

the devil. That surely would sap the strength of their ferocity. The fact that this turned out not to be the case made their dilemma all the more painful. It became clear as the war progressed that it was a war to the death. It was difficult to distinguish German from Nazi and required an effort to do so. Hitler could not achieve his astonishing successes without the passionate support of his people, people whose strength stemmed from a belief in their cause.



A Change in Lifestyles

It was not easy for Fritz to escape the pain that Germany's fate caused him. Quoting Goethe he noted down, 'My heart is full of affection for Germany. I have often felt bitter grief at the thought that the German people so estimable individually should be so despicable in the mass.'¹ But he had little time to reflect on his grief. His own life was taking a critical turn. He had only one cause to rejoice: the outbreak of war in September 1939 finally resolved the anxiety of whether or not he would be forced to return to Germany. With closed borders his only option was to stay in England.

In England he and Muschi were now in a new situation. They were no longer merely subject to the varying intensity of anti-German feeling; they had become enemy aliens. As such they had no idea what might be in store for them. They could not but feel very insecure, Muschi again living through anxiety during her second pregnancy and afraid that the emotions she was experiencing might adversely affect her baby.

More shocks were in store. Fritz, facing one disappointment after another as potential investors withdrew, finally decided to take action over the discord in the office. He did not trust one of his senior colleagues, whose position at B.T.L. was such that it was impossible to work properly without his loyal and reliable support. Fritz believed it was his duty to inform Schicht of his doubts. It was a mistake; Fritz had overestimated Schicht's loyalty to himself. A new row exploded over him. With accusations of slander flying through the air, Fritz,

angry and upset, offered Schicht his resignation, which was accepted.

Fritz's resignation had serious implications. Not only did it mean that he was without an income but also that he was threatened with homelessness. The tenancy of Highclere was part of his terms of employment with Schicht. Fortunately Schicht proved generous on this point and allowed the tenancy to be extended six months to enable Muschi to have her baby while Fritz was looking for alternative accommodation.

Through all this, despite the anger and disappointment he felt about the unhappy events at work, Fritz managed to maintain an optimistic view of life sustained by his belief in the integrity and fairness of the English. He wrote to an acquaintance of his, Mrs Ollemeier:

Meanwhile our friends are holding on to us in a wonderful way. The true humanity which I find practised so thoroughly in the personal sphere gives me hope that out of the present turmoil there must be created something better than we had before. So we shall pull through all right.

Our troubles such as they are, are exclusively in the spiritual field and we have reason to be grateful for good health and, let it be said, comparative economic security.

Of the 'spiritual troubles' more will be said later. Meanwhile 1939 came to an end. Fritz and Ivor Worsfold tried to salvage the B.T.L. idea but without success. War had obliged what potential investors they had to look elsewhere, and Ivor was soon called up to join His Majesty's Forces. Fritz tried to earn a little by writing articles. His care with money now proved useful, he had some savings to tide them over, though not enough to pay for Muschi's confinement when another son, John, was born on January 16th, 1940. He was forced to approach the doctor in charge and ask for a reduction in fees. The doctor generously agreed to halve the bill.

Early in the New Year a new threat appeared. Weybridge was suddenly declared an enemy protected area. That meant that Fritz had to leave the house within twenty-four hours to avoid arrest. He moved in with friends in London. He was very uneasy in hiding, particularly as his friend, a highly placed civil

servant, would be in serious trouble if it was discovered that he was sheltering an enemy alien.

Such loyal signs of friendship increased his confidence that he was on the side of right and that all would be well. It was not misplaced, for soon David Astor came to his rescue as the tenancy of Highclere came to an end and Muschi and the boys had to prepare to leave. Astor realized that Fritz would probably have to be content with a menial if not manual job for some time but that this would be an intolerable hardship for Fritz if he was devoid of any intellectual stimulation. His uncle, Robert Brand (later Lord Brand), had a beautiful estate in Eydon, Northamptonshire, which was a working farm, both arable and dairy. He needed farm hands and could offer them a tied cottage. This seemed to Astor the ideal solution. He was sure his uncle and Fritz would get on well, they had similar minds which thought on a grand scale and Brand had the sort of contacts which Fritz would find invaluable. He suggested a meeting.

