

French Speed with Movies on the Job, Ernest Hemingway

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The following is the tenth of a series of articles by Ernest M. Hemingway, staff correspondent of The Star, on the Franco-German situation.

By ERNEST M. HEMINGWAY. Special to The Star.

Düsseldorf.—Hiking along the road that runs through the dreary brick outskirts of Düsseldorf out into the pleasant open country that rolls in green swells patched with timber between the smoky towns of the Ruhr, you pass slow-moving French ammunition carts, the horses led by short, blue-uniformed, quiet-faced Chinamen, their tin hats on the back of their heads, their carbines slung over their head. French cavalry patrols ride by. Two broad-faced Westphalian iron puddlers who are sitting under a tree and drawing their unemployment pay, watch the cavalry out of sight around a bend in the road.

I borrowed a match from one of the iron puddlers. They are Westphalians, hardheaded, hard-muscled, uncivil and friendly. They want to go snipe-shooting. The snipe have just come with the spring, but they haven't any shotguns. They laugh at the little Indo-Chinamen with their ridiculous big blue helmets on the back of their heads and they applaud one little Annamite who has gotten way behind the column and is trotting along to catch up, holding his horse's bridle with sweat running down his face, his helmet joggling down over his eyes. The little Annamite smiles happily.

Then at forty miles an hour in a sucking swirl of dust a French staff car goes by. Beside the hunched-down driver is a French officer. In the rear I get a glimpse of two civilians holding their hats on in the wind and another French officer. It is one of the personally conducted tours of the Ruhr. The two civilians are American ministers who have come to "investigate" the Ruhr occupation. The French are showing them around.

Personally conducted tours are a great feature of the Ruhr. The two gentlemen in the car are typical of the way it is done. They obtained a letter of introduction to General Dégoutté from Paris. They wanted to make a full and impartial investigation of the Ruhr occupation in order that they might return to America and give their churches the facts.

It is true they hadn't thought of this when they came to Europe, but the Ruhr was the big headline news and to be an authority on Europe when you returned to America you must have seen the Ruhr. If the Genoa Conference had been on they would have gone to Genoa and so on.

They are at Düsseldorf speaking a very little French and no German. The French were delightful to them. A staff car and two officers were placed at their disposal and they were told they could go anywhere they wanted. They didn't know much where they wanted to go so the French took them. At forty miles an hour they did the Ruhr in an afternoon. They saw towering mountains of coke, they saw great factories, they ascended the water tower and looked out over the valley.

"There," pointed a French officer, "are the steel works of Stinnes, there are those of Thyssen. Beyond you see the works of Krupp."

That night one of them said to me: "We've seen it all and I want to tell you right now that France is absolutely in the right. I tell you I never saw anything like it in my life before. I never saw such mines and factories in all my life. France did absolutely and un-ee-quivocally right to seize them. And let me tell you this thing is running like clockwork."

Next in point of amusement to the personally conducted tours in the Ruhr are the rival French and German press bureaus at the Hotel Kaiserhof in Essen. The French press officer is a large blond man who looks like the living picture of the conventional caricature of the German. On the other hand the German press officer who arrived at the Kaiserhof to give his thirty minutes of propaganda immediately after the French press officer had functioned, looked exactly like the caricatured Frenchman. Small, dark, concentrated-looking. Both sides freely distorted facts and furnished false news.

Sir Percival Phillips, of the Daily Mail, after he had been badly let down by a piece of French news he used which proved false the next day, said he would use no more of either press bureau's news without labeling it as from the press bureau. "My paper is pro-French," he said, "but it might not always be my paper, and I have a reputation as a journalist to sustain."

The French have a genius for love, war, making wine, farming, painting, writing and cooking. None of these accomplishments is particularly applicable to the Ruhr, except making war. The military end of the occupation has been carried out admirably. But to run this industrial heart of Germany, which has been pinched out and cut off by the military, requires business genius. Business genius is required to run it at all.

At the customs cordon which was designed to separate occupied from unoccupied Germany and yield tremendous revenue on taxes and duties, you see this spectacle: A long column of trucks on the occupied side of the imaginary line chained together, piled high with packages and goods, covered with tarpaulins, some of which had blown off. They have been standing there for weeks. The five douaniers or customs men have been too busy intercepting all goods to have time to search those they have held up. At the railroad siding there is a huge warehouse jammed to the rafters with held-up merchandise.

A fat movie operator comes up in a motorcar, taking propaganda pictures to show the people of France how well the occupation is going. He gets out of the car, sets up his camera and shouts instructions to the douaniers who have been sitting against the side of the shed smoking their pipes. They stir into action. The movie man shoots a long line of trucks, then the five douaniers each climb up the side of a truck and begin to pull packages out, rip them open, haul out the contents, put a chalk mark on the package and jam it back into the truck.

When he has enough footage the operator makes a note in his book, "Our Douaniers At Work In The Ruhr," shoves the book into his pocket, gets into the car, waves adieu to the long-suffering douaniers, who relapse back with their pipes against the wall of the shed.

I watched movies taken of coal being loaded. The same fat operator. An enormous pile of coal. Six workmen tore into the pile of coal. "Get a

move on," said the operator. "Show some action. You're not on strike. You're working." They worked at top speed.

"C'est fini," said the operator, stopping cranking.

The workmen straightened up. The movie man moved off. One workman looked up at the enormous mountain of coal.

"He's a pig. That's what he is, that cinema thing." His pal agreed.

Reaching down the first workman pulled out of his musette a bottle of good red French wine. They had a long drink.

The movie man was writing in his notebook, "Our Workers Loading Coal In The Ruhr."

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