

[Seite: - 1 -]

Germany

The Hell of the Third Reich

Reports written in Germany in October 1944 state that as compared with a few months ago people are more willing now to help towards the overthrow of the Nazi regime. There are two predominant ideas in their minds: the war should be finished as soon as possible and the world at large should know that a better Germany not only exists but is anxiously awaiting the opportunity to help to overthrow the Nazi regime. Anti-fascists inside Germany are convinced that the outside world has never had reason to doubt their willingness to work against the Nazis; from the very start their underground struggle has been countless victims. Moreover, they fought Hitler at a time when many of those who to-day accuse of inactivity the progressive elements inside Germany had not realised what the Nazi danger really meant.

Of course, particulars of anti-fascist work inside Germany cannot be published. The following instances indicate against what tremendous odds they have to fight:

1) In X. a former free trade unionist was arrested because he refused to participate in a training course for Nazi speakers. After great difficulty he managed to get brought to trial, and was acquitted. His wife was then instructed to bring his clothes. She thought he would be released, but they only took the clothes from her. Since then nothing has been heard of the man.

[Seite im Original:] - 2-

2) In a factory air-raid shelter bitter complaints were often made about the situation. As this increased the S.S. came on to the scene and arrested a few of the men, who have not been seen since. A gloomy silence now reigns in the shelter.

3) Instances of shooting have increased during recent months. Formerly, people who after heavy air-raids gave vent to their feelings were tried. Nowadays they are often shot on the spot. In many instances, however, people who were shot expressed themselves not only in words but also in deeds. But the short shrift given to such people has a very discouraging effect on the others. It creates the impression that even acts of determined opposition are of no use: No one will know about them except those who carry them out; and they are either simply liquidated or terribly intimidated.

4) We have heard that the Dutch and Polish S.S. men are even worse than the German S.S. After heavy raids these foreign S.S. formations are used against the population; they are supposed to be especially ruthless on such occasions.

5) The possibilities of desertion become increasingly less. For the last few weeks more sentries have been stationed on the Rhine. There are three sentries within one

kilometre. A short while ago two German soldiers tried to cross the Rhine. They were shot at, one of them died on the spot, the other was brought ashore alive but died soon afterwards.

In view of such experiences all politically trained people think that the Nazis will not capitulate; they will rather let the whole of the German nation be wiped out. Many reckon that Himmler will use gas against his own compatriots.

Many people inside Germany believe in the existence of secret weapons which will work wonders. Most people, however, expect that the use of such weapons will only provoke retaliation on the part of Germany's enemies and thus prolong the war. As preparations are continuously made in Germany for protection against poison gas many people think that these new weapons have something to do with gas and that the Allies will retaliate in the same manner.

Help for Enemy Airmen and Jews

In spite of cruel penalties, British and American airmen who have baled out have repeatedly been helped to escape. Some

[Seite im Original:] - 3-

peasants have been astute enough to protect themselves by reporting to the Gestapo after the airman they had helped has got safely away.

A Jew just escaped from Germany told us the following facts: "I know that many Germans gave great assistance to the Jews throughout the years of the Hitler regime. They continue to do so although they know they are risking their lives. They are mostly comrades, socialists and communists. But often unpolitical people help just out of the goodness of their heart. One of my friends, for instance, gave shelter to Jews. In the course of the years I was one of five people to whom he gave refuge. Of course, we could not go out. A communist who knew one of the five, asked how we managed about food and heard that we were starving. As he had a good job in a food shop he then regularly got food for us. At first I thought that he just took the things. Afterwards I heard that the woman who owned the shop was dependent upon the services of that man, as her husband was away on military service. But apart from this she had no objection to helping people who were persecuted by the regime. For many years people in different parts of Germany gave me shelter from the Gestapo."

Not Victory, but War to the bitter End

The following are answers of a young Roman Catholic from Southern Germany to questions put to him:

Q.: "What do your friends think of Nazi strategy? Has the number of those who believe in victory increased or decreased since the beginning of the year? And what are the grounds [!] for their views?"

A.: "The true Nazis still believe that Germany will win. Their reason has been obliterated through years of Nazi training, they therefore believe that Hitler can work wonders, for instance with the 'wonder weapon'.