Fritz had come across Brand before and had been impressed. It was in New York in November 1932, when Brand had given a lecture which Fritz had admired as much for its contents as for its delivery. He wrote to his parents afterwards that Brand had one of the best kinds of English brains. Meeting Brand face to face he felt that his first impression had not been wrong and it gave him added satisfaction that the admiration was mutual. David Astor had been right in his judgment and wrote to Fritz early in 1940:

Dear Fritz,

I want to compliment you *in writing!* on having such a long and successful talk with Old Brand. I regard him as the litmus paper for intelligence tests. You may not be given a medal for developing your mind, but I consider an afternoon's talk with Brand in office hours when you are less than thirty is an achievement in itself.

Yours respectfully,

David

Soon after this David Astor began to call Fritz 'professor'.

By June 1940 the job and Eydon Hall cottage were Fritz's.

It was something of a comedown after life at Highclere. The labourer's cottage was without gas or electricity, had only one tap inside, an outside lavatory and was very small. The bath tub in the kitchen had a wooden cover so that it could also be used as a table. There was no place for silver and crystal here. On forty-five shillings a week the Schumachers would have to learn a new way of life. They had an added burden of two extra mouths to feed. Two Jewish refugee girls had joined them, Caroline and Gina Ehrenzweig. Caroline, the older of the two, a capable and intelligent girl in her twenties, had studied at the same Froebel institute in Hamburg as Muschi.

Somehow the six of them crammed into the tiny cottage. Gina and Caroline were meant to help Muschi in return for their keep. Caroline, however, was not strong and before many days had passed was forced to take to her bed for what turned out to be almost a year. Fritz was also soon exhausted by the unaccustomed farm work. On his first day he was shocked at the leisurely pace of the other farm hands. They did not seem to have the first idea what hard work meant. Fritz thought he would show them and worked at twice the pace. After three days he collapsed exhausted. Physical work, he had discovered, could only be sustained at a steady, rhythmic pace. After that he learnt the pace from the other workers.

He did not have long to accustom himself to his new way of life. The fifth column activity which had led to Holland's collapse under Hitler's invasion in May 1940 had thrown the British authorities into panic. To prevent similar activities in Britain all Germans, whether Jew, communist, anti-Nazi or otherwise, were under suspicion and rounded up. Soon after arriving in Eydon Fritz too received an ominous rap on the door and was ordered to accompany the waiting officers. He was taken to a hurriedly erected internment camp on Prees Heath near Whitchurch on the borders of Shropshire and Wales, where he found himself with 1,400 other prisoners.

The first few weeks were terrible. It rained most of the time and the overcrowded tents were surrounded by mud. Fritz, whose health was never robust, succumbed immediately to the deprivations, the cold and the damp, and became extremely ill. The captain in charge of the camp was unfriendly and unsympathetic. 'The cemetery here is very beautiful,' he sneered as he

refused to transfer Fritz to the hospital tents for special treatment. Fritz had to fight against the feeling of depression that now took hold of him. He had three desperate worries: his health, Muschi's stamina, and his future in England. Past experience had told him that he could not rely on his health to stand up to the strain of his new conditions. The physical hardship and the emotional and mental anxiety that the camp imposed on its inmates were greater than anything he had gone through before; his health had let him down under less.

As for Muschi: he had left her with little money, cramped conditions, responsible for two refugees, one of them sick, as well as the two children, in an unfamiliar part of England without friends or acquaintances, and he could offer her no hope or consolation as to the length of their separation. He was not even sure whether he could hope for Brand to hold open his job and allow her to remain in the cottage to wait for his release. Soon he discovered Muschi's burden was even greater than he had imagined. Caroline's illness had taken a dangerous turn; she needed urgent medical help and nursing.

Yet these worries paled into insignificance when he thought about the greatest horror he might now face, that of deportation. Prees Heath was only a temporary camp; men were being sent away all over the world and to find himself on a boat to Australia or Canada was an unthinkable nightmare. Towards the end of July, when the immediate threat seemed to have passed and he was allowed to write to Muschi, he shared his fears with her.

