

Lebensraum in Germany

By Dr. FRANZ OPPENHEIMER

The statistics in the following article are based upon pre-1914 figures. In spite of the fact that parts of France, Poland, and Denmark were then parts of Germany, pre-1914 Statistics is the closest we can come to on original Germany. (Without Austria.) Inside Germany little has been changed since then. A very few large estates have been divided up, but although some of the numbers may be changed, proportions have shifted only slightly, if at all.

Opinions differ as to the real reason for the war now raging in Europe, but Adolf Hitler's own reason for and justification of his policy of aggression is the German nation's alleged need for "Lebensraum." This, together with the race theory, is in fact the foundation of National Socialism.

While the American public has never had much patience with the Nazis' persistent bleating about their racial superiority, many persons in this country feel a sneaking sympathy toward the "poor, cramped Europeans." In spite of the fact, however, that the density of population in Germany is much higher than in this country, and such sympathy is misplaced. German claims of overpopulation are, in fact, every bit as absurd as the "race" fairy tale.

For proof we have to refer to statistics. That may seem strange, as statistics have long been Adolf Hitler's most forceful arguments in his demands for more land for the "have-not" people of Germany. Comparisons between the land available in Germany and in other, wealthier nations and their colonies, have been a dangerous weapon in his hand. Statistics, however, work both ways; and this weapon may prove a boom-erang.

All authorities agree that to live independently in Germany a farmer's family needs, on the average, 12.5 acres. In the backward and comparatively poor East up to 25 acres may be heeded, while in the fertile and largely industrialized West 5 acres are often ample. To Americans, used to their "homesteads" of

160 to 320 acres, that may seem incredible, but the American farmer is essentially different from the European "peasant." The former is, to all intents and purposes, a manufacturer of agricultural produce; while the latter is largely self-sufficient. His garden and the keeping of livestock repay him so well for his efforts that comparatively little land is needed—or even desirable. It is all he and his family can manage to care properly for—one horse, nine cows, seven or eight pigs and some chickens—and that, according to statistics, is about what the livestock amounts to on a German farm of the size given above. Add to this the work in the dairy and the greater intensity of cultivation necessary in order to raise sufficient feed, and it is clear that an average of 12.5 acres is generous.*

The statistics dealing with the regularly employed on farms bear this out. Their number, per acre, sinks steadily as the holdings increase in area:

Size of Holding	Steady Workers per Acre
Under 1.25 acres0.96
1.25 - 50.36
5 - 12.50.26
12.5 - 500.14
50 - 2500.06
250 and more0.04

It is evident that at 25 acres the point is reached where "family-economy," without hired help, must cease. No normal family can supply 3.4 steady workers.

How many independent farmers of this type could exist in Germany to-day?

* Much less for instance in Japan, whose agriculture is really horticulture. 35% of all Japanese farms have less than 1 acre, and even that would be enough if it were not for the fact that many of them are tenants and have to pay up to 70% of all they make for rent. In China a farmer who owns 5 acres is considered "rich."

The entire area of Germany is roughly 135 million acres. Forests take up about 42.5 million acres. Farmland, i.e. plowland, meadows, rich pastures, vineyards, gardens (not ornamental gardens) occupy another 80 million. The rest is poor pasture, wasteland, water and areas taken up by cities and towns.

On this area, if we apply our average, there could therefore live 6.4 millions independent owners with their families — about 32 million heads. This without using the forests and poor pastures.

The entire rural population, however, only amounts to slightly over 17 million. Of these, 44% are "independent," 56% dependents." These latter are:

Higher employees 181,000
Servants of	
the "independents"	.. 153,000
Laborers9,336,000
Total9,670,000

There remain "independents"—including highly-paid representatives of owners—only 7,570,000. Of these "independents" however, many are only tenants, not owners, although no statistics exist on this matter.

