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Germany

The Situation through the Eyes of the S.S.

S.S. and the O.K.W.

The following are extracts taken from the "Reichs-Dienst Führungsbericht S.S." which expresses the opinion of the S.S. leaders concerning the political situation on the home front:

"The recent political struggles which have taken place within the `Reichs-Führung' and the `Wehrmacht' have now been settled, since the new and definite constellation of power has secured once and for all that the will and the directives of the Fuehrer shall be paramount. As a result of the latest increase in its powers the S.S. has now become the highest controlling authority over all institutions in Germany. In this way justice has been done to the achievements of the S.S., and the forecasts of the S.S. The strengthening of the S.S., the guaranteeing of its reserves and the constant renewal of its forces is now absolutely secured against the claims of the army. In spite of this, however, the army is still taking too many qualified men who really belong to the S.S. One must still continue to press for a considerable increase in heavy arms for the `Waffen-SS'."

Religious Opposition

"Resistance on religious grounds is assuming serious proportions. There are, for instance, these everlasting chain letters with their lamentations about the wickedness of the world which end up in filthy slander against S.S. leaders; they literally bristle with such insults. Such manoeuvres which only lead to a softening of the people's morale must not be dealt with by soft methods."

Socialists

"Recently several instances of the revival socialist propaganda were reported. We have to reckon with an increase of this propaganda. For this reason the political leaders in those parts of Germany where there is a majority of industrial workers should order preventive arrest of socialist leaders as was done on similar occasions in the past."

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Sabotage by the enemy

"There is evidence of increased efforts by the enemy to organise acts of sabotage in Germany; special attention must be paid to them. Attempts of this nature have rapidly

increased. In any case the guards must be increased. Further we must see to it that no more slackness whatsoever in keeping a watch on suspicious elements is tolerated. (In the original manuscript there are two exclamation marks after 'slackness', W.G.E. [1]) Here is an instance of such slackness: The checking up of the political past of people in important positions has frequently been neglected. We must admit that this checking is difficult to-day since the number of 'important positions' has greatly increased. To counteract this we can only press for increased watchfulness."

Occupied Countries

"The correctness of the measures suggested by the 'Reichs-Führung S.S.' (for instance the shooting of hostages) has been proved by their success. In France for example the assassinations have practically ended. Although the general feeling in France has become more hostile against Germany, from the point of view of the 'Reichsführung S.S.' it is to be welcomed that we have started upon the inevitable purge in France. In any case we must prepare ourselves for a thorough and general purge of our opponents and their followers in the occupied countries, for it is unavoidable that they will increase in strength and numbers as soon as difficulties arise in the course of the war. On the evidence of some S.S. officials we must be ready for revolts, for instance in the Balkans, which may break out very soon even in those parts which so far have not shown any considerable sign of resistance."

Foreign Workers

"The demoralisation of the foreign workers in Germany is growing to the same degree as the passive resistance in the occupied countries. The German inhabitants of all the occupied countries have become increasingly isolated as a result of the hostility felt towards the German army of occupation."

Morale

"Many higher Civil Servants, officers and transport officials fear grave events in the rear while the army is preoccupied with the war on the Eastern front. Also officers of the Waffen S.S. are anxious about the reduction of the German army of occupation in France. But people generally comfort themselves by the thought that the British are so heavily engaged in the Mediterranean that they cannot become a great danger in the West."

1917 Over Again

"A new wave of criticism has been aroused by the food restrictions, the travelling difficulties and the mobilisation of the youth (many children have been sent to factories immediately on leaving school). The opinions of the older people with their experience of 1917 and 1918 prevail against the arguments of National Socialists and of the younger people who are hopeful and optimistic. Critics of the government and the party point out that they have not fulfilled certain promises. There are the same signs of

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weakening morale as in 1917. Travelling difficulties and the mobilisation of the youth are considered to be worse than during the last war. The delay in issuing the list of casualties arouses discontent; war cripples and wounded whose existence is becoming more and more noticeable have a depressing effect; in many cases they have had to be

transported to Germany because sanatoria and hospitals abroad will be needed for new casualties, for instance in Greece and in the Baltic States. The depression caused by these unavoidable measures has been deeper than we expected."

The Truth will Out

"It is unavoidable that more and more detailed reports concerning the sufferings of the population in the occupied countries should be brought to Germany, in the first place through our soldiers on leave. People are shocked and frightened. Even soldiers, apart from those who are National Socialists, often share such feelings. The shooting of hostages in particular is condemned; it has now become known in Germany that innocent people are shot as hostages. Workers and Civil Servants in the occupied countries and our soldiers back on leave bring such reports home, recently also from Holland and Norway."

O.K.W. against the Truth

In a special bulletin for the Officer Corps published in February 1942 the High Command of the Wehrmacht issued instructions to the officers how to counteract rumours. The following are extracts from this:

"The importance of the enemy's weapon of spreading rumours cannot be underrated. He relies on the effect of this poisonous weapon. The enemy has obviously a very low opinion of the German people. Only recently he let slip his opinion that one should lie unscrupulously. There is no rumour so stupid that it will not find some credulous souls in Germany. (This, we know, is Hitler`s own view which is attributed to the English propagandists, W.G.E.) The following points concerning the technique of the enemy must be noted: 1. Rumours current in Germany are never spread by chance, but according to a plan. 2. Moscow and London work together. 3. Rumour is a weapon which the enemy does not use on its own, but he always links it up with propaganda from his secret wireless stations and his leaflets. The enemy is by no means stupid. 4. The rumours spread by the enemy are very clever psychologically and are based on the weaknesses of the German people. 5. Credulous people and braggarts are the allies with whom the enemy reckons. Credulity helps the enemy because there are still people who believe that there is a grain of truth in every rumour. And the enemy reckons with the poisonous effect of this belief. In this way the credulous person, even if he only believes 10% to be true, in reality swallows the poison of the enemy. The desire to brag is another help to the enemy, because some people feel important when they can appear to be well informed and can impress others by passing on unpleasant news.

Editorische Anmerkungen
