THE SITUATION IN GERMANY

General Situation: I think it safe to say that most experts, Nazi as well as non-Nazi, do not believe that war is imminent. Since the Czech crisis in September, there has been no calmer capital in Europe than Berlin. No doubt this is partly a case of ignorance being bliss: the German is simply out of touch with international realities. But most observers also believe that the Wilhelmstrasse itself is really determined on peace, at least for the present, and this for two reasons (1) the precarious German economy (2) the needlessness of war when the Reich's enemies are already on the run.

There is also a third reason working for peace; paradoxically, it is an exceedingly martial one. This is Roosevelt's policy of wielding the big stick. I am not attempting to judge the merit of Roosevelt's warlike stand. I do not even say that all of the Americans in Berlin - including some of the diplomats - agree with it. But most observers on this side agree that, rightly or wrongly, Roosevelt has thrown a mighty obstacle across Germany's path. He has put teeth into Democracy. That Germany hates him for it goes without saying. But they also fear him, and to the Nazi German, fear is a greater deterrent than friendship.

Recently I heard from a Nazi source that the only man in the world today whom Hitler really respects is Roosevelt. I do not think it too much to say that the President's much discussed talk before the Senate military committee, no matter what political war it has created domestically, has helped to clear the air internationally.

Of course, the three big questions to be settled in the near future are Spain, Germany's colonies and the Italian claims. In Berlin, non-Nazi observers believe that France and England's policy of appeasement will continue to avert war. Both Germany and Italy, it is believed here, will get what they want, at least to a large degree. I presume that the Western democracies will get something in return, possibly some additional pledges for the security of their immediate frontiers or some favorable trade agreements. What these pledges or agreements will really be worth I do not presume to know.

Internal Conditions: Domestically, Germany has her vexations. Austria has not yet been digested. I was in Vienna the first week in February and Buerckel made a speech which was a veritable plea to the Viennese not to indulge in so much graft, blackmail and plundering of public and private funds. I got the distinct impression that a kind of super Tweed ring was running Vienna - and running it into the ground. I asked an American diplomat in Vienna whether the Austrians were justified in their complaint that Prussians had been sent in to run the country. His answer was revelatory. "I wish there were more Prussians here," he said. "Any time I want something done, I try to get in touch with the German in the department. The Austrians lie, pass the buckle or offer to take me out for a drink."
Nor is corruption limited to Austria. During the past year more than one of the so-called "incorruptibles" close to Hitler have been involved in scandals. Among them have been Dr. Ley, the labor minister; Brueckner, Hitler's chief adjutant; and a man named Kanonberg, the superintendent of the Reichschancellory. These scandals have been hushed up, but they are still festering inside the Party. I have been told by a man in a position to know that "there's more corruption going on in Germany than would be possible under a parliamentary regime."

But all of this is outside the ken of the man in the street. I have heard all kinds of estimates as to the percentage of backing that Hitler would get in an open and free election. The estimates range from 60 to 75% for to 60% against. But pending the coming of a free election, we have to look at the records, where we find that the German people are practically 99 9/10ths per cent pure Nazis. They are, speaking generally, going along wholeheartedly with Hitler in making Germany one vast military machine. And if in the process more and more of their liberties are curtailed, and they begin to run out of coffee, and must clothe themselves with tree pulp, their increasing anger is turned not against Hitler but against the Fuehrer's foreign enemies, whose intransigent attitude makes these sacrifices necessary. This is the beauty of German propaganda.

Jewish Situation: Before leaving Germany on February 10th, I had an interesting talk with an American diplomat during which the latter expressed the following points of view (1) The agreement which Rublee took away with him is the best that the Nazis can be expected to offer (2) The Nazis will live up to whatever they promised (3) American Jewry ought to cooperate fully with the plan, no matter how distasteful some of its terms may be (4) Germany has learned to respect America, it is time for Ambassador Wilson to come back to his post, and American Jewry ought to do nothing to prevent this development.

This is the view of an American diplomat who has always been sympathetic to the cause of German Jewry. On at least one point I disagree with him most violently. I do not think that the Germans are in the least interested in maintaining their share of the agreement. Almost at the moment that Rublee was reporting in London about the Nazi offer to create "orderly emigration," the Gestapo was threatening a representative of the Reichsvertretung with more "shocks for German Jewry" unless emigration was speeded up.

