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## **France**

We reproduce the following reports on the situation inside Germany in their original form which makes a repetition of the same facts unavoidable.

### **Muddle and Terror**

"A German official in a fairly high position - he formerly belonged to the left wing of the Zentrum - told us about the tremendous difficulties caused by the fact that many offices were run by absolutely incompetent people. The same type of people were also sent as so-called 'commissars' into factories to keep an eye on factory owners and managers who for some reason or other were no longer regarded as reliable. The decisions these people made were sometimes quite fantastic.

The muddle in the administration caused by the air-raids had reached tremendous dimensions. This official himself often filed applications or complaints with a note: 'to be dealt with in 6 months' time'. By that time many cases will have been settled automatically through new air-raids, destruction of files or similar things.

Recently we learnt that a woman employee in the German Foreign Office had been beheaded. This woman, who was the mother of a small child, had been offered an anti-Nazi leaflet which she had refused. She had, however, given a donation to the distributors of this leaflet.

Hospitals were hardly any longer to be seen in Berlin; there were, however, many hospitals underground. These did not offer safety against bombing either; for that purpose they would have had to be built 6 metres underground which in most cases was impracticable. - The shortage of doctors was indescribable. One of our friends fell ill recently and his family 'phoned for a doctor. He did not come until the afternoon of the next day.

### **German Youth**

German youth will confront us with tremendous problems. Children had in many cases lost all contact with their parents and there was absolutely no agreement between them about questions concerning the war and the regime. The youth of Germany fanatically believed in victory and regarded every one who thought differently as a traitor. These young people had no knowledge of realities and were completely devoid of critical faculties.

The following terrible case happened recently. A man who lived in a neutral country was informed that his sister had died. She was married in Germany and had a boy of eleven. The man was allowed to travel to the funeral. Until the last moment before his

return he did not find out the cause of his

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sister's death. Then his brother-in-law confided in him that his wife had made a depreciative remark about the regime, whereupon her son of eleven got into a terrible rage, took the dagger which he, as a member of the Hitler Youth, carried, and cut his own mother's throat. Nothing had happened to the boy."

Two left-wing socialists who left Germany a few months ago reported to us:

## **Opposition**

"There was general agreement in Germany that defeat was imminent. Some people still reckoned with the possibility of a negotiated peace basing their hopes upon disunity in the Allied camp. Their number was, however, decreasing.

There was no anti-Nazi organisation in Germany on a national scale, but regional and local co-operation of anti-Nazis on a non-party basis took place. There were cells and groups which styled themselves Communist Party of Germany but clung to this name mainly out of opposition to the Nazis and admiration for the Soviet Union. There were often good, comradely relations among anti-fascists who had known one another from the time before Hitler. Although there existed a great deal of solidarity between the anti-Nazi workers in the factories, generally in attitude of helplessness, especially regarding the future, prevailed.

Sometimes anti-Nazi slogans appeared on the walls. We did not see, however, any leaflets apart from those dropped by Allied air-craft.

Foreign workers were treated with great solidarity by the German workers in spite of the penalties incurred for such friendly behaviour.

Though on the whole Gestapo control had not been tightened up recently, former anti-Nazis were arrested, even if there was no evidence of any activity on their part, simply because oppositional activities were noticed in their locality. Mail inside Germany was not permanently watched by the Gestapo but often letters were opened and checked.

In spite of the shortage of workers and soldiers political crimes were draconically punished throughout. In some cases the sentenced persons were ordered to serve their sentence later and were sent to the front. The treatment of those who had served their sentence varied: Many were sent straight to the front, others were sent home and closely watched to find out their friends. Later on they were sent to a concentration camp or to the front. Jews were deported and gassed.

Sabotage was very difficult and its effect upon production small; acts of sabotage were therefore few and far between, both on the part of the German and the foreign workers. The reasons for this was not only the extremely close watch kept upon the workers but also the thorough decentralisation of production which made it in many cases impossible for the individual worker to know what he produced and how he could best do damage to the object he produced. Since the intensification of the air-raids there even seemed to be a decrease in acts of sabotage. Factories which employed more men had a higher percentage of sabotage than factories which occupied mainly women.

The pace of production was very slow. Perhaps this was due to fatigue on the part of the workers rather than to intentional sabotage. At first the air raids caused great damage to production: in many cases, however, this was repaired amazingly quickly.

Armament workers received big additional food rations. Medical attention was generally not as good as the Nazis tried to make people believe; the cause of this was shortage of doctors.

Absenteeism was strictly watched. When workers came late because of an air-raid they did not get into trouble, but if they stopped away from work for more than half a day they were severely punished.

The transport system had greatly deteriorated on account of the depreciation of irreplaceable spareparts and the air raids. Here again damage caused by bombing was often repaired at an incredible pace. Foreign workers of all nationalities were used only for certain repair jobs in the transport industry.

