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Germany

As far as we know the following is the first authentic eye-witness account of the events in Munich University that resulted in the execution of a number of German students. We have suppressed certain particulars, publication of which might endanger people still in Germany.

Eye-Witness Report of the Disturbances in Munich University

Last January the Gauleiter delivered a speech to the students in which he called on the young men who enjoyed the privilege of being exempted from military service for a certain time to act as political soldiers on the home front; he attacked the young women who were present, accusing them of having joined Munich University only as a means of avoiding compulsory labour. During this attack he was hissed at and interrupted by the students. Students of both sexes then walked out of the room voicing protests and left the Gauleiter to continue his speech before a reduced audience.

Some of the young women were arrested. Whereon large numbers of students organised demonstrations shouting out: "We want our women back again ... ". During the course of the day the young women were released. The story of this incident spread all over Munich, and the people laughed over the misfortune of the Gauleiter. The students were proud of this demonstration, rather like schoolchildren who have played a trick on their teacher. The Party executive, it appears, criticised the Gauleiter for having acted in a stupid and clumsy manner.

Spiritual Resistance

This demonstration during the Gauleiter's speech was however not simply the outcome of a spontaneous wave of indignation. Amongst the students there was a more or less literary circle which sought inspiration (doubtless because they desired an ideological basis which differed from the theoretical platitudes of the Party ideology) from the study of a school of French philosophy. The male students had nearly all been to the front and had been discharged so that they could continue their medical studies. The students came together regularly to read the works of these writers and they were joined by some other people who had been connected with the Catholic Review Hochland [1] when it still existed. A former student of Munich University called X [2], a Catholic who still lives at Munich, and a professor of philosophy named Huber [3], also a Catholic, took part in these meetings and enlivened them with their views. Our informant was on one occasion invited by a student to take part in one of the meetings.

At this meeting our informant made the acquaintance of Scholl [4]. Scholl made a very intelligent contribution to the discussion; he had a good knowledge of the subject under discussion. Our informant was asked to prepare for a later meeting a review of a

certain book. He accepted and was very much impressed by the

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atmosphere and the level of discussion, although they did not openly attack the regime, he felt during these discussions a marked intellectual opposition and a sincere effort to discover a new philosophy of life. At one of these meetings he was introduced to X and Huber. The latter did not mince his words, he violently protested against the persecution of the Catholics and said that it was better for hundreds of Catholics to get themselves shot by affirming their opposition to the regime than that they should keep silent. This would arouse a big scandal and would produce reactions which would make the situation clear in the eyes of the rest of the world. Our informant said that Huber had a nature which inclined towards martyrdom. Scholl and Schmorell [5] were friends of X. and Huber.

Down with Hitler

"One morning", our informant continues, "whilst on my way to the university I noticed that the words 'Freedom' and 'Down with Hitler' were inscribed in large red lettering on its walls. They remained there until 11 o'clock. This aroused tremendous excitement amongst the students and in the town as a whole. Everybody was talking about it. For three weeks these inscriptions continued to be put up at irregular intervals, but at daybreak they were immediately obliterated by the police and during the morning painters were at work removing all traces. Even to-day one can still see where the painters did their work. During the same period similar inscriptions were put up in Innsbruck. I do not know who was responsible for these inscriptions. I do not think that it was done by the students whom I met in the discussion groups mentioned above.

One morning about eleven o'clock a shower of leaflets was thrown down from a floor above into the assembly hall of the university of Munich and this was done just as the students were coming from their lectures. I picked up one and glanced at it but when I saw what it was all about I threw it down again. Unfortunately, I cannot recall the contents of the pamphlet exactly enough to be able to give you an extract. These leaflets were duplicated. They caused wild excitement amongst the students. The Rector closed the university gates and called in the Gestapo. Many of the students were searched and also all the buildings. Scholl and his sister [6] made no attempt to conceal that the guilt was theirs. I saw them being taken away by the Gestapo. I remember very well the look on the face of Scholl's sister at the moment when she was being taken away by the Gestapo; when her glance met mine, her expression was one of mingled fear and pride. Another student called Probst [7] was also taken away. At two o'clock the doors were reopened and the students were allowed to go, on presentation of their identification papers to the Gestapo. The next day the students heard that the three who were arrested had been shot. Naturally this incident caused an immense stir amongst the students and throughout the whole city of Munich. The Gestapo started a big enquiry and many people were arrested especially amongst the students. Some of them were very soon released again. It is certain that the Gestapo found out about the existence of the literary circle which was mentioned above. Huber was also arrested. Notices were published in the newspapers referring to Schmorell (a friend of Scholl) stating that the detective force were in search of a criminal and offering a reward to any person or persons who helped to secure his arrest. Schmorell was actually trying to escape, but only three weeks later he was arrested. It is interesting to note that Schmorell's crime was not mentioned in the newspapers and that there was no reference

to the Gestapo but only to the detective force. Schmorel's friends had hoped that he would succeed in escaping abroad.

