

Germany

The following eye-witness report concerning the situation inside Germany was completed a few days before the Allied landing on the Continent. It was based on experience in about a dozen German towns.

It shows with impressive lucidity how important it is that responsible people should examine the question how a peace can be prepared which is more than a mere armistice.

Bitterness Against England

"That the war has been lost is obvious to all politically conscious people.

The ever-recurring reproaches levelled by British propaganda against the German people that they have not yet rid themselves of Hitler and that there is no difference between Germans and Nazis has created much bitterness against England. Socialists point out that long before the Anglo-Saxons realised the danger anti-Nazis in Germany had taken up the struggle against the regime hoping that Great Britain and France would back up this struggle by opposing Hitler rearmament, his defiance of treaties, etc. As nothing of that sort happened Hitler could develop his terror apparatus to such a degree of efficiency that it could eventually destroy the whole active opposition. Nobody should be surprised now that so little is to be seen in the way of active opposition against the regime: the best part of the anti-Nazi movement has either been murdered or is still in prison or concentration camp. Those who have been released after having served their sentence have been weakened physically and mentally and, as they are regarded with suspicion by the Government, they are often under a special control. Furthermore, most serious anti-Nazis are of the opinion that it would be of no use to openly show their opposition against the regime as that would lead to their complete annihilation and thus mean a further reduction of the forces needed for the reconstruction of Germany. They do, of course, as much as they think is possible to sabotage Germany's war effort - probably the opinions of people inside and outside Germany differ as to what is possible in this respect. It is difficult to say whose opinion is right. Maybe people outside imagine things to be easier because they do not live under the same conditions. German socialists point out too that the comparison with the occupied countries is unfair: there the majority of the people are united against the foreign invader whereas in Germany the patriotic factor does not exist to support the work of the opposition. On the other hand, it is possible that after all the hard years some people inside Germany gave up too early because they were simply tired-out and also saw the difficulties bigger than they really were; others did not make use of opportunities to sabotage because they misjudged their possible effect. People outside sometimes think that during the last year the terror apparatus has grown somewhat

slacker and that therefore anti-Nazi activities have a bit more scope than a few years ago. A number of instances however showed that this is a mistake. There were numerous cases where attempts to build up anti-Nazi organisations were discovered and squashed in their initial stages.

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Fear of Soviet Russia

In spite of these feelings against England most socialists would prefer Germany to be occupied by the Anglo-Saxons rather than by Soviet Russia.

They think that an Anglo-Saxon occupation would give a certain opportunity for the building up of the spirit of freedom and justice in Germany, whereas a Russian occupation would strengthen the hand of the communists which they consider to be disastrous. It appears that the influence of the communists was not as great as some people outside Germany thought. Although the fighting spirit and courage of the Russians is much admired I met a number of people who have given up their communist sympathies as a consequence of their experiences in Russia. I asked them whether they did not confuse war and peace conditions; they answered, however, that they could well distinguish what has become backward and primitive as a consequence of the war and what made the impression of being the same in peace time. It is difficult to judge now already what influence the communists will be able to exert. Their influence will become negligible if the Anglo-Saxon occupation authorities will give a chance to sincerely progressive forces to eradicate the roots of Nazism. There is complete unanimity amongst socialists as to what these roots are. If, however, the reactionaries are given a free hand the popularity of the communists will grow and great difficulties will arise.

The mass of the people are not so convinced that the war is lost as is generally assumed. Many people hope that the invasion will be repulsed and that a negotiated peace will follow. But even these people are convinced that things cannot go on as they are now for long. In spite of extremely efficient organisation on the part of the authorities the bombing considerably affected the transport system, the food situation, housing conditions, and the nerves of the people.

