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Report from Inside Germany

We received the following report a few days ago. It was written by a German worker who was employed by one of the biggest German armament factories. The report describes the situation after the generals' revolt.

"I had my holidays from 28th July till August 7th. I spent three days in Leipzig, two days in the Riesengebirge in Silesia and two days in Berlin. The rest of the time I spent travelling. The journey in the overcrowded trains was one long ordeal.

Leipzig

On my first day of travel I arrived in Leipzig, or rather what was left of that town. Our train did not arrive at the main station as it was almost completely destroyed. Any traffic that can still, or again, get into the station is exclusively reserved for troops and goods. Passengers had to alight two kilometres outside where an emergency station was erected. There was an irregular bus service between the emergency station and the town. G. met me there. We walked to the town. On the way G. told me a bit about recent events. I shall try to give you an idea of the mood of the population.

Nazis

There is a small minority who want the war to go on at all costs. They are the 100 % Nazis for whom the 'peace will be more terrible than the war', as Goebbels said. About 5 % of the civil population belong to this group. They stand and fall with the Nazi regime. They are hated by the rest of the population. They hardly notice that there is a war on, as they have secured for themselves such a high standard of living. I need not waste time telling you any more about this group.

Apathy

Then there is the great mass of war-weary people who want peace more than anything else. In their eyes every additional day of the war makes the disaster only worse. It is hardly believable how apathetic these people are towards everything else. This apathy is in the main a negative factor; it contains, however, a small positive element. I consider as negative the fact that these people seem to take no notice of the death sentences, the atrocious methods of warfare, the persecutions, etc. They only wake up when they do not get their rations or when they see how arrogantly the wives of Nazi officials behave, or when they are faced with Nazi and S.S. officers. On such occasions an oppositional whispering campaign starts. It then sometimes happens that working class and/or middleclass women vent their feelings by 'unintentionally' knocking or pushing the wives of

Nazi officials, even at times knocking them down with their bikes. These are unmistakable signs of the feeling of the population against the Nazis. The positive part of the apathy consists mainly in the fact that from indifference the workers in the factories work slowly. Many of them are not conscious of thus committing sabotage for which they could be extremely severely punished. Some of them vent their feelings by very rude remarks, the essence of which is that they are fed up and want to be left in peace.

Anti-Fascists

Others are consciously working against the regime. They are the conscious anti-fascists who never supported Hitler and do to-day less than ever, and who are deliberately working for his overthrow. They carry out sabotage, distribute handbills and leaflets, chalk anti-war slogans on the walls and `agitate' in the air-raid shelters, sometimes quite successfully: Sometimes a `Blockwarden' or a Nazi official who happens to be in the shelter during an air raid gets a good hiding not because he is a Nazi, but because he fails to make room for a woman with children, or pushes a pregnant woman or a similar incident.

Despair

It would be wrong, however, to think that all war-weary people are of one opinion. The views of this big section of the population are very divergent. There are people amongst them who would be quite satisfied with the Nazis if they had not taken their little business away, or if they had not forced them to close their bakery or hairdresser's shop. Others are war-weary because they have lost several close relations in the war: their misfortune turns them against the war, and therefore against the Nazis. The general mood is one of despair. I had the feeling of being upon a volcano which might erupt at any minute. A terribly depressed atmosphere prevails, no laughter, no jokes (apart from occasional obscene ones); sometimes women in factories or in the street become hysterical.

Food

The one thing that prevents open outbreaks of despair is, in my opinion, the comparatively favourable food situation, which is still far better than in 1917. But people have an idea that the coming winter will be disastrous with regard to food, too, and they hope that an armistice before the beginning of the winter will at least save them from the worst in this respect.

Housing

If only a fraction of the bombed-out people [is] to be sheltered in emergency houses, hundreds of thousands of such homes have still to be built. This, however, will be impossible because of lack of material and man power. This prospect weighs upon people like a terrible nightmare.

Opposition

You will ask, very reasonably: Why don't these people do anything to end this war? In reply to that one must state that not all people are inactive in this respect. There is an

active opposition, which is numerically by no means small. But their actions are not coordinated. Only the extreme left wing of the workers fights together with the left middleclass: Former communists, a number of socialdemocrats, former free trade unionists and a number of catholics and protestants are united. Such units, however, exist only in a factory, a residential quarter, or only in a street. There is no co-ordination. This is the weakness of the opposition. Occasionally there is contact between two or more factories, between two or more towns. A very important reason why the opposition is not united is, in my opinion, the fact that their views regarding post-war plans are too divergent.

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The Generals' Plot

For instance the attempt on Hitler life did not make impression upon the civilian population, especially among the working class. Sometimes people even express their satisfaction at the execution of the officers; not because they consider them to be traitors, or because they value the life of Hitler so highly, but because they think that this officers' clique, which had hitherto collaborated with the Nazis in this war through thick and thin, were acting only in their own interest. They only wanted to get into power to resume their reactionary domination of the people.

'Free Germans'

The attempt on Hitler has brought up again the problem of the Seydlitz Committee in Moscow. People know a lot about this committee, especially in Berlin. But I shall refer to this later. People in Leipzig are asking whether these `Seydlitz-people' are intended to play a special role after the war. Are they to become the masters of Germany? It is interesting to note people's reactions to this question. It might be thought that specially in working class circles there would be a great sympathy for this committee which has his seat in Moscow. This, however, is not the case. Generally the workers are afraid that these officers will get into power positions. The upper middle class has, of course, much less to say against these people.