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A few weeks after these occurrences a trial took place in which Huber, Graf [8] (a student) and some others were sentenced to death; other students were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. I do not think that Huber knew about the actions (the inscriptions on the walls of the university and the leaflets) carried out by Scholl and his friends. It is very likely that the Gestapo, sensing that there existed a centre of resistance inside the university, were looking for the man who provided the intellectual inspiration. Huber's name was most probably mentioned during the interrogation of the students.

Motives of Resistance

I think that Scholl and his friends were convinced of the necessity of taking some action to show that people existed with the courage to be in disagreement with the Party. I am even of the opinion that Scholl and his friends did not plan their actions according to the rules of illegal work. For one thing they had no experience of such work. It is also most likely that they believed they had to sacrifice themselves for their cause. I do not think that Scholl and his friends had any contact with working class circles. At least such connections were never mentioned during the discussions I had with them. It is an interesting fact that when he was sixteen Scholl occupied an important position in the Hitler Jugend.

Opposition Continues

It is an interesting fact that in June of this year small leaflets were being passed from hand to hand in the university of Munich, the gist of the contents being: 'Do not forget Scholl and his friends, they died for yoursake.' Thus it is clear that the Gestapo did not succeed in completely destroying this core of resistance.

Legends have grown up throughout Germany around these occurrences amongst the students of Munich. All these legends were favourable to Scholl and his friends and made heroes out of them. They fell on favourable soil and broke the silence which had seemed interminable. The action of Scholl and his friends expressed what thousands of people are feeling at the present time.

At the end of September, when I came back from Germany, practically nobody believed in a German victory. People wish for the defeat to come as soon as possible so as to bring to end a nightmare which is becoming more and more terrible.

However the terror is very severe and [weighs] on everybody; in my opinion any organised opposition is at the moment out of the question. The Gestapo and all its organisations must first of all be undermined.

The whole of the population is convinced that the S.S. is all powerful and that nothing occurs without their knowledge."

Italy

The following is the translation of an article from the second number of the illegal Italian paper "Unita Europea" [9], which appeared in Italy at the beginning of August

1942. It is entitled "Carattere della Federazione Europea", the character of the European Federation.

"When we speak of a united Europe we think of a great movement, comprising all spiritual, political and economic forces,

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which should within a few decades link together the peoples of Europe for common cultural tasks and thus liberate the continent from the spectre of war. This project, however, must not remain a vague ideal; its realisation demands a certain international structure which we must already clearly conceive in its broad outlines to-day; otherwise we shall miss our aim.

The main task of the Federation will be to safeguard international peace, to guarantee civil liberties to all peoples, to abolish and prevent economic autarky, to create a unified currency, to abolish colonial empires, i.e. the exclusive possession by a few big powers of territories rich in natural resources.

To fulfil these tasks the Federation - which will be a united political structure consisting of free peoples, not the open or veiled domination of one state over others - must be based upon a fundamental principle. The extent to which the Federation is built upon this principle will determine its success in outlawing imperialism and any form of balance-of-power policy and replacing them by the voluntary co-operation of all civilised nations. This fundamental principle is that THE FEDERATION MUST NOT BE A LEAGUE OF STATES BUT A REPUBLIC OF ALL EUROPEANS; the citizens of Europe must participate in its political and administrative activities through direct representatives and not through the medium of their national governments. They must contribute directly and not through the medium of state treasuries to the federal budget; they must be recruited directly, not through the medium of state armies, into a militia to preserve the federal order. They must be directly and not through the medium of state police be responsible to the federal executive in cases of violation of federal laws. That means that a European legal code must be created which lays down the rights and duties of federal citizens towards the Federation. To-day we are citizens of a State as well as inhabitants of a borough - that means we have a number of rights and duties towards the State apart from those towards the borough; in the same way we must to-morrow become true citizens of a European Federation. This is the precondition for the creation of a system capable of generating a European consciousness. This consciousness does not as yet exist, and a Federation cannot prosper unless its structure favours its development. It is for this reason that the use of national states as a medium for federal affairs must be avoided.

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If the federal authority were to consist of state representatives, federal problems would be decided within the narrow viewpoints of national government offices. The various national groups would continue to regard each other with mutual mistrust and jealousy. It would be again the voices of Italy, Germany, France that we would hear, not the voices of the Italian, German or French Europeans who might well understand each other on some points more easily than their respective fellow countrymen. Representation by Governments would strengthen narrow nationalism, whereas direct representation will help to create an international political life in which the people actively share and which is no longer the game of professional diplomats.

Similarly the financial contribution towards the federal administration must not be paid in the form of quotas from individual States; this would endanger the whole system. For there is no difficulty in compelling an individual to pay; a state, which is reluctant to pay, however, can be compelled to do so only through a military expedition. Similarly, if in the case of an individual

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citizen the law had to be enforced by the respective state police, obstructionism by a single state could paralyse federal power over its whole territory.