The contact between foreign workers and the population was good, much better than the authorities desired. When a foreign worker or a prisoner of war entered a job accompanied by a German guard the shopkeeper often said that he was sold out; but he mostly had the desired goods available when the foreigner came alone.

A large number of former left-wingers and trade unionists had kept to their old convictions; they were, however, very disillusioned and did not envisage a way out of the present situation in Germany which could be brought through forces inside Germany.

## Hopes and Disillusionments

The events in Italy had at first roused great hopes, then people became disappointed. Much had become known in Germany about the terror of the Badoglio regime against left-wingers and this had roused repulsion against it. Most people thought that there was no likely candidate for the rôle of a German Badoglio, but some considered von Manstein [1] in this connection. People were pinning their hopes upon a revolution, but they had no conception how it should come about.

Nothing was to be seen in the way of really organised preparations for the future. The hopes of the people went in the direction of a socialist Germany, but they did not desire a return to the conditions of the Weimar Republic.

A well functioning international organisation was considered as essential. Socialists hoped that the socialists of other countries would help in this direction. The anti-German resolution of last year's Labour Party Conference caused great disappointment.

Many people knew about the existence of the Moscow Committee "Free Germany" and thought that von Seydlitz [2] was either acting under pressure or that his name was used without or even against his will. The reason for this belief was probably similar to the one which explained the attitude of some Communists: since they were perturbed about Communist fraternisation with the Junkers and the military clique they

preferred to call it all a `tactical manoeuvre'.

An Allied occupation of Germany was expected; the Anglo-Saxons would be preferred to the Russians. There was great fear of the Russians, allegedly because of the experience of cruelties perpetrated by them. This accounted also for the fact that there were so few deserters in Russia.

There was no tension between the military and the civilian population as was the case in the war 1914-18, perhaps because this time the air-raids affected the whole of the population.

The respect for Hitler had vanished, often he was even looked at as a comic figure. This explained his recent keeping in the background.

The soldiers were mostly ignorant about events which did not take place in their own particular sector.

The hinterland too was very poorly informed, especially since listening in to foreign radio stations was made very difficult through the shortage of wireless valves.

As regards the attitude of bombed out people German newspaper reports were on the whole truthful. The population of the affected districts showed great solidarity and readiness to help one another which made social differences disappear. The hatred of the people was directed against the foreign enemy; they held that since the air raids did not affect military objectives they were intentionally directed against the civilian population. Again and again they were amazed that some highly important military objectives had not been attacked yet, for instance the Leunaworks, or the factories in the district of Metz which equal in importance the industry of the Ruhr district.

The registration of bombed out and evacuated people had increasingly slackened and got more and more into a muddle.

People in the reception areas resented the presence of evacuees. In most cases the relationship between evacuees and their hosts was unpleasant and, in the long run, untenable. The supply of the bombed out with even the most primitive necessities of life was getting increasingly worse.

The authority of the Church had increased. Both denominations were finding a strong response. There was no anti-semitism amongst the people. In Berlin there were still a few thousand Jews living in hiding."

## **A German Transport Worker Reported**

"I recently met some German workers whose jobs often took them abroad. They told me:

'Whenever it was possible without making ourselves too conspicuous we got hold of Swiss papers. It often happened that the left-wing papers were already sold out at noon, the same applied to some English propaganda journals which were occasionally intermingled with the Swiss papers. We attempted to take such papers (‘Weltwoche’ [3], ‘Nation’ [4] etc.) to Germany; of course, we could take only one or two copies and we had to be very careful. The other day one of us had such a paper

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sticking out of his pocket; one of his colleagues approached him. Our friend tried to hide the paper, whereupon his colleague told him: ‘There is no need to hide this paper

in front of me.' We made an experiment with the Nazi paper 'Signal' [5]. We offered it for reading to a Saarlander who was known for his Nazi sympathies. He glanced through two pages and then returned it with the remark: 'I am not interested in these fibs.' 'But it is a German paper', said a colleague. 'There are nothing but fibs', replied the other. None of those present looked at the paper.'

When I asked them whether something could be done to accelerate the end of the war, they replied:

'Who should do that? In the towns there are only women, children, old people, prisoners and foreigners left. All fit men are at the front. Who then should organise something? The factories where there are still skilled workers are closely watched. There is nothing doing.'

Sometimes painted slogans were seen on the walls in Germany. Leaflets were hardly ever distributed. People were afraid of picking up leaflets dropped by enemy planes and were extremely cautious in doing so. There were, however, a number of people who picked them up when they were not watched, who read them and passed them on to good friends.

Recently three sailors were arrested after their return from a journey. The reason was that in a public house a picture from a Swiss paper was found stuck on the wall which showed Churchill and Stalin battering the Swastika [6] with hammers. The sailors were cross-examined very thoroughly and asked where they had been while they were abroad, what people they had met, what papers they had read, what literature they had come across etc. At the end they had to be released as no connection between them and the picture could be established.

