



# The Amenities of Industry and Labour in Germany

by

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*In an article recently published in this Review, the part played by the German Labour Front under the Order of 24 October 1934 was explained by Dr. Geck. This author indicated, among other measures which have been taken by that Organisation in the fulfilment of its duties, the creation of the Office for Beauty in Work, the object of which is "to enable the worker to enjoy his work by performing it in beautiful and healthy surroundings". In the article below, Mr. Steinwarz studies in detail the working of this office, of which he is deputy-director. He demonstrates the steps which have been taken (in collaboration with the 33 district branches) to help undertakings by recommendations and advice to transform their buildings within and without; he also explains the operation of various workers' welfare activities.*

**I**NDUSTRY throughout the world developed so rapidly that in course of time men's minds became preoccupied with production and machinery to the virtual exclusion of other considerations. Little or no attention was paid to the environment or the working conditions of the men and women who were responsible for production and for the maintenance of the machinery. In some countries isolated attempts were made to escape from this attitude and a few undertakings and their managements realised that satisfactory solutions for human-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. "New Trends in Social Policy in Germany", by Dr. L. H. A. GECK, in *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, July 1937.

factor problems in production and in the world of machinery were closely connected with the question of the efficiency of an undertaking. Cleanliness and orderliness, beauty and art, efficiency and quality are factors which cannot be entirely separated from each other in industrial life any more than they can in other fields of human activity. It was therefore not a pure chance that during the years of depression the undertakings that were above the average in the quality of their products and in the degree of social care for their workers survived the storm more satisfactorily than others with lower standards in these respects.

Common sense demands healthy and decent working conditions—a proposition that does not require proof. But such conditions cannot be achieved unless employers and employed are prepared to work hand in hand for the wellbeing of the undertaking. Conflicting views of any kind, whether arising out of class hatred, dissatisfaction with wages, or any other cause, preclude any possibility of satisfying these requirements.

It is only since 1933 that Germany has been able to take steps in this direction without the help of legislative measures. Indeed what is understood in Germany by the term "beauty in work" (*Schönheit der Arbeit*) can never be laid down by legislation; it must be a moral obligation for the management and employees of every undertaking.

Legislative provisions can never be more than minimum requirements with which an employer must comply before he can set up or carry on his business. The law cannot ensure that the mechanism on which it insists is kept in good order and given a certain beauty of form, and it certainly cannot impose on the employer or the employees any moral obligations beyond the scope of the legislative text. It is in this sense that the leaders of German undertakings and their followers have understood the concept of the beauty of labour.<sup>1</sup>

The extent of their endeavours to apply the principle of beauty to industry and labour can best be shown by figures. Since National Socialism came into power in Germany more than 500 million RM. have been spent on improvements in industrial undertakings in accordance with this principle.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "leader of the undertaking" and "followers" are used in Germany to indicate the relationship of loyalty, somewhat similar to that between a feudal overlord and his vassals, which should exist between employers and workers in the "works community".

This expenditure included the following items :

1. External appearance of the undertaking :	RM.
(a) Structural appearance of the undertaking	92,348,950
(b) Gateways and surrounding ground	2,581,223
(c) Grass and trees in the courtyard	2,935,610
(d) Open-air places of assembly	394,832
2. Internal appearance of the undertaking :	
(a) Improved workrooms	94,103,812
(b) Natural lighting (windows)	2,396,420
(c) Artificial lighting	4,528,213
(d) Ventilation	3,967,444
(e) Dust-removing plant	2,449,000
(f) Washing accommodation	20,976,872
(g) Changing rooms	10,246,472
(h) Lavatories	3,620,400
(i) Bicycle stands	1,728,744
3. Social and educational institutions :	
(a) Halls for meetings and entertainments	9,737,428
(b) Canteens and recreation rooms	10,603,294
(c) Clubs	19,183,020
(d) Holiday homes	1,856,822
(e) First-aid rooms	510,224
(f) Roof gardens and balconies	434,517
(g) Children's playgrounds	97,100
(h) Installation of loud-speakers	1,482,900
(i) Works libraries	454,228
(j) Works dwellings	25,296,824
4. Sports :	
(a) Sports equipment and playing fields	1,328,745
(b) Gymnasiums	520,346
(c) Outdoor swimming baths	1,428,776
(d) Indoor swimming baths	40,328
5. Miscellaneous improvements	48,786,253

Total	RM. 364,038,797
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6. The expenditure on village improvements cannot yet be completely determined.

