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Germany

The following report, written on the 31st March of this year, is a collection of impressions of a number of people. Its authors have also an intimate knowledge extending over many years of the underground German anti-Hitler movement.

Civilians

"We mentioned already on previous occasions that one could speak of the beginning of a process of disintegration in Germany; this applies to the morale both of the civilian population and of the troops. All reports confirm this and even point to the fact that this process of disintegration has already reached a fairly advanced stage. The long winter with its many privations, the war in the East with its heavy losses, the uncertainty as to the duration of the war, the renewed call-up of civilians for the army and for the armament industry - all these factors have had a depressing effect on morale. There is a general disbelief in the possibility of a complete victory and many people do not believe in a German victory at all. The opinion is sometimes expressed, even in conversations, that a defeat would really be the best thing for the German people.

People in Germany are often heard to say: 'We will not put up with another winter of war.' This fear of another winter of war which would be even harder than last winter is in the forefront of people's minds and they are sceptical about the outcome of the Spring offensive. The view that there will be a collapse in Germany before the next winter is voiced now more frequently than hitherto. Also some people in Switzerland who are generally well informed about Germany are beginning to share this view.

No Optimism

We are not optimistic, however, concerning the effect of this lowering of morals; in our opinion this in itself will not lead to open revolt against the regime. A great deal depends upon military developments during the coming spring and summer. One must not underestimate the fact that the Germans are making tremendous preparations in the East and in the Balkans. We know for instance that the Nazis are preparing to use gas.

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Soldiers

The morale amongst the troops who have fought on the Eastern front is bad. In contrast to this, the younger age groups who have not yet been at the front are still firmly convinced that Germany will be victorious.

At the front, where loud speakers have been set up, one hears the comments on the propaganda speeches: `Smash up this whole paraphernalia of propaganda lies. What these people dish up to us is the greatest rubbish we ever heard. We would like for once to hear the views of the other side.` Not only the soldiers, but even the officers speak in these terms. - Whereever `Waffen-SS' and regular soldiers come together, there are outbursts of violent enmity.

It happens fairly often that soldiers on leave from the Eastern front refuse to salute their superior officers. They give them clearly to understand that `the day will come when they will settle their accounts with the whole officer clique on the home front.' In view of the many instances of such insubordination it is understandable that Hitler makes big efforts to strengthen the position of the "Waffen SS".

Radio

One hears that people in Germany try to listen in to the English broadcasts more than ever before. But as people have become distrustful of the lying German propaganda they are inclined to have a similar distrust of the English propaganda. For this reason it is extremely important that the English broadcasts adhere strictly to the truth. People are very anxious to check up on the reports given out by the B.B.C. **[1]**

In the view of comrades of various opinions and from different parts of Germany the workers' broadcasts of the B.B.C. are greatly appreciated, and many people look forward to hearing them.

Soldiers home on leave frequently take every opportunity of listening in to English broadcasts. One soldier on leave was caught listening to the British broadcast in his home. His mother had warned him; whereupon he had answered: `Never mind, I must hear this.' When the Gestapo came to take him away he made a terrible scene and threatened to shoot them down, shouting: `I have come from the front and I shall soon be returning to the front. I have a right to hear what our opponents have to say.`

In face of the soldiers' threatening attitude the Gestapo released him. When the soldier had returned to the front, the radio was confiscated, but no further action was taken. A civilian would have been sentenced to many years imprisonment, or even perhaps have been condemned to death. It seems that the Gestapo has received instructions to be more considerate to soldiers from the Eastern front on account of their highly nervous state and not to take too strict measures if they have an occasional outburst. Articles in the Nazi press for instance,

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even in the "Schwarze Corps" **[2]** go in the same direction. They encourage the people to treat nerve-racked soldiers on leave in a friendly and considerate manner.

Opposition in Industrial Districts

In industrial districts there are once more frequent chalkings on the walls: `Down with Hitler! Down with the War!`

In Catholic districts the war weariness and antagonism to the regime shows itself in an increasing distribution of Catholic leaflets. Amongst those distributed are the sermons of Bishop von GALEN **[3]**; the 26 points of the `Reichskirche'; and the letter of van MOELDERS **[4]**.

An especially encouraging sign of determined oppositional work is reported from X. In some factories in this place there are groups of three to five people who have an organised contact with one another. These groups have begun to open their ranks also to foreign workers. They are socialist organisations who in this way give practical expression to the ideal of international solidarity in the common struggle against Fascism.

