

Incredible; But It Happened

To the Editor of The Post—Sir: "Fantastic" seems to be the adjective most commonly applied to the pernicious "Christian Front" conspiracy. "A crazy dream" is the phrase in one editorial. And Mr. LaGuardia "pooh-poohs" it derisively.

All of which reminds me of a couple of incidents. Some years ago I was sitting in Vienna in an open-air restaurant in the shadow of the Stefanskirche, and I happened to mention the Cafe Central, not far away. It set my friend to remembering a story that had been told him by the distinguished correspondent, M. V. Fodor.

Just before the World War, Fodor had been talking to an eminent official of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, in referring to Russia, had ventured the opinion that the empire of the Tsars was headed for calamitous overthrow, in the not-distant future. The Austrian official roared with incredulity and amusement. His ample tummy shook with laughter. "And who, pray, is going to overthrow Russia?" he asked—"Herr Bronstein, of the Cafe Central?"

He was referring to a well-known and generally ridiculed character among the hangers-on of that usually crowded eating place—a shabby, impecunious, hot-tempered but hopelessly cloud-gazing individual, who was always gassing about what would happen when "comes de revolution." "Herr Bronstein of the Cafe Central, indeed!" Yes, verily, it was to laugh! (But Herr Bronstein of the Cafe Central happened to be the man now known to history as Leon Trotzky.)

Some years later I was in Berlin,

standing in front of the art gallery by the Brandenburger Thor. It was the anniversary of the establishment of the Weimar Republic. A vast celebration was taking place. For hours a great parade had been pouring by. Tremendous shouts of applause for the Republic were ringing through the air. Sonorous songs in praise of it rose from endless thousands of German throats.

The loyal troops of the Republic were steadily pounding the pavement of Unter den Linden. Then suddenly, near where I stood, a scowling man raised in his hand a broken brick and hurled it at the flag of the German Republic in the parade. On his coat lapel, I noticed, he wore a little swastika. Instantly, burly policeman grabbed him and hustled him unceremoniously away. The people around me laughed. "A Hitlerite," they said—"You know: Hitler, that ridiculous beer-hall-putsch fellow, who was always making fantastic plots in Munich—after he got his start by gesticulating and screaming before six or eight cranks in some cellar down there."

Ah, yes, Hitler. Quite ridiculous! The drums of the republic went on beating out their thunderous march on the broad Unter den Linden, and the shouts roared all around me. (And look at "the beer-hall fellow" now—called by some very cool observers the most extraordinary conqueror since the rise of Mohammed.)

Mayor LaGuardia, I would say, is wrong. J. Edgar Hoover is right. The pernicious so-called "Christian Front" should be rigorously dealt with—should be scotched before it becomes any more dangerous than it is.

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