The worst thing at this time has been the news of internees deported overseas. To leave England now would break my heart . . . The danger is over . . . We will be together again. No one will tear asunder the threads of my hope. Let us hold to England whatever happens to us. My motto: I will not leave you, then you will bless me. Will England understand me? . . . I can see my tasks more clearly than ever: Europe, a new Europe: Coming from England.

The nightmare of the first few weeks soon passed. As his health began to improve and news of Muschi reached him, with the reassurance that she would be allowed to stay at Eydon Hall cottage, his old optimism returned and he began to look on

this new experience as something positive. He discovered within himself strong inner resources which lifted him above the daily problem of living.

Dearest little wife,

Today at last, on the birthday of the great Goethe, who was never interned, the sun is shining again after a long period of bad weather. The sun is everything. The night was evil and cold, but the sun dispels much. I am sorry that I had to miss yesterday (Christian's birthday). Let us continue to be patient. The children will grow, the course of the war will improve even if I am sitting behind barbed wire. As long as you do not lose courage and maintain your confidence. One day the nightmare will have dreamed itself out. For most of that small minority of highly strung people to which I belong, internment means unbelievable and unimaginable hardship. But I have established with satisfaction that I, on the other hand, have reserves of strength to which others do not have access. My inner holding is such that most people assume that I am completely untouched by everything, so far as it concerns me. This is good. You would be amazed to see what a marvellous reputation I enjoy here in the camp. As the old and the ill recently left for the Isle of Man, many of them told me of their sincere high esteem. You see, even if you live like a dog, nevertheless you still don't live like a dog. This time will be useful to us later on. What does not kill us makes us stronger . . . Apart from this I am trying to uphold peace and unity in the camp. I think I am succeeding well which represents quite a service to the community. I have the reputation here of having the motto: I have never met a man I didn't like.

But I love you.

Fritz

Fritz's 'motto', which he had seen on the gravestone of the famous American cowboy, William Rogers, on his trip across America, at first elicited nothing but ridicule from his fellow internees. 'How can you say that you like that man over there?' someone jeered, pointing at an internee who had made himself particularly obnoxious. Fritz went over to the man in question

and after a few minutes' conversation discovered that the burden of grief the man was carrying over a lost son was such that Fritz could find nothing but sympathy for him. 'Once you discover a man is human, however outwardly disgusting,' he explained later, 'then, of course, you like him.'

It was not always easy to recognize the human element in the internees or their captors. In the degrading squalor of the camp many men sank to less than human behaviour. The internees were an unbelievably mixed bag, not only professionally and socially but also in their attitude to England and the war. The internment policy had picked up prisoners indiscriminately, regardless of whether they were anti-Nazi like Fritz, Jews and communists fleeing persecution, or fervent Nazis. There could be no unity amongst the prisoners with such differing attitudes.

Amongst such a diverse group Fritz had a tremendous stroke of luck. He found himself in a tent with a man named Kurt Naumann. Naumann was a large and energetic man who had been an active communist and anti-Nazi worker in Germany until he had found himself on one of the Nazi blacklists of wanted men and had escaped into Czechoslovakia. In Czechoslovakia he had left the Communist Party, disillusioned by a lack of humaneness about it and had joined the New Beginning branch of the Socialists. When the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia and he found his enemies again on his heels, he and his wife Hanna fled, eventually finding refuge in England.

Naumann and Fritz were united in their disgust at camp conditions and together set about organizing camp life in a more tolerable and humane way. On his birthday, August 16th (for which Muschi sent him the inappropriately worded telegram 'Many Happy Returns'), Fritz was elected camp leader with Naumann as his deputy. They began their reforms at the most basic and essential level, organizing the men into sanitary squads and forbidding indiscriminate urination around the camp. The cooking was reorganized so that the daily diet of herrings was served in more imaginative ways. Fritz entered into negotiations with the captain to prevent the pilfering of the men's food parcels by his staff and clothes were obtained for those in need. There were a hundred and one tasks to be seen to. Fritz had never been so absorbed in non-intellectual

tasks in his life and it was an eye-opening experience. He wrote to Muschi at the beginning of September:

I am keeping quite well. My position, without any rights and with plenty of duties, is very difficult, but good training. My method of 'ruling' which is based on human kindness and persuasion, seems somewhat strange to the 'military mind'. But with so much misery about I am convinced it is the only method. I wonder how long they will deny us any rights whatsoever. About my release ... I beg you to be very patient, like me. A few days don't matter, a few weeks won't matter, and even months shall not matter. At present we are quite unimportant. It is only the big fight that matters. If we are the forgotten men, it won't be for long. And when we shall emerge again we shall be stronger and better, we shall be more convincing for what we have stood through, for our faith, our ideals which are beyond the might of men to corrupt. Then there is peace in my mind. There is all the hope and confidence in the world. Whatever the British are doing to us now, as long as they win I shall be satisfied.

Several days later he added: 'I am learning a great deal: how to deal with many different types of men, how to smooth over difficulties arising between them, how to be just, impartial, generous and patient. It is a hard school but a good one, and I am making some progress.'

Fritz's hard work was not without its rewards for not only did he win the respect of the men but also eventually that of the captain. It brought him together too with other like-minded men in the camp, particularly refugees who had been working in Oxford before their arrest, among them a respected economist called Frank Burchardt, who worked at the Oxford Institute of Statistics. There were opportunities for lively and stimulating conversations after all, although none as illuminating as those he held with Naumann.

By profession Naumann was a communicator, a journalist and writer, well able to put across his passionately held left-wing convictions. Fritz was immediately captivated. At Oxford, when so many of his fellow students had been left-wing, Fritz had stuck to the liberal traditions of his middle-class

German background. Naumann was the first full-blooded Marxist he had listened to seriously, and he found the experience a profound eye-opener. It was as though the scales fell from his eyes and his education had at last begun.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines 'university' as: 'Educational Institution designed for instruction or examination or both of students in all or many of the more important branches of learning.' Fritz had had little sense of being instructed in the more important branches of learning while at university. But there at Prees Heath he felt that he was at last being educated. This was his real university. Instead of feeling hopeless and powerless in the situation in which he found himself, he rose with new strength. Marx made sense of it all. Marx explained the political and the social upheavals in terms of economic status and economic activity. Here were ideas that needed to be studied in depth. Suddenly Fritz could see how he had failed to take proper account of the political dimension of the economic issues which had concerned him. Poverty and plenty, oppression and justice were put into a new perspective by Marx's penetrating analysis.

As Fritz learnt from Naumann, Marxist analysis came to life around him. Prees Heath was a microcosm of the ideas Marx had put forward: the oppression and exploitation of the masses of prisoners by a few captors. Fritz's intellectual and academic mind was exposed to the realities of life. He had always been an elitist, mixing by virtue of his birth and intelligence with the intellectual aristocracy; and he saw as he mixed with the men that although he was a prisoner without rights or status, he was still privileged and that others had far harder deprivations. He was conscious of his experience and was grateful for all that he was learning. When he was released from Prees Heath, he came out not as a man emerging from the hard conditions and pressures that go with the deprivation of liberty, but as though he was returning from a stimulating seminar, on fire with new ideas and new visions. He left Prees Heath invigorated, released from a torpor which had gripped him in the years leading up to the war when the plight of his country descending ever deeper into madness had robbed him of real creativity.

The main frustration Fritz had to face while still in the camp

was being able to do little to speed up his release. He had to leave that in Muschi's hands. The wheels of bureaucracy moved slowly and only the cases of men urgently needed for the war effort were given priority. Fritz saw that the reasons for release could be bizarre. A small Japanese prisoner was released very quickly. The camp had buzzed with excitement: 'What was so special about him?' He turned out to be an expert on sexing day-old chicks, apparently an indispensable part of war-time agriculture.

Fritz wanted his own release to be on grounds of his expertise. Much as he wished to be a free man he dreaded being released on health grounds. He had to gain freedom on his merits not his weaknesses. Muschi kept him informed about her efforts on his behalf. She had rapidly contacted all their friends and acquaintances after Fritz's arrest and they soon set the ball rolling towards his release. Among the first were Harold Scott and Alexander Paterson for whom Fritz had acted as interpreter in 1935 at the Prison Governors' conference. Both proved loyal friends. Paterson visited Fritz as soon as he was able. His report to Muschi renewed her courage.