As is well known, Germany passed through several years of severe economic depression before 1933. More than 7 million workers had been reduced to unemployment. The first essential therefore was to restore order in German economic and social life ; and the fact that immediate steps were taken at the same time to spread the idea of the beauty of labour is the best possible proof of the extent to which National Socialism appreciated the importance and justification of this movement. Otherwise, not a single head of an undertaking in Germany would have been

prepared to spend anything in this direction. It will be necessary to consider first of all the fundamental improvements that had to be made in order to remove the most glaring defects and shortcomings in German industrial undertakings.

Orderliness and cleanliness were the two fundamental requirements with which every undertaking could be required to comply. Workplaces had accordingly to be tidied up, and rubbish removed from the undertaking itself and the ground surrounding it. The various workrooms were taken one after another; the lighting and ventilation were improved, the paint-work was renewed, and machines were changed or replaced by new ones. Above all, attention was devoted to washing rooms, bathrooms, changing rooms and lavatories, which had been particularly neglected up to that time. The next step was to improve the surroundings of the factory—the courtyard, the frontage, the entrance gates, and finally, the approaches. It was only when those elementary requirements had been fulfilled—and there are now large numbers of undertakings in Germany in which they are fulfilled—that a number of wider problems could be tackled, such as the establishment of settlements and works dwellings, instruction in keeping these dwellings in good condition, the payment of wages at fortnightly or monthly intervals, etc.

The various tasks to be undertaken may be classified in two main groups: (1) artistic and architectural; (2) technical and hygienic. Architectural requirements in particular had been extraordinarily neglected in the erection of factories.

A factory was always thought of as something dingy and dismal, and the idea of making the building artistic was unheard of. Inside the factory questions of taste were ignored. Not only was the tasteful arrangement of workplaces or of the so-called welfare rooms neglected; it was considered as an unnecessary expense for the undertaking. The worker therefore found himself in an environment which stamped him more and more as a proletarian, where he could not wear decent clothes because of the risk of having them covered with dirt; he went to work unwillingly, arriving in a mood of depression and looking forward the whole day to leaving work in the evening. In such circumstances it was naturally impossible to expect any cultural development among the workers.

In this field also, the Office for Beauty in Work (*Amt Schönheit der Arbeit*) has done much to bring about improve-

ments, firstly, by taking over buildings planned in its own architect's office, and secondly, by preparing models of furniture, crockery, glasses, lighting, fittings, etc. In this way, the artistic appearance of German undertakings is slowly but surely being improved. There is no need to discuss here the results which this may have in the development of handicrafts, manufacturing industry and trade.

The situation was similar with regard to technical and hygienic equipment. In this direction also all that existed was a certain amount of legislation which was carried out as a minimum requirement but which could not affect the appearance of the equipment in question. It will suffice to mention the questions of ventilation and of good lighting in undertakings (to which further reference will be made later); means of combating smoke, rust, and dust; and the general fittings of the factory.

In all these matters the first point was to win over the leaders of the undertakings and their followers and to interest them in improving their workplaces. With the help of the German Labour Front and the Strength through Joy Organisation (*Kraft durch Freude*), branches of which exist throughout the whole of Germany, general propaganda was made which applied to all undertakings and was carried on by means of such slogans as: "Fight Noise"; "Pure Air in the Workplace"; "Good Lighting means Good Work", etc. New and modern methods of propaganda and organisation led to the extensive results which may be observed in Germany to-day. The improvement in lighting may be taken as an example.

When the Office for Beauty in Work began to investigate German undertakings in 1934 it found that in general the conditions of natural and of artificial lighting were far from satisfactory. It appeared that no one had taken a real interest in the question of lighting in German undertakings before 1933, although legislative provisions existed on the subject which, naturally, could not enforce more than a certain minimum. On the other hand, scientists and engineers had collected a large amount of experience and information concerning proper lighting. Unfortunately, the absence of any adequate means of propaganda and organisation prevented such persons from placing their experience and knowledge at the disposal of those who really required it—namely, persons engaged in industry. It is true that the scientists and experts had kept each other

informed of their progress in technical journals and technical articles, but the effect in practice had been small.

