proved profitable to Germany have been made in several countries, writes J. T. M. in Printers' Ink. Some of the broad facts discovered by the state agents in certain continental European nations have been the subject of much discussion and public men in France and Italy are open in their denunciation of the evil, of the wide extent to which it is practiced and of the insidious danger which it represents.

In the years immediately preceding the war large American corporations, like similar firms in Europe, came in frequent contact with the so-called "spy system in business" and all those who handled any important business for these corporations, especially if the business was in Germany, and even if it involved the simplest and most open and above-board kind of transactions, were almost invariably confronted with incidents of secret service meddling.

The present writer while attending to certain business for a number of American companies in combination had occasion to travel frequently from one country to another and had established headquarters in Germany on the eve of the outbreak of the war. He had been warned by friends to keep a close eye on his papers and effects and, as far as possible, to travel only with such baggage as could be taken in passenger compartments on the trains. This, however, was not always feasible and one morning when leaving Milan for Germany with a trunk he was struck by the eager insistence of a German-speaking employee of the foreign-owned hotel, in which for special reasons he had stopped, in attending to the checking of the trunk on the train. The writer watched this employee's actions while the trunk was being labeled and felt reassured until he reached Basel in Germany, where the train which had come through Switzerland was to be divided in two sections and routed north toward Berlin on both sides of the Rhine. The customs inspection is made for Germany at German Basel, but the trunk in this instance was not taken off the train and, although it was plainly visible in the open baggage car, the chief inspector refused to listen to remonstrances, on the alleged ground that the trunk was routed via the eastern bank of the river while the writer's ticket was for the Strassburg way. This, however, was not in accordance with the facts.

A week later notice was received that the trunk was at the customs department of a central German city. An appointment was made for its inspection and, instead of customs officials, two special agents were present at the appointed time—the hotel porter who was to take the trunk away recognized them as such. The inspection was thorough. Every document and every scrap of paper was minutely examined. Endless questions were asked regarding the business documents and the method of doing business which they implied, the countries in which business was done and the names of the firms concerned, the pretext for the questions being the doubt that the printed part of the business documents might be dutiable as being printed and the manuscript and type-written part of them might constitute contracts, and therefore be subject to duties under other heads. The contents of the trunk were weighed and separately classified and finally fees were levied under three separate heads for the molestation caused by having put the German authorities to the necessity of making this special investigation. A total of about three dollars was involved.

Soon after this incident the writer became conscious that his desk in an office in that same city was being tampered with and, after a watch had been set, a German in the service of the same American corporation, and already suspected as being a government agent, was caught red-handed in the act of prying open the desk and making a record of its contents.

When confidences were exchanged with other representatives of American corporations it was learned that the experience was a common one, and the comparing of notes seemed to show an explanation for the surprising ability of German firms to learn the names of the foreign customers of American corporations and the seeming coincidence of their soliciting those firms almost simultaneously with the American agents every time that the latter had something new to offer. Incidents can be vouched for where agents for American corporations in Italy and other countries, on receiving from America new machines or radically new models, found to their amazement that German agents had already visited their customers, had described the new machines or models and had denounced their alleged weak points and their undesirability for various reasons. The German agents knew more about the American machines than the American agents.

Of course, sweeping generalizations are to be avoided and all statements which are likely to upset the equanimity of those satisfied with the course of established routine and liable to be characterized as grotesque, and, if emphatically set forth, they are liable also to fall of effect on those who refuse to be disturbed in their fixed ideals. Lord Roberts, it should be remembered, was a nuisance to the majority of the British reading public when he kept up his tiresome warnings about the true meaning of Germany's military preparations, and it should not be forgotten that Gen. Leonard Wood, when half a dozen years ago he began to urge preparedness in America, was denounced as a professional alarmist eager to obtain power and a chance for distinction. And so those who are raising the cry of alarm regarding the secret service methods of trade warfare being conducted by Germany declare that they are not getting the proper hearing and that the danger is one of supreme moment.



It is affirmed that German "trade by espionage" is practically as great a menace to the world as is Germany's military machine; that, indeed, Germany's military methods and her "economic penetration" methods are interdependent, and that any peace which seemed to leave German militarism powerless would be vain and futile if the German methods of trade were allowed to continue as at present. The question is asked whether trade after the war will be a secret service struggle on the part of all the nations and whether, as Germany forced all the powers to mobilize for militarism, she is going to force them also to mobilize for trade warfare. These questions may seem grotesque, but able men are raising them. They point out that the law of civil conscription in Germany has made all the business representatives of the empire potential secret service agents at the disposal of the military authorities.