The meaning of these figures must be clear to any one who looks them over carefully. Incredible as it may seem, the logical conclusion is that if every rural family now living in Germany—including all midget farmers, tenants and landless laborers—were given as much land as they need for a comfortable living, only half of the soil now under culture would be required. The other half would remain unused—a reserve of wealth for future generations.

It is a startling discovery. And a discovery many will refuse to accept as fact. It is indeed hard to believe that a people with such a vast store of wealth within its own borders

would, of its own free will, go through the agony of a modern war for no other purpose than to conquer more of a thing which it already possesses in over-abundance—fertile land.

Statistics explain this enigma as well.

The land under cultivation is taken up by approximately 5.75 million holdings. 3.25 millions of these, however, are only "auxiliary" holdings, and do not concern us here. They occupied a space of only 8 million acres. There remain 2.436 million "independent" holdings, on 72 million acres.* Evenly distributed, about 30 acres would fall to each. More than twice as much as necessary.

However, the land is anything but evenly distributed.

Class of Holding	Number of Holdings	Percentage of total number of holdings	Percentage of total area
Midget Farmers (up to 5 acres)	458,000	18.8	1.4
Medium Farmers (5-50 acres)	1,700,000	69.7	42
Big Farmers (50-250 acres)	254,600	10.4	32
Large Holdings (over 250 acres)	23,110	0.9	24

Summing it up: All holdings up to 50 acres—and that is a great deal in Europe—88.5% of the number, occupy only 44% of the total area under cultivation, while the larger farms and great estates, only 11.3% of the number, occupy fully 56% of all the farmland of Germany.

That is not all. All farms, no matter whether the men working them are owners or tenants, figure as "independent" in German statistics. The extent of large-scale farming is given, but not the extent of large-scale ownership. There is no way of ascertaining how many of the smaller farmers, especially of Western

* Land under cultivation only. Many farms are actually larger, as they include woods and poor pastures. These, however, do not figure in the statistics.

Germany, are really tenants. There is no doubt, however, that large landed property in Germany is huge, even in parts where small holdings predominate. One of my pupils, Theodor Haebig, with the greatest difficulty, succeeded in at least establishing the amount of landed property in the hands of the nobility. Their lands alone run into hundreds of thousands of acres. There are, for instance, the princes of Hohenlohe and the dukes of Arenberg: Both own vast stretches of land densely settled with small and medium tenant farmers.

The riddle of the German people's need for land is solved. The land is there—more than would be needed for generations to come. But those who want it cannot get at it, because no scrap of land in Germany is left without an owner. And those who own and hold it, in large estates or in small farms, are the same men who have been ruling Germany for hundreds of years, and, for that matter, are ruling it still: the Junkers, the landed nobility and landed gentry of Germany.

They were responsible for Germany's getting into the war of 1914, and they form the backbone of Hitler's army today. Their philosophy of life has been absorbed by the German masses. Hitler himself has fallen heir to the megalomania of these men who feel themselves to be the rightful masters of the world.

Had Hitler been truly honest about his "socialism" he could have given the German people all the land and "lebensraum" they needed by confiscating — or even honestly buying — part of these giant estates and dividing them up among his land-hungry rural population. He has certainly not been squeamish about confiscating the property of other people. However, this step would have met with strong resistance from the side of the Junkers. Once some estates had been divided up, the matter would not have ended there. Opening up free land would have meant depriving the Junkers of the cheap labor which means life or death to them.

Hitler preferred to compromise. The Junkers are — and always have been — the greatest power in Germany. The old and the new rulers of Germany are now at work hand in glove, in perfect agreement as to their aims.

The rulers of Germany want Lebensraum — but not for the German people. They want it for themselves. No free German farmer would till the soil of any country or colony Germany might conquer. The land would become the prey of the same men who already hold more than half of Germany in their clutches. These men do not want free farmers. The average Junker looks down on the farmer with all the contempt every "robber-baron" feels for honest work.

The rulers of Germany want Lebensraum — but not just land. They want the working power of the people now living on it. They want to be not workers but masters. Overlords of enslaved populations.

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