The Office for Beauty in Work therefore brought theory and practice together by setting up a committee in each district, consisting of representatives of the two groups, including economists, industrialists, craftsmen, etc. This committee began its work of propaganda and organisation in accordance with principles laid down by the Central Office for Beauty in Work. The work was immediately taken up in various undertakings and reports were made on lighting conditions. These provided further valuable material for the scientist in the light of which he could develop his theories. Great improvements were made in natural and artificial lighting during the last three years. Under the slogan "Good Lighting means Good Work" it was possible not only to improve conditions in undertakings but also to influence the crafts and the various associations and organisations which had previously worked in isolation in connection with this subject. The following conclusions were reached :

(1) It is absolutely essential to set up unbiased advisory bodies on the technical aspects of lighting in every German city. These bodies should help every industrialist and every housewife to obtain advice as to the methods of lighting which are most suitable for an industrial undertaking or a private house.

(2) The development of handicrafts in connection with electricity must be encouraged even more actively than hitherto.

(3) Speeches and pictures are not sufficient to spread this idea of good lighting throughout German industry. An educational film with the title "Light" was therefore prepared giving information as to satisfactory methods of lighting. A few days after it was first shown in Frankfort on Main applications for the film were received from six foreign countries, and it has now been shown in practically every city in Europe.

The work in favour of satisfactory lighting will be continued on an extensive scale through the winter of 1937-1938 and throughout the coming year so as to ensure that an increasing number of associations and organisations keep the problem in mind, and, in particular, that handicrafts are enabled to develop in this field.

The situation with regard to noise was much the same. In the course of time people had got used to workers becoming

more or less deaf after ten or twenty years in a noisy undertaking. The attitude adopted was : it is very sad, but it is an inevitable consequence of the work and nothing can be done about it. But something *can* be done about it. In the first place, it is possible to transfer a worker to another department after he has spent a certain time in a noisy section, and it is also possible to improve working processes and thus deal with the evil at its root. Here again, a number of successful experiments have been made and the results will shortly be made public.

One of the most neglected questions was, and still is, the general equipment of the factory. Anyone who knows how little interest was taken in the fitting-up not only of workrooms but also of lavatory and washing accommodation and changing rooms will realise the difficulties that had to be overcome in order to change the attitude of manufacturing industry and the crafts. Many improved fittings have now been developed, but they were produced only as the result of constant insistence on the need for good, cheap, appropriate equipment. Collaboration with industry and the crafts was necessary before new forms could be evolved. In this way new types of washing fountains and washing troughs were produced, and certainly there is still room for improvement in this direction. For fifty years no attention whatever had been paid to the development or improvement of equipment of this type.

For years, and indeed for decades, nobody had raised any objection to the fact that workers were provided merely with a cupboard measuring  $30 \times 30 \times 165$  centimetres for their clothes—a size that made it impossible for them to use a coat hanger. The improvements made in such matters of equipment show that a systematic effort has been made to deal with even very minor items. It is, after all, not entirely unimportant to provide adequate accommodation for the worker's clothes. He has to pay for his clothes out of his wages, and therefore he should be enabled to save them and protect them as far as possible in the undertaking so that they shall not wear out unreasonably soon.

It is naturally impossible within the scope of this article to deal with all the aspects of the question. It may be possible to deal with some of them in a later article.

In addition to the central Office for Beauty in Work, situated in Berlin, there are branches in the 33 districts of Germany, each under the guidance of a correspondent. The

correspondents are assisted by a certain number of collaborators, some of whom are paid while others have honorary duties. They pave the way for the spread throughout their areas of the idea of beauty in the workplace. The central Office has four main departments :

- I      Management.
- II (a) Artistic improvements in undertakings.  
    (b) Preparation of models.
- III     Technical improvements in undertakings.
- IV     Press and propaganda.

Those who take part in the work include architects, engineers and economists, their main duty being to provide the material required for the district offices.

An account of all the latest improvements and possibilities of improvement is given in a special series of publications and in a periodical entitled "Beauty in Work". By means of propaganda leaflets, articles, posters and films, the idea of the beauty of labour is constantly brought before the leaders of undertakings and their followers so that gradually German factories may become clean and beautiful places in which to work.

It is of course admitted that in many undertakings there is still much room for improvement, and it cannot be asserted that in a country with so many factories the work is anything like complete at the present time. The movement is making progress, however, and there can be no doubt that in a few years it will have proved victorious in practically every German undertaking. A special incentive is provided by the granting to undertakings of the honorary title : "National Socialist Model Undertaking".