Peasants in South Germany

We hear that a form of passive resistance is organised by the South German peasants. This resistance is directed against the decrees concerning the cultivation and delivery to the authorities of agricultural products. Whenever inspectors visit a village the surrounding villages are warned so that the peasants can hide their stocks if they have not already done so. There are peasants who out of hatred for the regime neglect the cultivation of their fields even though they themselves suffer material loss. It is interesting to note in this connection that the South German peasantry has been particularly heavily affected by the losses on the Eastern front.

In Waldshut a father refused (at the end of last January) to have his daughter conscripted to a munitions factory in one of the larger towns. Thereupon SS-men appeared in front of his house with gallows on which they intended to hang him. Immediately a big crowd collected. The SS-men were insulted and threatened with violence, and were forced to abandon their intentions. Next morning, however, the father was fetched by the police. He disappeared for four days. When he returned his mind was completely unbalanced and he refused to speak about what he had gone through.

We repeat what we already said at the beginning of our report that all these signs of demoralisation and opposition do not mean that an open revolt against the Nazi regime is imminent. They are, however, an important beginning. How far they will develop depends on the military successes of the Allies."

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Catholic Opposition

The narrow-minded and brutal policy which "Reichsleiter" BORMANN [5], recently appointed deputy to the "Fuehrer" has decreed for the fight against the Christian churches in Germany has only served to strengthen their resistance. The letter of the German air ace MOELDERS [] has become so well known amongst the population that in Catholic districts the Nazi press has had to publish detailed comments on it. In this letter MOELDERS says amongst other things that now, faced with fear of death, Nazi are turning against to the Catholics for strength and courage.

"Many are converted and place now the ideal higher than all earthly rewards and temptations, and I believe that herein lies one of the deeper meanings of this war."

In a sermon, which is circulated in Germany, the Bishop of Trier says:

"I was not surprised but deeply shocked at the words of the speaker: 'For Germany I would commit any perjury, and if necessary, fifty every day.' I wonder if some truly Christian men and women did not desire to get up and leave the hall in protest against such an outrageous sentiment! I do not know. But this I do know from a report, that at this point in his speech there was general applause from the public."

A Swiss Sees the Third Reich

A Swiss who has recently returned from Germany reports:

"Since the end of 1940 the German food supply has been gradually reduced. The shop windows are still full of goods. A foreigner might get the impression that everything is still obtainable. If, however, he looks more closely he will discover in some corner or other the inscription: 'For display only'; 'Not for sale'; or 'Sold'. The following inscriptions are also frequent: 'For sale only when no longer needed for window display.' This is of course bluff, because the display is never changed.

Pure milk can only be obtained for invalids and small children and even then only in very small quantities. - At Christmas every person received about 4 ozs. of filled chocolate. The women queued for hours in the cold, to get this rare delicacy even though its quality was rather doubtful.

Potatoes, the poor man's food, are, however, still generally obtainable, although rationed. In some places (for instance in Cologne) weekly ration amounts to one pound. - There is very little variety of vegetables. For a time tomatoes were available in sufficient quantities, but were very expensive. (In November about 1.80 mark per lb.) Apricots were obtainable for a time at about 1.70 mark per lb. These prices are of course beyond the means of working-class people.

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While on the one hand the working-class people already suffer from the shortage of food and warm clothing - how they envied our Swiss shoes! - the party officials and the industrialists can still afford any luxury. To give an instance: I offered to give some coffee to an industrialist in return for a favour he had rendered me, but he explained to me that if he so desired he could buy 500 or 1000 kilograms of coffee immediately. Nazi officials have boxes full of the finest blend of cigarettes and cigars, while ordinary mortals have often to queue for hours for their daily ration of three cigarettes.

"You are the only one."

On one occasion I was given a complimentary ticket for the opera by a German Industrialist. The opera was "Nero and Agrippina" by Georg Schmueckle^[6], which was quite new. The whole performance was an experience for me. It was political and very topical. Phrases which for years we have been accustomed to hear were put into the mouth of a bloodthirsty and megalomaniac Caesar. After the performance I was introduced to the actors and was asked for my opinion of the play. I expressed my astonishment that it was at all possible to produce a play like this. Surely, this play practically compels people to see the analogy. But they answered me: "Rubbish, you are the only one who has noticed anything."