Last but not least, the military problem is of fundamental importance. We shall certainly not achieve our purpose if we do not succeed in ensuring that the armed forces are under the command of the federal power. National armies must disappear just as local militias have disappeared. If the Federation has to rely entirely or even mainly upon national troops we shall find that under the guise of federation the country with the largest army will become the dominant power and its army will carry out federal orders only so long as its national government does not give orders to the contrary. The German League (Deutscher Bund) of 1864 in which order was maintained by Prussian and Austrian troops should on no account be regarded as a real Federation of free peoples. It ended in fact in armed conflict between Prussia and Austria and the creation of the Prussian military state.

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The conception that the foundation of a federation implies the creation of a European legal code must be the guiding principle in the light of which we shall have to judge every venture launched under the name of Federation. In the light of this principle we shall accept every hopeful solution, no matter what it calls itself, and reject all - however brilliant their appearance - which are incapable of developing in this direction.

Editorische Anmerkungen

1 - „Hochland“, katholische Zeitschrift mit überkonfessionellem Autorenkreis, erschien von 1906-1941, herausgegeben von Carl Muth, nach dem Versuch der Veröffentlichung eines versteckt regimekritischen Artikels Joseph Bernharts von den Nationalsozialisten verboten.

2 - X. Die Initiale konnte nicht entschlüsselt werden.

3 - Kurt Huber (1893-1943), Musikwissenschaftler, Philosoph, Professor für Tonpsychologie und Philosophie in München, Volksliedforscher, geistiger Mittelpunkt der „Weißen Rose“, einer Widerstandsgruppe gegen die nationalsozialistische Diktatur, mit Hans Scholl und Alexander Schmorell Verfasser des Flugblatts „Aufruf an alle Deutschen“, Verhaftung und Verurteilung zum Tode (1943).

- 4 - Hans Scholl (1918-1943), Student der Medizin in München, Bruder von Sophie Scholl, Mitglied der gegen das NS-Gewaltsystem gerichteten Widerstandsgruppe „Weiße Rose“, Verhaftung beim Verteilen von Flugblättern (1943), Verurteilung zum Tode und Hinrichtung (1943).
- 5 - Alexander Schmorell (1917-1943), Student der Medizin in München, Mitglied der gegen das NS-Gewaltsystem gerichteten Widerstandsgruppe „Weiße Rose“, Flucht nach der Verhaftung seiner Freunde, Verhaftung am Tag der Beerdigung seiner Freunde, Verurteilung zum Tode und Hinrichtung (1943).
- 6 - Sophie Scholl (1921-1943), Studentin der Biologie und Philosophie in München, Schwester von Hans Scholl, Mitglied der gegen das NS-Gewaltsystem gerichteten Widerstandsgruppe „Weiße Rose“, Verhaftung beim Verteilen von Flugblättern (1943), Verurteilung zum Tode und Hinrichtung (1943).
- 7 - Christoph Probst (1919-1943), Medizinstudent in München, Mitglied der gegen das NS-Gewaltsystem gerichteten Widerstandsgruppe „Weiße Rose“, Verhaftung, Verurteilung zum Tode und Hinrichtung (1943).
- 8 - Willi Graf (1918-1943), Mitglied des katholischen Jugendverbands „Bund Neudeutschland“, nach Verbot dieses Bundes durch die Nationalsozialisten Mitglied des ebenfalls verbotenen Jugendbundes „Grauer Orden“, Anklage wegen „bündischer Umtriebe“ (1938), Mitglied der gegen das NS-Gewaltsystem gerichteten Widerstandsgruppe „Weiße Rose“ (ab 1942), Verhaftung und Verurteilung zum Tod wegen Hochverrats, Wehrkraftzersetzung und Feindbegünstigung, Hinrichtung (1943).
- 9 - „Unita Europea. Carattere della Federazione Europea“, italienische Widerstandszeitschrift des illegalen „Movimento Federalista Europeo“ (MFE), der ersten föderalistischen Vereinigung Europas, gegründet durch Spinelli, Rossi und andere Mitglieder von „Giustizia e libertà“. Altiero Spinelli (1907-1986), italienischer Politiker, als Journalist, Kommunist und Gegner des Faschismus 16jährige Gefängnisstrafe, Führer der Partito d'Azione (1944), Befürworter eines europäischen Nationalismus, Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments (1976-1986); Ernesto Rossi (1897-1967), italienischer Politiker und Journalist, Mitgründer der „Partito d'Azione“, Gegner des Faschismus, Mitbegründer des illegalen „Movimento Federalista Europeo“ (MFE; 1941), der ersten föderalistischen Vereinigung Europas. Dieser trat für eine sozialistische europäische Revolution ein.