

I MARRIED A NAZI!

Marching Shadow of Hitler Darkens U. S. Girl's Strange Honeymoon

WALKING HOME after the tea at which the uniformed Nazi had lectured all the guests, my spirits were low. Karl had been so unnecessarily brusque when I suggested leaving early; he had been flat with his command that I remain quiet until all the others were ready to go.

He was not happy, either. Perhaps he was remorseful. When all the anger within him had burned out he spoke wearily. "We should never have come together to Germany," he said. Silently I echoed the sentiment. The thought made a bond between us.

As Christmas approached I began to look forward to pleasant things. But I was to learn that this season, too, had its political significance in the Reich.

There is an ancient holiday celebrated on the day of the winter solstice. In prehistoric days the Teutons marked it by bonfires on the mountain tops, so that from one end of their country to the other there was a chain of light. This festival has been adapted to Nazi purposes.

In Hamburg the celebration took place in the park near our little apartment. With true Germanic efficiency the plans were made. All day long the brown-shirted Storm Troopers piled up brush and boxes and lumber, and by nightfall there was a woodpile—a great thirty-foot cube—waiting. And near it was a speaker's stand draped in the red and black of the Nazi régime.

Promptly at 8 p. m. we heard the steady, familiar tramp of marching troops in the Eppendorferlandstrasse. In perfect formation they moved into the park, where each company took its appointed place about the pyre. Behind them the space was quickly filled in by civilian spectators.

Then the speaker's stand was illuminated, and new marchers came and were given place still closer than the troops to the anticipated bonfire. These were the Hitler Youth, boys and girls, being caught young for training in the ideals of the Nazis. They carried lighted torches.

The assembly was now complete, and the speaker stepped forward and saluted. Without delay he launched into his speech. He was like every other orator I had heard in Germany. His syllables fell with machine-like precision in the beginning, but as he warmed up he worked himself into a frenzy; phrases ripped with harsh clarity through the loud-speakers: "German honor—the fatherland—mein Fuehrer—peace through

By
MARGARET PORTER REINKE
(Copyright: 1939: The Chicago Tribune.)

● The author of this story became the bride of Karl Reinke, a German. When she first met him on an ocean voyage he was a resident of the West Indies, tolerant and charming. They visited the homes of each other's families, and in 1937 they were married in Miami and went to Haiti to live. Later Karl gave up his business connections in the West Indies and the couple journeyed to Germany for a belated honeymoon. It was after their arrival in Germany that Karl began to subscribe to the Nazi creed. Rapidly he fell under the spell of Hitlerism, and just as rapidly he became irked with his bride's American ways. The shadow of Nazism between them became an ominous cloud when one day at a party a harangue by a Nazi official provoked a protest on the part of Mrs. Reinke.

a deliberate drill. With torches aloft they intoned a rhythmic chant. In perfect formation they executed the simple maneuvers of the exhibition. And when they had finished they went back to their original station to a huge burst of applause. It was a triumph of regimentation.

But not even Germany can quite conquer Christmas. The stores through the shopping season had a huge trade. Some one told me that buying was heavy because the Germans didn't know when or how their funds would be confiscated, and preferred to have tangible goods rather than cash. This doubtless was exaggeration. It seemed to me that even Hamburg was

photographs of German scenes, and similar articles. The family had taken a hint, too, I suppose, for their gifts were practical—tablecloths, napkins, towels, etc., in a varied assortment. For me it was like a bridal shower.

If it hadn't been for the carp the day would have been perfect (in Germany Christmas eve is the festive day). Carp is the traditional Christmas dish; Germans have it just as every American, if he can, has turkey for Thanksgiving. One of the big, fat blue fish was aboil on the Reinke stove when we arrived, and when dinner was served it made a brave show on the table.

But carp is oily and rich and filled with myriads of bones. I tried to consume my share, if only to show my appreciation of Mother Reinke's cooking. I failed. I choked on the bones, and the richness of the fish made me ill. My dear mother-in-law saw my distress and insisted that I cease trying to be an experienced carp eater, to which I said a fervent amen.

After that all was joyous. Karl was happier than I had seen him since the Haitian days, and I reflected his mood. He was so carried away by his spirits that he arranged to give a New Year's eve party in the best coffee house in Hamburg.

That one wasn't so successful. First, Karl was disgruntled when he discovered that the prices had been doubled for that evening. Instead of the good orchestra we had expected there was only a jazz band. Further, the patrons nearly all spent the evening growing constantly more intoxicated, and ended by joining arms and singing lustily.

It was fun for them, but Karl was disgusted, disdainful of this vulgar merrymaking. He grew more dignified as the others stepped up their hilarity. Looking back, I think that he was



Skiers at rest at a Bavarian mountain winter resort.