France

Traitors

The appointment of LAVAL^[7] as the new leader in France arouses the question as to what forces stand behind him. The different personalities are of course inspired by very different motives in their efforts to gain power and influence in France. From the outset LAVAL decided in favour of collaboration at least with the Italian fascists and it will be remembered that he was the most violent opponent of the application of sanctions

against Italy. He realises that his position will be doomed if more progressive and democratic forces come to power in France after an English victory. For this reason he has staked everything on a German victory, as have the traitors, Marcel DEAT [8] and Jacques DORIOT [9].

Semi-Traitors

Besides these purely venal agents of German imperialism there exist quite a number of politicians who in addition to their purely personal interest in political power have certain other, less selfish aims. They advocate collaboration as being the best way of achieving national, political, and economic progress. PÉTAINE, PUCHEU and BELIN belong to this group. There are trustworthy reports that both BELIN and PUCHEU have for a long time been active in a secret organisation which included representatives of capitalist trusts and the trade union movement and which aimed at achieving some form of co-operation between the two. Such ideas are by no means confined to France. They were not unknown in Germany after the last war and had quite a number of supporters in the circles of the French C.G.T. There were also similar trends in England. No wonder therefore that exponents of such views were to be found

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in the Vichy Government, which was a typical transitional government. Only now has it been transformed into a really defeatist government. PÉTAINE needed the support of the workers and employers in order to get a basis for a more stable policy. PUCHEU and BELIN were predestined for this rôle. During their tenure of office both made great efforts to improve their relations with the trade unions. PUCHEU especially made continuous attempts to win over former trade union officials and in particular those who had not become supporters of Vichy. In this attempt he and BELIN met with no response. BELIN, in spite of his very cleverly written paper "Au Travail" did not succeed in playing a leading role as Labour minister in the Vichy Government. The "Charte du Travail", the new French labour legislation, is not only openly reactionary, but it is so contrary to the ideas of BELIN and his friends that they have attacked it with great vehemence.

The appointment of LAVAL as the head of the government is obviously intended to eliminate these wavering politicians who are not clear as to what they want and do not recognise the real nature of German imperialism. The way should thus be cleared for 100% Fascism.

Opposition

This new development clarifies the position of the opposition movement, but also makes their work infinitely more difficult. The attempts to corrupt the working class movement in occupied countries were very soon abandoned by the German authorities because of their bad experience in this respect in nearly every country, including Germany itself. And there is no reason to assume that France will prove an exception. France, it is true, is in a special position because the Germans are anxious that France should become a voluntary supporter of their famous New Order. This is the only reason why the Vichy government was at all able to offer some measure of resistance to Hitler's demands. The assumption of power of the Quisling Laval is most probably an indication that the patience of the Germans is exhausted.

It speaks for the political courage of the leaders of the present opposition movement

that, faced with the prospect of intensified terror, they nevertheless did not waver and still refused to co-operate in the experiments of PUCHEU and BELIN. In the last issue of "Europe Speaks" we gave a detailed report of the opposition movements. Before we pass any further judgments about them we shall await the effects of the present regime. Just a few notes concerning the various movements.

Libération[10]

This movement has made good progress; its paper, "Libération" has a fairly wide circulation. It is encouraging that many trade union officials who advocate resistance both to Vichy and to the Germans are active in this organisation. They have the possibility of voicing their opinions in the paper "Libération". Expressed in traditional terms one could say that "Libération" is a left wing organisation. Many socialists are amongst its sympathisers. So far it

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has not suffered very much from police interference. Recently its printing works was unfortunately discovered by the police but up till now this has not had any serious consequences.

The paper which appears fortnightly has an edition of about 15,000 copies. "Libération" exists also in the occupied zone. It appears that in the occupied zone the communists use this organisation as a cover for their own activities.

Libération Nationale

This is the largest opposition organisation in the unoccupied zone. Its fortnightly paper „Combat" is published in an edition of 35,000 copies. It has also an organisation in occupied France. Expressed in traditional language one could call "Libération Nationale" a right-wing organisation. It has connections with military circles in Vichy.

So far this organisation has had no conception as to what underground work means. For this reason it has suffered a number of misfortunes, which did not, however, seriously affect the existence of the organisation. But many accidents occurred which could have been avoided.

"Franc-Tireur"

This is an organisation which seems only to exist in Lyons where it publishes a monthly journal in an edition of 5,000 copies. The organisation consists of young radical socialists.