The Bitter Defenders

Many unpolitical people are convinced that the war will have to be fought to the "bitter end". This conviction is partly the result of Goebbels' propaganda which tells the people that the victorious Allies will enslave the whole German nation and will not make any difference between Germans and Nazis. The advocates of this tendency in the Allied countries are well known in Germany. Partly it is the consequence of a certain feeling of guilt. Many a soldier remembers the material advantages he secured for himself and his family in the occupied countries, he remembers the shooting of hostages, the fight against guerrilla 'bands', the treatment of prisoners, etc. The civilians too feel guilty in certain respects, e.g. in the case of the persecution of the Jews, through either taking part in it or tolerating it. I am of the opinion that to destroy the impression amongst the Germans that they must fight for their very existence the Allies must present them with concrete prospects for the future. That alone would make it worth while for the individual German to help bring about a defeat or at least not to try to prevent it. As the poison of Goebbels' propaganda has penetrated very deeply mere promises on the part of the Allies would now be of little use as people would regard them only as a tactical manoeuvre. It would be much more effective if the Allies would explain that it is not at

all in the interest of the Allies to carry out the threats which are sometimes uttered against the whole of the German people; that on the contrary, the German people after it has rid itself of the Nazis and the war criminals, should co-operate in the European community, as such co-operation is in the interest of a peaceful Europe.

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The Anti-Nazis

It appears that the Nazis have not succeeded in shaking the convictions of the conscious enemies of the regime. There are, however, some former left-wingers who, although they have remained convinced anti-Nazis, still defend the one or the other measure taken by the Nazis, such as a certain amount of social welfare work for women and children, improvements in factories, fixing of prices - measures which as such are quite good but in the hands of the present German government serve war and fascism.

The Opposition

There is certainly no large-scale organised opposition. Attempts at building up such an opposition were nipped in the bud and valuable forces were thus destroyed. The discovery by the Gestapo of the movement 'European Union' and of the organisation led by general von Hammerstein were the two heaviest blows suffered by the opposition. Apart from these two important instances I know of a number of other cases: recently twenty workers of the Bochumer Verein [1] were arrested because they tried to form a shop steward committee. I heard again and again that in most big workshops there is a tacit agreement amongst the workers as to who is to be regarded as their man of confidence.

It is quite certain that the former enemies of the regime still keep in contact with one another wherever they can do so without making themselves conspicuous. Anti-Nazi activities are carried on by local groups consisting of close friends or by individuals who do not confide in anybody. The opinion is generally that open acts of sabotage which might lead to the discovery of those who have perpetrated them are of no use to-day, as they would only result in the annihilation of the last valuable forces who could help in the reconstruction of Germany; moreover, the effect of such activities would be quite out of proportion to their losses. Anti-Nazis are generally agreed that the few remaining active forces should be preserved for the moment when the military collapse of the Nazis enables their enemies to take concerted action, either on a national or a regional scale. As long as their military power is not seriously shaken activities from inside are of little avail as they are immediately squashed and thus deprived of any worthwhile effect.

If the forces outside would give more encouragement and help by showing positive prospects, more would be done inside Germany. Even now, more is certainly done than people outside hear. The so-called 'pin-prick' sabotage which is practised every day by thousands of anti-Nazis has quite a considerable effect. It is important to remind people inside Germany again and again of all the small possibilities which do not involve any danger for them and yet can cause quite a lot of harm to the Nazi war machinery. The daily humdrum and worries undermine people's energy and as a result they do not exploit all possibilities or discover new ones. This should also be taken into account when writing the leaflets which are to be dropped over Germany. It is no longer necessary to expose the wickedness of the regime; those who have not realised it up to now will not be converted by leaflets either, and the others are convinced. Quotations

from Nazi leaders whose prophecies have definitely proved wrong should be publicised again and again as nothing is more apt to shake the confidence in their present promises and prophecies."

Editorische Anmerkungen

1 - „Bochumer Verein“ = „Bochumer Verein für Gussstahlfabrikation“, 1842 von und gegründet, zunächst Herstellung von Gussstahlglocken nach eigenem Patent, in den 1960er Jahren komplett von Krupp übernommen.