The French economist, M. Lucien Descaves, who has made special investigations in this matter, quotes from a secret document, of which he has seen a copy, containing instructions to German engineers, who are called upon to sink their professional pride and to devote themselves to finding trade secrets and to furthering German trade, which will be readily possible for them under the guise of their professional mantle.

M. Descaves has described the results of a tour he made of neutral countries for the purpose of investigating German secret service methods of trade. Both men and women, he says, are employed in this way by Germany, mostly young men and women. Secret service and business promotion are practically convertible terms. The German secret service man or woman is taught the art of trade development and the German commercial traveler is taught the art of espionage. Germany realizes that the role of commercial traveler is the best disguise for a secret service man and that secret service is the best of all adjuncts to trade. Germany, according to M. Descaves, is inundating the neutral countries with literature and with agents. The agents are recognized as by far the most productive. Printed documents are scattered and, even if they are followed by many others, they are soon forgotten. Where the agents follow one another, working with mutual aid, their work is practical and profitable. They perform not merely a common task; they work out a propaganda.

"The Germans," he continues, "have been systematically giving furloughs from the army to their mobilized men who had been commercial travelers in foreign countries. These men are authorized to visit their former customers, but they are especially engaged to work with zeal and adroitness and to produce practical results. Special rewards are reserved for those who are able to practice espionage for the benefit of Germany. The agent has a double, or rather a triple, part to play. He is openly placing his country's products, he is celebrating his country's glory and secretly he is gaining information regarding Germany's neighbors and her enemies. Such work is regarded as worth a reward and the reward is paid. In one neutral country I was struck by the large number of these German commercial agents who are young, despite the fact that the country, being at war, needs young men. But the fact is that they can serve their country on this front just as well as on the battle fronts. They are industrious, insinuating, tenacious. The promises they make, in the name of the great commercial firms of Germany, are kept. They go and come as in time of peace. They have their own hotels, restaurants, cafes, meeting places. They are servicable and they push their eagerness to be agreeable to the point of servility. While they do not succeed in making themselves popular, they impose themselves on the business men because they can quickly obtain from Germany what merchants have patiently but vainly sought elsewhere."

M. Descaves urges that the allies put more commercial travelers in the field to offset the German trade campaign methods, but he declares that the French business agent, undoubtedly like the business agents of France's allies, "has an insurmountable repugnance for espionage, no matter what the reward might be."

M. Charles Humbert, proprietor of Le Journal of Paris, and other public men of France declare that in order for the world to be safe for democracy Germany must not merely be beaten in the field, but her whole system of militarist government, with the country's trade development sub-

servient to it, must be overthrown and the world's commerce freed from serious dangers. If this is to be effected the whole German idea of trading must be modified.

"Economic penetration" has long been recognized in Germany as one of the most important functions of the state. The highest in the empire, kings, princes, nobles and hereditary land magnates, have vied in showing their interest in all industrial and commercial enterprises of magnitude and in promoting in every way possible to them the expansion of German trade, while chancellors, cabinet officers and members of parliament have practically been at the beck and call of corporations and individuals embarking on new undertakings on a large scale. The state in many lines has become the partner of leading promoters and in cases where capital is risked in enterprises, which if successful must redound to the benefit of the empire, that capital is practically guaranteed against loss. Should the enterprise itself be revealed as practicable, but be jeopardized by incompetency or dishonesty, the state will find a way to step in, to protect the outside investor and to turn the enterprise to success. Differently from what occurs in certain more democratic countries, the German state does not stand aloof from trade and industry, does not eye "big business" with cold suspicion, or permit the legislative bodies to molest it with a multitude of pin-pricking laws. The Kaiser poses as the friend and associate of great munitions manufacturers, visits with Westphalian coal barons, presides at the launching of steamships owned by private corporations and lends the encouragement of his presence to the cutting of canals, or the making of automobiles, or shoes, or carpets, by private enterprise. The whole attitude of the state toward trade is different in Germany.

By instinct, it is possible that the Kaiser, the princes, the counts and the barons of Germany have as little desire to come in contact with the ordinary mortals who are "in trade" as certain titled Britons have, but in Germany duty to the state overcomes the repugnance. The one supreme duty of all is to promote the military might of the state, for in this way alone can Germany's greatness be assured.