Socialists

The socialist organisations in unoccupied France have unfortunately made very little progress. Still, they have passed the embryonic stage. The Riom Trials aroused a certain measure of activity amongst former socialists which showed itself in organising money collections for the purpose of distributing BLUM's [11] defence speeches at Riom. Quite a large sum of money was collected.

Wirepulling

The following orders to the press indicate what the Vichy government feared would be

the reaction of the French public to the reports of the Riom Trials:

No. 33. - Cut out the sentence of M. DALADIERS' [12] speech: "More than 1.000 caterpillars for tanks were left in the depots, so that witnesses should be able to say later on that they were missing on the front."

No. 34. - Do not quote the name of Colonel de GAULLE [13] in the explanations of M. DALADIER. This is strictly forbidden.

No. 38. - Cut out all the passages in the statement of M. D. [14] referring to the conference in Paris in 1939 and to the conversations with the Polish High Command.

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No. 39. - Cut out the passage in M. D.'s statement which indicates that it had been decided not to fortify the Northern Frontier.

No. 41. - Do not publish anything about the statements of Marshal PÉTAIN to the Army Commission of the Senate concerning the uselessness of fortifying the Ardennes Sector.

No. 43. - Cut out all reference to M. Rene BELIN in the explanation of M. DALADIER.

Sicily

We received the following report from Sicily: -

"Recently I had occasion to make a journey to South Italy. What struck me most was the growing anti-German feeling, both in the civilian population and amongst the military.

In Catania grave incidents occurred between German flying officers and Italians. There were wounded on both sides. Similar incidents occurred in Naples, Taranto and Bari.

This attitude of the population and of military circles has had its repercussions even in Rome. It is no secret that in several Italian ministries, and especially in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a large section of the personnel, and not only those in the lower grades, do not hide their sympathy for the Anglo-Americans. Persons in high positions have expressed themselves with very little respect towards MUSSOLINI [15], and especially towards CIANO [16], who is considered to be an incorrigible boaster."

(W.G. Eichler)

Editorische Anmerkungen

1 - „B.B.C.“ = *British Broadcasting Corporation, 1922 gegründete unabhängige britische Rundfunkanstalt, die mehrere Hörfunk- und Fernsehprogramme betreibt, während des Zweiten Weltkriegs auch in deutscher Sprache.*