The threat took place at a talk between the Reichsvertretung representative and the Gestapo concerning the centralized Jewish emigration office that was then in prospect. "We'll be handling about 90 applications for emigration a day," the Jewish representative said. "You'll be handling three or four times that," the Gestapo man said, "or we will know the reason why. Why do you think so many Jews got away from Germany in 1933, and why has emigration slowed down since?" The Jewish representative answered: "In 1933 immigration gates were still open; now the Jews have no place to go."

"Oh no," was the Gestapo official's reply. "That isn't the reason at all. It was shock that drove the Jews out during the first year of the Third Reich. And you had better remember that we are in a position to repeat these shocks as often as necessary."

The fact is that when I left Germany, Jewish leaders were in a state of despondency and apprehension greater than at any time since the advent of the Nazis to power. There was evidence at every hand that the Germans meant to press the Jewish question to a quick solution - this solution being emigration of the great bulk of German Jewry. On the one hand the Gestapo was showing the iron fist; on the other, and despite official denials, the move to segregate Jews into ghettos was continuing, with hundreds of Jews receiving
vacating notices and finding it increasingly difficult to find new apartments except in certain Jewish neighborhoods. And the fact that the Gestapo, during recent weeks, has been showing a great deal of interest in Jewish community property and in the number and location of Jewish schools and training camps is a source of additional apprehension.

As to welfare work, the Jews of the old Reich are still technically able to take care of themselves. Some of the communities, and many individuals, are still surprisingly rich - on the books. The question is to what extent, and how rapidly, the Nazis are going to enable the Jews to liquidate their extensive holdings. Also, providing this liquidation is permitted to take place, it is a question of how many of the wealthier Jews will voluntarily submit their private fortunes to the general distribution without which the bulk of German Jewry would not be able to continue living. I have never been rich and do not know what it feels like to give away a life's savings, or even an inheritance gift, so I am not trying to approve or condemn when I point out that there are hundreds of Jews who persist in clinging to their property. That is, however, the fact; and there is no doubt that certain Jewish leaders who for long have thought that a capital levy was the only way out of the dilemma will eventually get their way.

In any case, Jewish wealth today is as non-productive as a sterilized egg, and it is only a question of time when it will be used up. If foreign lands open their doors and Jews can get out swiftly, the chances are that no financial crisis will arise. But if the Nazis consider that the world is dilatory in solving its Jewish problem for it, there is no telling what confiscatory measures will be taken, nor what renewed "shocks" may be delivered upon German Jewry, nor to what state of misery and serfdom German Jewry will be reduced.

In this connection it should be pointed out that Austrian Jewry, financially, presents a different situation. It speaks volumes for Viennese Jewry that, when I asked a director of the Vienna Jewish community whether he was hopeful that Rublee would create transfer possibilities for emigrants, he answered, "We haven't anything to transfer any more."

America's role in saving German Jewry continues to be deeply appreciated, except that certain German Jewish leaders cannot understand why the United States does not consent to a merging of a three-year quota. There is no question that this would go far towards relieving the almost unbearable pressure under which thousands of Jews are now suffering. The crowded condition of the consular visa departments in Berlin and elsewhere means that persons with perfectly valid affidavits and who in every other way are perfectly acceptable immigrants to the United States are nevertheless shut out for two, three or four years. This neither the Jewish leaders nor the Jews themselves can understand although the problem may be somewhat more clearly seen by those Jews who have already come to the United States.

The American Attitude: There arises the question as to what the general attitude of American Jewry towards their German co-religionists ought to be. From the Berlin end, the problem seems a little different from what it is on the other side of the water. American Jewry - as seen by the German Jews - have proved loyal and generous, but perhaps a little too militant. It must be remembered that the German press pounces upon every example of Jewish war-mongering as manna from heaven, and that every time a Jew in America makes a face at Hitler, Germany's Jews literally shiver in their boots - and perhaps with good reason. I am not myself passing judgment; I am merely reflecting a considerable part of German Jewish opinion.

It would seem clear to me that there are at least three courses open to American Jewry (1) to walk on tip-toes, say nothing and concentrate on getting the Jews out of Germ-
any; (2) to fight back with all their strength on the clear-cut Jewish issue, refusing to imperil the principle of tolerance for the sake of Germany's half-million Jews; or (3) to tackle the problem from another end, soft-pedalling the Jewish issue and joining forces not as Jews, but individuals and as Americans, with liberal elements everywhere in the fight against Fascism, and to trust that in that victory the Jews will again find their freedom.