Hitler greeted with bouquets.

strength." Iteration and reiteration; the same old propaganda. And the same result as always—the cheers of the crowd. How they reverberated "Sieg heil!" and "Heil Hitler!"

As the bonfire was touched off the crowd sang. It was impressive, this scene in a Hamburg park, especially when one knew that in a thousand German towns the same thing was happening. The flames leaped up, reached a peak, died down, and none of the figures in uniform, whether children or adults, had moved.

Only when the pyre was nothing but embers was immobility ended. The Hitler Girls, in brown jackets, black skirts, and low-heeled shoes, stepped out in

touched, as Chicago always is, by the spirit of the season.

Certainly my husband's relatives regarded that spirit with appreciation. Gifts were piled high when we reached the Reinke home on Christmas eve. All the family were there, even Friedrich, who had come down from Berlin. Else and Mother and Father Reinke vied in their welcome. Then Else lighted the tree and we all went to work sorting the packages.

Every one was well remembered, but my pile of presents was by far the largest. By agreement Karl and I bought each other things we could use in the home we would have back in America—silver napkin rings, a leather desk folder, a book of

always the aloof spectator, the introvert, when enthusiasm was in order. His aloofness, perhaps, was only timidity. He seemed actually pained when I made the slightest faux pas socially.

One day in January we had been invited to Aunt Anna's for dinner. We arrived early and were chatting in the comfortable parlor when some one turned on the radio. An English voice was heard. It informed us that in one minute we would be listening to the President of the United States addressing the congress.

Sitting close beside the old radio with its lace cover, I heard that voice and realized more than ever how terribly homesick I was. Perhaps any American voice would have carried me back to a country so different from Germany; a bright land, filled with spontaneity, gaiety, a pioneering spirit, and (best of all) individuality and freedom.

Courage returned. When the dinner bell rang I asked Aunt Anna's permission to listen just a little longer to the broadcast. She and Uncle Adolph consented smilingly and went with Karl and Else into the dining room. In a few minutes I joined them, but the plates had been served and passed and Karl gave me a disapproving look.

Later when we were alone he lectured me severely. "It was



(Acme photo.)

The Nazis stage a dramatic, colorful night ceremony in Berlin.

a stunt," he said, "an American stunt. It should not be tolerated here in Germany. This is my country. Must you put me in a bad light with my relatives just because you are homesick? You are selfish, utterly selfish."

To me it did not seem a serious lapse from good manners, and I am sure the good aunt and uncle understood, but I apologized to Karl and agreed to "stunt" no more. Karl never forgot the incident.

There were times that winter of 1937-'38 when life was good. Once, I remember, Karl took me out on the balcony under a million stars and said lovely things about our marriage and our future in America. I could only believe in his sincerity.

Again we became comrades on a Sunday excursion to the Harburg forest. Untouched by the world's tribulation, by our differences of viewpoints, we tramped through the snow in the silence of the pine trees. I was no longer afraid; it seemed that my individuality had returned and that Karl was willing to let me have it.

After we returned to Hamburg the vague fear was to return.

I was pleased in mid-February when my husband proposed a trip to the Bavarian Alps. Preparations were all made and the tickets were bought. Then Karl caught influenza. Day after day the fever held on. The doctor, efficient and casual, came and went. "A little more time, a little more time," was his only comment.

Karl was very ill. He could take no food but fruit juices and the thin soups his mother made for him with her own hands. The nursing was constant, and I did my share, but I fear Else and Mother Reinke were far more efficient than I.

One night, after washing the dishes, I went into the sickroom. The doctor, Else, and her mother were there, watching and talking softly in German. Suddenly I was cold and frightened and alone. I was not needed there. The three there were experienced and wise; they belonged, and they were needed. I was only a helpless outlander who could not even speak the native tongue of my husband.

I did not belong there at all. But one morning the fever was gone. Karl was going to get well. I buried my head in the quilt and wept. His thin hand reached out and touched me. "I am happy, too," he said. "I love you . . . so much . . . geliebte."

It was the end of February, and the sun shone brightly that day. But a new cloud was looming. Hitler the Fuehrer was calling Schuschnigg of Austria to Berchtesgaden for a conference. We had no idea what was in store for us or for Austria.

Laboriously the little train chugged into Mittenwald in the Bavarian Alps. It was late afternoon of a March day in 1938. A few minutes later we were comfortably installed in the pension of Frau Hoffman, where advance reservations had been made; a delightful haven, with comfortable beds and plentiful food excellently cooked.

Mittenwald, a center for win-

(Continued on page eight.)

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