

Europe Gives Production Sense

PRODUCTION IS LIFE. The ethics of production is one of the bitterly learned lessons of war. In the light of reports on the present economy of Europe the fulminations of "amoral economists" are as satisfying as mustard without meat.

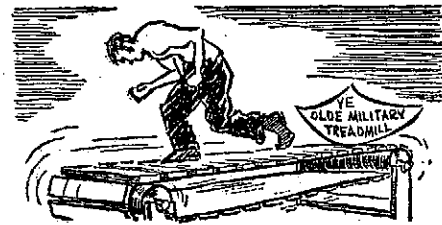
If production is the making of things, regardless of the purpose to which they are put, then the maximum activity of a civilization bent on destroying itself is production of the highest order; and if the definition of wealth is restricted to any combination of labor and land, whether or not such combination serves to satisfy desires, Europe must indeed be in a very prosperous condition.

But it is not. The tremendous activity of sixty million workers in feeding and supplying thirty million men in arms seems to promise a condition of abject poverty. Famine stalks this so-called production. The making of things which do not satisfy the desires of men is done at the expense of these desires, and the effort exerted is sheer waste. Life suffers. There is no production.

Nor is it possible to store up satisfactions in anticipation of a complete stoppage of production. We live from hand to mouth. Germany is learning this lesson with emphasis. Seven years ago the Reich began robbing her laborers in anticipation of the present complete stoppage of production; yet, three days before the Polish campaign her grain reserves, the Government reported, were only 8,600,000 tons—less than one-third her normal annual consumption. Poland was ravaged for the purpose of supplying the deficiency in her food supplies; but the loot was meager, and millions of starving Poles can produce little, particularly under the lash, beyond enough to keep themselves alive. Now that Argentine wheat has been cut off by the British Navy, Germany turns in vain to Balkan fields denuded of workers by the menace of war. Fish, an important item on the German menu, is not produced by submarines or mines. "Only a miracle," writes a reporter, "can rescue the Third Reich from a repetition of the starvation of 1918." The "miracle"

would be acceptance of the truth that production is nothing but the satisfaction of human desires.

All over eastern Europe soldiers garrisoned in idleness are literally eating the head off the economy of their countries. Millions of refugees in England, France and the "neutral" nations are devouring tons of rationed food. The condition of Italy is indicated by the reported arrest of some thirty-odd thousand "hoarders." Mussolini has been "producing"



so many engines of destruction that he cannot compete with the belligerents in the Balkan food supply market; his only resort is to use these engines to steal what he cannot buy.

Spain demonstrates what Europe will be. The almost complete destruction of her capital handcuffs her depleted manpower; she is starving. Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark are stripped, and the armies of occupation are as productive as locusts; their insatiable maws leave little for the enslaved workers, out of the little that slaves produce.

Russia, where production by ukase has ceased to have any human purpose, was reported to be short of potatoes and milk before the invasion of Finland began. Stories seeping out of that blacked-out wilderness hint of a repetition of the famine of 1932-33. Robbery of the peasants by millions of non-producers in uniform and in mufti has turned her farms into garden patches; the worst winter in a decade has sabotaged what little was produced.

France has been called upon to import 70,000 field workers from her colonies. How much will

these inefficient laborers raise beyond what they consume? The women farmers are in munition factories making what no woman can use in the satisfaction of desires. And a million refugees from Spain, Germany, Belgium and other countries are "star boarders."

England's food plight broke through the traditional fences surrounding 3,000,000 acres of aristocrats' sacred grassland. But where are the workers who produced the things which used to be exchanged for the bacon and dairy products supplied

by the now fettered workers of Denmark and Norway? Rationing may temporarily relieve the situation, but a hungry worker makes a poor leaning post for civilization.

The picture is dark indeed. Europe is on the breadline now. What will follow this war of extermination? Extermination. But, if anybody is left to philosophize about it, particularly an economist, civilization may be revived if the concept prevails that the satisfaction of desires is the only thing that gives production sense.