I visited his camp on Saturday afternoon, and he and his colleagues gave me an excellent cup of coffee, and we sat outside the tent and had a good talk. Thanks to the fresh air and the excellent weather we have had in the past weeks, he looks very much better, having more colour in his face than I have ever seen before. You know his spirit, and so it is hardly necessary for me to tell you that he is as brave and cheerful about it as any man could be in the circumstances.

Paterson, himself a prison governor and one of the most significant penal reformers of his time, willingly added his voice to those pressing for Fritz's release, which included Lord and Lady Astor and Harold Scott. Scott's support was crucial. He was shortly to be knighted for his services as Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Home Security and his influence hastened the consideration of Fritz's case. Also vital was Brand's assurance to the authorities that as an agricultural worker Fritz was urgently required for the war effort. All hands were needed for the harvest.

It took just over three months before Fritz was released from internment. Back in Eydon he was a free man but if he wanted to visit London or anywhere else beyond the boundaries of Banbury, permission had to be obtained from the police. He was still an enemy alien. The villagers greeted him as such. Most of Eydon had not seen Fritz before his arrest and had built up a picture in their minds of a strong, blond, Nordic type of German. They were unprepared for a tall, dark and thin man who still looked like a boy, and the rumour quickly spread that Fritz was a spy who was being hidden at Eydon Hall cottage. Even when this rumour was laid to rest, feeling against the Schumacher family ran high. As they walked down the high street to do their shopping, doors closed and notices appeared - 'no Germans'. Only one shopkeeper, Mr Tyrell, had the courage to serve them. Not even the presence of Caroline and Gina reassured the angry villagers that Fritz and Muschi were not enemies. One night there was a noisy commotion outside the cottage; then stones pelted the windows and villagers armed with pitchforks and other offensive weapons began to shout outside. Fritz, after the patient and long-suffering stand he had taken at Prees Heath, was enraged. He tore open his front door and bellowed into the darkness, swearing and using every term of abuse that he could think of, both colloquial and Shakespearean. The villagers retreated but the hostility continued. The 'battle of Eydon', as Fritz called it, had not yet been won. It was only when Brand called a public meeting that the fears of the local people were finally allayed and Fritz and Muschi at last began to enjoy their country life. Christian found friends in the village, Muschi found help, and it came to be the happiest time of their lives. Muschi's warmth elicited a response in many people, and where Fritz was admired for his brains, she was loved for her personality.

Eydon was also ideal for children. Christian was, in Fritz's words, 'a human dynamo'. He was always bursting with energy, roaring about the place, noisy, wild and demanding, followed about by John whose agility combined with Christian's force to make them like a couple of little monkeys, never out of mischief. Fritz's greatest pleasure was to observe the development of their minds. He wrote them little verses, in-

vented games which always had plenty of intellectual content but he also rejoiced in their uninhibited and lively ways. He had no intention of submitting his children to the formality of his own childhood and wanted them to have as much freedom as possible. Later the boys became quite unruly and Muschi found that she was unable to handle them at all. Unable to impose discipline herself, she found little help from Fritz, who defended the children to anyone who complained and then retired into his study away from the battlefield. But at Eydon their freedom was complete and both parents delighted in it.

Despite the initial antagonism in Eydon, Fritz soon made his way amicably with his work mates. Soon after his arrival a farm girl asked him his name. 'Fritz,' he replied. 'Ooh, we can't call you that,' she tittered, 'we'd better call you James.' So James he became, working alongside the others gathering in harvest, seeing to the cows, making silage, building and repairing walls and fences, and learning all the time. The fresh air and the physical labour soon had its effect and the improvement in his health at Prees Heath was consolidated and it at last took a turn for the better. The delicate youth was turning into a reasonably robust man. But he still looked ridiculously young and once, when Muschi opened the door to a villager and he asked for her son, it took her a few moments to realize that the caller must mean her husband. Only his prematurely lined brow hinted that the boyish looks belonged to a husband and father.

Fritz spent eighteen months at Eydon Hall farm. Unexpectedly, as Prees Heath had done, it turned out to be a break for him - an important formative experience. He remarked on this in a letter to Werner von Simson when the time came for him to leave Eydon, wondering whether he was taking a step in the right direction.

