

# NAZIS BAFFLED BY PARISIANS

French Laughed at Orders  
And Hid 'Wealth'  
From Enemy.

By HELEN KIRKPATRICK  
Times Foreign Correspondent

PARIS, Sept. 8.—When Americans and exiled French people arrived in liberated Paris they were equally astonished by the elegance displayed in women's clothes and in the shops as well as by the quality of food served in such high-priced restaurants as were open.

It was tempting to rush to the conclusion that Paris, like the richer farming country of Normandy and Brittany, had not suffered by the German occupation. It was confusing to find large numbers of Parisians nonchalantly handing out thousands of francs for a meal which would have cost them 15 francs before the war.

Where did all the money come from? How did the big couturiers of Paris get superb materials? Why were the women so well dressed on our arrival? Were reports that the Germans had cleaned out the French shops incorrect?

**Never Conquered**  
The answers to these questions show clearly why the Germans, although they defeated the French army and occupied the country, were never able to conquer the French people.

I talked with French of all classes. Their answers form a pattern and permit the reconstruction of four years under the German heel.

The first winter was the worst for the French. The victorious Germans gorged themselves in Paris and ran riot in the shops. French were beaten down, humiliated, made uncertain. Industries did not know what their fate would be and the French were as yet inexperienced in the art of smuggling goods and people across the demarcation line into the forbidden northern zone.

During that winter, however, Paris took the measure of the master race. Parisians discovered that the master race had a most unmasterful awe for French culture, French cooking and French dress designs. They found that the Germans were lacking in subtlety and humor and understood neither. Above all, they realized by the spring of 1941 that Britain was not going to be defeated and that the war would continue.

Charles De Gaulle, by his stand at the time, restored somewhat the self-respect of the French. Then they went to work on the Germans. The first thing the Germans had demanded was a wholesale shifting of the fashion center from Paris to Berlin.

With great tact, Lelong, president of the Grands Couturiers, resisted the demand and the subsequent attempt to close down one of Paris' biggest industries. This involved for most of the designers, furnishing clothes for German women but at enormous prices which made the Parisians roar with laughter. But by keeping open thousands of workers were withheld from the German war industry.

Women who had always saved money by going to small, unknown dressmakers, began patronizing the big couturiers and with special cards were able to get all the clothes they wanted.

Those without money or coupons acquired materials from time to time on the black market. They put away at least one smart outfit for liberation day.

The French continued to manufacture luxury items everywhere they could get away with it. The Germans tried to limit the amounts to those wanted by themselves but the French always managed to make more and hide some.

At one point, 18 months ago, the Germans decided that Paris shops had an unwelcome luxurious air and gave the order that no luxury items were to be displayed in the windows. The next day every shop-window in Paris was empty. When the Germans complained they were told that those were the only items there were, so the order was rescinded. Paris laughed.

**Defiant Laughter**

Where did the money come from? The workers were paid very highly by the Germans so all wages rose except those of the white-collar class, civil servants, police, lawyers, and professional people. So the workers had more money than ever.

The black market was encouraged by the allies and was one certain source of food for the French. All that the French could divert from German requisitioning and get away with, they did. Hence those with money ate well. And they laughed.

For Paris, laughter was a form of defiance. Vichy and the Germans forbade dancing, so Paris danced—behind closed doors. The Germans and Petain frowned on frivolity, so the Parisians blossomed forth in the world's most frivolous hats.

American men, sometimes abashed at the hats American women choose, are speechless when they view the fantastic creations worn in Paris. And while Parisians laughed, they also ignored the Germans. They might not have been here. There were collaborators—all too many, but the percentage of the entire population which associated with the Germans was small.

The Germans will probably always be baffled at their failure to conquer the French people. They know that they didn't and it hurt them. And according to the French they are still wondering exactly what French finesse is and why the Germans cannot possess it.



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make-up chair.  
at a photograph  
and then looked  
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"Here Is Your  
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Albert Kennedy  
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