It happened very often that Russian prisoners who were sent to work on farms laid fire to the farm and then escaped. One prisoner who was badly treated by the farmer's wife murdered her and then hung himself. People who knew the murdered woman said that she was very mean, but they added in her defence that it was very difficult to treat the prisoners well because often government controllers turned up on farms to check up whether prisoners did not get more to eat or received better treatment than government orders prescribed. The 'official' function of these controllers was to check up whether the prisoners had decent billets.

German official propaganda spread the rumour that every one who escaped from Germany into Switzerland would be immediately shot by the Swiss frontier guards. Recently this rumour had the following effect: A Russian managed to cross the frontier. When he was almost half a mile inside Switzerland, a peasant met him and looked after him, then a customs official approached them. Thereupon panic overcame the Russian, he fled to the German side, fell into the hands of a German control guard and was shot.

Russian women and girls had to carry out a lot of heavy men's jobs, like unloading coal. Some of them felt quite happy and did not want to return. Others complained bitterly and hoped that the Russian soldiers would soon come and cut everybody's throat. This mood was understandable when they had experiences like the following: Belgian, French and Russian

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girls unloaded a ship. A sailor's wife wanted to do them a favour and cooked a saucepan of potatoes for them. Thereupon the Dutch foreman came, and confiscated

the potatoes. The woman was cross-examined for four hours by the Gestapo.

The situation in Berlin was said to be terrible. There were awful epidemics. Mass feeding on a large scale had to be introduced. The shops were empty because large stocks had been destroyed."

The following report was written by friends living near the Swiss border:

"The soldiers at the frontiers who used to be so arrogant that they hardly ever talked with Swiss people were now much friendlier. The number of those who obeyed orders and did not talk to us was now very small. Those who talked were fed up with the war. There was a great hatred against the S.S. who were often used for watching over the other soldiers. `The day of reckoning up with them will come, afterwards we can cross the frontier, we shall not have far to go', one of the frontier guards said. At present only married men with a family were employed for frontier guard duties; the authorities reckoned that by threatening to use members of the family as hostages they would deter the men from deserting.

I recently heard that for the production of Stukas (already before the outbreak of the war) political prisoners were used for experimental purposes. Such experiments were shown in films to foreign doctors who could study in these films the effect of atmospheric differences. They saw how in the course of these experiments blood vessels burst."

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## *Editorische Anmerkungen*

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- 1 - *Erich von Lewinski, genannt von Manstein (1887-1973), deutscher Generalfeldmarschall (1942), entwarf als Stabschef einer Heeresgruppe den Operationsplan für den Westfeldzug, Oberbefehlshaber der 11. Armee (1941, Eroberung der Krim), Führer einer Heeresgruppe (1942-1944), vergeblicher Versuch, Stalingrad zu entsetzen, Entzug des Kommandos durch Hitler (1944), Anklage und Freispruch beim Nürnberger Kriegsverbrecherprozess (1945), Verurteilung zu 18 Jahren Haft durch ein britisches Militärgericht (1949), Entlassung (1953), offizieller Berater der Bundesrepublik beim Aufbau der Bundeswehr (1953-1960).*
- 2 - *Walther von Seydlitz = Seydlitz-Kurzbach (1888-1976), Berufsoffizier, in der Schlacht um Stalingrad (1941-1942) forderte er als kommandierender General eines Armeekorps einen Ausbruch, später die Kapitulation der deutschen Truppen (1942), sowjetische Kriegsgefangenschaft (1943-1955), Gründer und Vorsitzender des Bundes deutscher Offiziere (1943-1945), später Vereinigung mit dem Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland (NKFD), Entlassung in die Bundesrepublik (1955).*
- 3 - *„Die Weltwoche“, von Manuel Gasser und Kurt von Schumacher 1933 gegründete Schweizer Wochenzeitung, die sich gegen den Nationalsozialismus einsetzte, seit 2002 Magazin mit konservativ-liberaler Ausrichtung.*
- 4 - *„Nation“, 1933 gegründete Schweizer Zeitung. Unter dem Journalisten Peter Surava*

*(1912-1995) wurde „Nation“ während der NS-Zeit zum antifaschistischen Bollwerk der Schweiz, prangerte sowohl den Faschismus in Italien als auch den Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland an, berichtete über Opfer des Nationalsozialismus und Judenghettos und unterlag deshalb der Schweizer Pressezensur, die der Zeitung „Greuelpropaganda“ vorwarf. Die Auflage der „Nation“ stieg unter Surava von 8.000 auf 120.000.*

*5 - „Signal“, nationalsozialistisches im , das eine Auflage von bis zu 2,5 Mio. erreichte und in 25 Sprachen veröffentlicht wurde.*

*6 - „Swastika“ = Hakenkreuz.*