Post War Policy

You see, it is again the social question which plays the main role; this is also the reason why the opposition is still split. Although all are agreed that a democratic form of the State is desirable, their views differ as to the contents of this democracy. I have spoken to a number of former communists, former socialdemocrats, workers and middleclass people who have become proletarian and are now working in factories. The workers, without exception, want a social and democratic republic; they have, however, no clear conception about concrete details. They are agreed, however, that the main features of this republic are to be the elimination of the power of the capitalists, the bank magnates, and of the Junkers, who are to be deprived of their estates. Another question which is much discussed: how is the available housing accommodation to be distributed? What about the distribution of food stuff and consumers' goods, in so far as they will be produced or imported immediately after the war? All these sections of the population are prepared to adapt their lives to democratic principles. There are, of course, a number of people who demand harsh punishment for those responsible for the war and for the crimes committed against German anti-Nazis and other peoples and races. Quite a few of them will take justice in their own hands, and it will be rough

justice at that! A number of those who have lost their property are chiefly interested in the question how to retrieve it. Others put up with their losses with the reflection that their standard of living was really no better in the old days. But they too, are interested in the question what sort of living they will be able to make after the war. Then there is another group of people, very small, who openly state that they will fight for their old property. Almost all small savers have resigned themselves to the fact that they have already forfeited all their savings; they state this sometimes with regret, sometimes with complete indifference, sometimes with terrible anger. It is interesting that the decisive factor in these cases is not the amount of savings at stake but the illusions which their owner fostered. I want to mention still another sign of war weariness and opposition against the Nazis: soldiers, non-commissioned officers and low-ranking officers who have deserted the army are hiding all over Germany. The people who shelter them do it sometimes because they are relations and want to help them

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personally, others do it for political reasons. War-weariness is the main tenor of life in Germany. The fear of what is to come is enormous. Nobody has any idea of what it will be like; will the German people be made slaves? Some are optimists and others are pessimists regarding this question. That was the situation in Leipzig in summer 1944.

Berlin

In Berlin the main features of the situation are almost the same. What is interesting there as compared with Leipzig is the fact that people have more definite views there regarding the post-war order. Especially workers there would welcome a Russian occupation, as they hope then to be able to introduce a socialist order. They do not believe, for instance, that the officers in the Seydlitz Committee will play a role after the war. They believe that the Russians will drop these people when it comes to solving the social and political problems. Those amongst the officers who oppose social progress will have to go. I was in Berlin for the first time [for] 11 years. It looked awful. The bombardment had caused terrific damage. I can't and do not want to enumerate it all. In spite of it all there is on the whole no hatred felt against the Anglo-Saxons. In the air-raid shelters the officials do not succeed in creating an atmosphere of hatred against the Allies although they try extremely hard. People sit about apathetically and generally do not even listen to them.

July 20th

Now I want to tell you a bit about the consequences of the attempt on Hitler's life. The terror was tremendously intensified, it is true. And still the effect of the terror was incomparatively smaller than two or three years ago. This may sound incredible. The reason for this is that to-day the handling of the terror apparatus is solely the job of the S.S. and the Gestapo. Millions of people who in former times were the most despicable informers have completely stopped this business. Informing has become rather rare. On the other hand, the S.S. and the Gestapo are all the more ruthless whenever they catch anybody. And they still catch a lot. The papers do not publish even 10 % of the death sentences, not to speak of the prison sentences. The concentration camps are again overcrowded. In the same way as the plot of the officers left the people indifferent they are not moved by the greatly intensified persecution of the aristocrats either. Indiscriminate arrests increase.

Workers

At the same time the government tries to win the favour of the working class. The Nazis try to make out that there was never a difference between the people and the Nazis, but even this propaganda makes no impression. Even the speeches of the most brilliant speakers produce no other reaction than remarks such as: 'all these are just words, no convincing arguments'. During the compulsory factory meetings there is frosty silence, no response, just dull resignation. Everybody feels relieved when these meetings are over. Then a whispering campaign starts and, as far as possible, discussions take place.

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The War is Lost

I asked many people about their opinion regarding the end of the war and as to who would win the war. (Such questions I could, of course, ask only people to whom I had been introduced.) Nearly all agreed that the war is definitely lost for Germany. Some people still believe in the possibility of a negotiated peace with the British and Americans, others in a negotiated peace with the Russians. But as I said before, the great majority are aware of the fact that Germany has lost the war and they are greatly worried about what reparations will have to be paid. As to the question when the war would end the opinions ranged from two to four months. The expectation of an early finish of the war is not just wishful thinking, it is based upon an estimation of the military situation. The Russian armies - which the Nazis were supposed to have wiped out long ago - now push forward with greater strength than ever. The underestimation of the strength of the Russians is thought to be Hitler's biggest miscalculation. People in Germany, with a few exceptions, believed Hitler's statements about the annihilation of the Russian armies. Had this, however, been Hitler's only miscalculation and misstatement, his prestige would not have suffered the heavy blow it did; the fact that the British and Americans also broke down the Atlantic Wall had an infinite greater effect upon the people than the bombardments.

I am full of optimism and hope that we shall meet very soon."