- 2 - „Schwarzes Korps“ = „Das Schwarze Korps“, Wochenzeitung der Schutzstaffeln der NSDAP, Organ der Reichsführung der SS, erschien 1935-1945.
- 3 - Clemens August Graf von Galen (1878-1946), deutscher Bischof, Kritik an der parlamentarischen Demokratie der Weimarer Republik, politisch aktiv im konservativen Flügel des Zentrums (ab 1906), Bischof von Münster (1933), Verurteilung der kirchenfeindlichen Politiker der NSDAP, drei Predigten gegen die Beschlagnahme von Kirchengut und die Euthanasiemaßnahmen (1941), trotz weiterer Kritik keine Verhaftung (1942-1945), Ernennung zum Kardinal (1946).
- 4 - Van Moelders, wahrscheinlich gemeint: Werner Mölders (1913-1941), deutscher Jagdflieger, Kommodore eines Jagdgeschwaders (1940), Inspekteur der Jagdflieger (1941), tödlicher Absturz (1941). Von Mölders existierte Anfang des Zweiten Weltkrieges der so genannte „Mölders-Brief“, der seine Wirkung vor allem in katholisch geprägten Regionen Deutschlands hatte, wahrscheinlich aber eine Fälschung des britischen Geheimdienstes war.
- 5 - Martin Bormann (1900-1973), nationalsozialistischer Politiker, Stabsleiter von Rudolf Heß (1933), Leiter der Parteikanzlei (1941), Sekretär des Führers (1943), federführende Beteiligung an der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft, vom Internationalen Militärtribunal in Nürnberg in Abwesenheit zum Tode verurteilt (1946).
- 6 - Georg Schmueckle (1880-1948), Mitglied der NSDAP (seit 1931), deutscher Autor von Romanen, Schauspielen und Lyrik, in denen er das Führerprinzip verherrlichte, Direktor des Schiller-Nationalmuseums in Marbach/Neckar.
- 7 - Pierre Laval (1883-1945), französischer Politiker, Außenminister (1932, 1934-1936), Ministerpräsident (1931-1932, 1935-1936, ab 1942), im Zweiten Weltkrieg Eintreten für eine Zusammenarbeit mit Deutschland (ab 1940), nach dem Krieg wegen Kollaboration mit Deutschland zum Tode verurteilt und hingerichtet (1945).
- 8 - Marcel Déat (1894-1955), französischer Philosophieprofessor, Publizist und Politiker, sozialistischer Funktionär in Reims, Parlamentsabgeordneter (1926-1928, 1932-1936, 1939-1942), Luftfahrtminister (1936), Austritt aus der SFIO, Gründer und Führer des „Parti socialist de France“ (1933), während der Okkupation Befürworter einer Kollaboration mit Deutschland und Gründer des „Rassemblement National Populaire“ (RNP), Minister für „Arbeit und Solidarität“ in der Vichy-Regierung unter Laval (ab März 1944), nach der Befreiung Flucht aus Paris nach Deutschland, Österreich und Italien (1944), in Abwesenheit Verurteilung zum Tode (keine Vollstreckung der Strafe).
- 9 - Jacques Doriot (1898-1945), Metallarbeiter, französischer Politiker, Kommunist (1920-1934), Parlamentsabgeordneter (1924-1937), Bürgermeister von Saint-Denis (1931-1937), Unterstützung der NS-Politik und Ausschluss aus der Kommunistischen Partei (1934), Gründer und Vorsitzender des „Parti populaire français“ (1936-1945), der Marschall Pétain unterstützte, Mitglied des Nationalrats von Vichy, Meldung als Freiwilliger, um auf deutscher Seite an der russischen Front zu kämpfen (1941-1944).
- 10 - „Libération“, quotidien républicain, französische Résistance-Zeitung, erschien zwischen 1941 und 1969 (?), (vgl. Internationale Zeitungsbestände in Deutschen Bibliotheken, a.a.O., S. 323).
- 11 - Léon Blum (1872-1950), französischer Sozialist, Ministerpräsident (1936-1937), Verhaftung durch die Vichy-Regierung (1940), Internierung in deutschen Konzentrationslagern (1943-1945), erneut Ministerpräsident (1946-1947).
- 12 - Gemeint ist Eduard Daladier, der beim Prozess von Riom, der auf Befehl Hitlers von

der Vichy-Regierungs gegen Politiker und Generale der III. Republik, unter ihnen Blum, Daladier u.a., angestrengt wurde, um sie für den Kriegseintritt Frankreichs zur Verantwortung zu ziehen. Der Prozess wurde auf Veranlassung Hitlers ohne Urteil abgebrochen, als die Frage der mangelnden französischen Rüstung bei Kriegseintritt zur Sprache kam.

13 - Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970), französischer General und Politiker, nach der Niederlage gegen Hitler-Deutschland an der Spitze des Freien Frankreich, von Großbritannien aus Organisator des Widerstands gegen Deutschland („Résistance“, ab 1940), Teilnahme an der Befreiung Frankreichs, Ministerpräsident (1945-1946), zeitweiser Rückzug aus dem politischen Leben, erneut Ministerpräsident (Mai bis Dezember 1958), Verfassungsänderungen zu Gunsten einer Präsidentschaftsrepublik, Staatspräsident (1958- 1969).

14 - M. D., gemeint: Edouard Daladier.

15 - Mussolini, Benito (1883-1945), Gründer und Führer des Faschismus in Italien, seit dem „Marsch auf Rom“ (28. Oktober 1928) Ministerpräsident, Einparteiendiktatur, Anlehnung an NS-Deutschland, Eintritt in den Zweiten Weltkrieg (1940), Gefangennahme nach Misstrauensvotum des Faschistischen Großrats (1943), von deutschen Fallschirmtruppen befreit (1943), „Staatschef“ der „Repubblica Sociale Italiana“, des Teils Italiens, der im Machtbereich Hitler-Deutschlands lag (1943-1945), Ergreifung und Erschießung durch italienische Widerstandskämpfer.

16 - Galeazzo Ciano (1903-1944), italienischer Politiker (Faschist), Außenminister (1936-1943), stimmte im Faschistischen Großrat für Mussolinis Absetzung (1943), Inhaftierung durch die Regierung Badoglio, Flucht nach Deutschland, danach Auslieferung an die Regierung Mussolini, von einem Sondergericht zum Tode verurteilt, Hinrichtung (1944).