But military power in these times is dependent on economic power. The nation with the most money can win wars, is the crude commercial way in which the idea has been phrased in other countries. Germany has different notions, but admits the hard fact that trade and militarism are inter-related. And as the warfare of today has called for new methods on the battlefield, so it also demands new forms of aid from commerce. Through trade and commerce the armed forces of the nation can deliver some of their most telling blows. Since, in the present hour, whether one likes it or not, the fact is established that the army is more than ever dependent on commerce, the army must now work for trade and trade must work for the army. This reasoning was furnished as the fundamental justifying motive for the law on civil conscription in Germany, and the German government, if it endures, is expected to push the principle as vigorously after the war as it does now. Even if Germany lost the war, it is affirmed, she can count on triumphing ultimately through her trade methods.

How vigorously Germany is working on this principle is best realized from the fact that since the beginning of the war, and to a greatly increased extent in the past year, the German government has effected new combinations between leading manufacturing and commercial concerns in Germany engaged in foreign business and is using the government resources in the combinations. The facts in this regard, known from other sources, are confirmed by the complaints of the smaller German concerns left out of the combination and deprived, not merely of all financial and commercial participation, but also of all knowledge of the business operations in which the government and big business are engaged. It is this apparently established fact of the union of the government with the most important of the German firms transacting business abroad which is the basis for much of the concern manifested in the countries of the allies regarding the German method of handling trade and commerce and the future evils which it forecasts.

PLANT LOOKS LIKE SHEEP

Singular Growth Resembles Animal So Greatly as to Deceive Even an Experienced Shepherd.

"Some of the most singular plants in the world," says a writer in the April Wide World, "are the vegetable sheep of New Zealand. These are known to science as Raoulia eximia, and although they are of such a strange habit of growth they are members of the daisy tribe. The vegetable sheep grow at high altitudes, usually on some bleak mountain slope, which may be 5,000 feet above sea level. The whole plant is a compact mass of stems densely covered with small woolly leaves. So closely do the Raoulia resemble sheep that experienced shepherds will often climb a long way up the mountain thinking that they see some missing member of their flock huddled against a rock, only to discover that they have been deceived by a plant! During a recent exhibition at Christchurch, in New Zealand, some specimens of the vegetable sheep were collected for the show. The plants are often large and heavy, and it required the efforts of half a dozen strong men to secure some fine examples of the Raoulia."

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Frank J. Cheney makes oath that he is senior partner of the firm of F. J. Cheney & Co., doing business in the City of Toledo, County and State aforesaid, and that said firm will pay the sum of ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS for any case of Catarrh that cannot be cured by the use of HALL'S CATARRH MEDICINE.
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French Testaments.
To assist the United States soldiers to learn French, and at the same time make reading the Bible more interesting, the Bible society has issued a special pocket edition of the Gospel of St. Mark, containing the Gospel in French on one page and its counterpart in English on the opposite page.

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MARCH TO VICTORY

Courage is a matter of the blood. Without good red blood a man has a weak heart and poor nerves.

In the spring is the best time to take stock of one's condition. If the blood is thin and watery, face pale or pinny, generally weak, tired and listless, one should take a spring tonic. One that will do the spring house cleaning, an old-fashioned herbal remedy that was used by everybody nearly 50 years ago is still safe and sane because it contains no alcohol or narcotic. It is made up of Blood root, Golden Seal root, Oregon Grape root, Queen's root, Stone root, Black Cherry bark—extracted with glycerine and made into liquid or tablets. This blood tonic was first put out by Dr. Pierce in ready-to-use form and since then has been sold by million bottles as Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. If druggists do not keep this in tablet form, send 60 cents for a vial to Dr. Pierce's Invalids' Hotel, Buffalo, N. Y.

Kidney disease carries away a large percentage of our people. What is to be done? The answer is easy. Eat less meat, eat coarse, plain food, with plenty of vegetables, drink plenty of water, solvent after meals for a while, such as Anuric (double strength), obtainable at almost any drug store. It was first discovered by Dr. Pierce. Most every one troubled with uric acid finds that Anuric dissolves the uric acid as hot water does sugar. You can obtain a trial package by sending ten cents to Doctor Pierce's Invalids' Hotel and Surgical Institute in Buffalo, N. Y.

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