I am sorry to leave Eydon. I should much rather be a farmer than an economist. The trouble is that I am not a farmer (and have no farm) but an economist. I have the reputation of being unorthodox and even a bit of a crank, which I hope, will enable me to combine the life of a farmer with the work of an economist. At any rate, it seems that Eydon will turn

out as having been not merely an episode but a turning point.

Fritz had too active a mind to be able to toil away at his tasks without thinking and his spell at Eydon also turned out to be one of the most productive periods of his life. He worked late into the night on economic ideas, studied Marxism and corresponded extensively with his friends, particularly David Astor, Werner von Simson, and, to a lesser extent, Ivor Worsfold. On the farm he was unable to undertake a task without subjecting it to rigorous thought and sometimes rigorous reorganization. He was glad when Brand asked him for his comments on the way the farm was being run and confidently gave his opinions, criticizing farm policy freely. Brand was receptive to Fritz's ideas, but the other farm hands were less impressed by the intellectual in their midst. They dug their heels in firmly when Fritz came around asking awkward questions and making suggestions. As winter came he noticed that the appalling stench of the silage repulsed even the hungry cows. When he compared the Ministry of Agriculture instructions to the methods used by the men on the farm he found that they did not correspond.

'Why don't you do it the way they say in these pamphlets?' he asked. 'We have always done it like this,' came the reply. Such answers explained a great deal. There were other similar experiences. 'For the last few weeks', he wrote to Brand, 'I have been rebuilding walls that the frost brought down ... I couldn't help wondering why the walls here should keep falling down, as I have seen walls in Italy, for example, which had outlasted two thousand years.' By asking a few more questions he soon discovered that the men did not mix enough cement into the mortar. Their reason was that cement cost too much and that anyway it was far more laborious to rebuild walls built with better cement. Fritz wrung his hands at this logic. 'Why worry about rebuilding walls in two thousand years' time?' he asked.

Observations such as these led him to some inescapable conclusions about the future of British agriculture. He believed that the secret of success lay not in the solution of technical problems such as soil fertility, the price of labour, capital

availability and other such criteria. The key factor lay in the quality of the farmers themselves. He wrote to Brand:

For generations there has been going on a process of 'negative selection'. The best have left the land and the dullest stayed behind. The rural population of today strikes me as less enterprising, less adaptable, less efficient, less methodical than the town population. But farming needs people who are enterprising, adaptable, efficient and methodical.

His general suggestions on how to improve farming were in line with an acceptable economic approach and reflected his newly acquired left-wing ideas. He believed that agriculture was being impoverished because it required too much capital to farm properly. What future could a young, intelligent person hope for in farming when he needed at least two to three thousand pounds in order to set himself up? Without such capital his prospects were dim: life-long poverty as an agricultural labourer.

Twenty years later, reflecting on the same theme, albeit capital shortage of a far more extreme nature in places like India, his diagnosis of the flight from the land and the impoverishment of rural life remained fundamentally the same, but the solutions he offered were very different. Then he was to recommend scaling down agricultural equipment to make it accessible to the ordinary man. In 1941 he discarded any suggestion of establishing a system of smallholdings because the cost needed to equip even a small farm would be beyond the ordinary man. His solution was almost exactly the opposite. Politically he found it unacceptable that large areas of land should be concentrated in a few hands passed down through generations of rich landowners; economically direct redistribution did not make sense. The answer lay in the intervention of the state, as he wrote to Brand.

If the state were to become the owner of a substantial part of the land, (say one third), it could create a substantial number of senior positions of foreman, state bailiff, local organiser, area supervisor, etc. The most humble labourer on the land would know that he could apply for a rise into

such a position. There would be something *to go for* ... Many excellent arguments have been adduced for some measure of land nationalisation. They all point to the improvements which could be realised by a more centralised control. But the decisive argument - to my mind - is the human argument. The state and only the state, could make agriculture into a career.

The 'flight from the land' is a problem that is agitating many governments. The first inclination of the legislator is to put obstacles in the way of those who desire to leave or to bribe them into staying ... But I should think rather than tying the rural population to the land, governments should aim at bringing townspeople into the country. Agriculture needs fresh blood.