The average citizen who was never quite on the side of the Nazis does not like to identify himself with them to-day - but he demonstrates his disagreement only on

occasions where there is no risk. He no longer believes in victory but thinks that the war will go on until Germany is wiped out.

Hope of victory has tremendously decreased this year for obvious reasons. The successful invasion, the big

[Seite im Original:] - 4-

Allied victories, the failure of V1. Goebbels announced that by a lighting attack London would be destroyed. But people know from the Nazis' own reports that after flying bombs had been in operation for several months London was still standing and carrying on."

Q.: "What is the activity of the anti-fascists? Are they watched now even more closely than before? Have arbitrary arrests taken place?"

A.: "There is certainly a special contact between many anti-fascists. As people must be extremely cautious this contact is only known to people directly concerned. (The members of the N.S.D.A.P. are trained to an increasing degree as spies and their power is enormous.) I know for instance a circle of people - miners, industrial and agricultural workers, tradesmen, doctors and students -, who have all contact with one another. They have one political aim: to do away with Hitler and his accomplices. The most important tasks of these men and women are to enlarge their circle, to collect and to circularise news and to keep an eye open for all chances to help in the overthrow of the regime.

Many arrests take place, mainly amongst bombed-out people because they often make abusive remarks. There are a good few old anti-Nazis amongst them who are denounced by Nazi spies as being 'due for arrest'.

All political prisoners are being put into concentration camps.

Recently many soldiers were put into prison, mainly because of offences committed against the regulations or because they passed on military secrets.

I myself spent two years in a concentration camp.

The watch over the citizens would certainly have been increased had it not been for the general confusion which is greatest in the frontier districts because of the many bombed-out evacuees, the foreign workers and the troops."

Q.: "What do you know about sabotage in the Third Reich?"

A.: "At present the most important kind of sabotage consists in the attempt of the German workers to prevent the detection of the sabotage done by foreign workers and to start such activities. There is sabotage in factories, though sabotage of the transport system is still rare - the anti-fascists are probably reserving it for later occasions. I only know of three cases of transport sabotage; these happened just

[Seite im Original:] - 5-

at the time of the Allied invasion. Loss of tools is often reported. All descent people consider it a matter of honour to go slow.

In spite of very strict counter-measures an increasing number of people report sick. This is due in part to the worsening of the food situation and also to the long

working hours.

The transport system is deteriorating. The Nazis try to avoid employing foreigners on transport work, especially in frontier districts. Bombing has caused considerable damage.

Many peasants make false statements regarding agricultural production to reduce their deliveries. There are big secret food dumps."

Q.: "What do you know concerning foreign workers?"

A.: "Apart from the real Nazis the German workers are in the main on good terms with the foreign workers. Probably some of them want to keep on the right side of the foreigners, who might be a help to them after the defeat of Germany.

The anti-Nazis often have an excellent contact with the foreigners. The output of the foreign workers is low, except in agriculture and in small factories. This is probably due to the fact that in small enterprises they are better treated and perhaps have more liberty than in the big factories. There is a mine in my home district where German and Russian workers were punished because of common sabotage.

Most of the workers and foremen in the heavy industry are non-Nazis. In view of the most recent events on the various fronts they fully understand the apathy of the foreign workers. But as there are spies everywhere they are careful not to demonstrate their sympathies. German and foreign workers use every opportunity for co-operation as this is in their own interest."

Q.: "What is the attitude towards political parties and trade unions?"

A.: "There are no organised party units. Even loyalty to trade unionism is overshadowed to-day by the feeling of solidarity which unites all anti-Nazis. They all expect the future to be very hard, but the Gestapo and the Nazi party are hell for them, and they must be wiped out at all costs."

[Seite im Original:] - 6-

Q.: "How will the regime collapse? Have preparations been made for a future struggle against the former Nazis?"

A.: "I can only speak as a Southern German. The onslaught of the Allies is expected to extend from Frankfurt to Constance or Munich. A development similar to that in Italy is considered unlikely as the spies inside the Nazi party are very much on the alert. It is, however, thought possible that officers of high rank will make another attempt, similar to the one in [July] this year, but more successful. The disappearance of Hitler from the political arena would signal the collapse on the home front. The majority of middle-class people would welcome the military collapse as long as they were sure that Germany would be occupied by Britain and America. People are terribly afraid of a Russian occupation.

The achievements of the Russian troops have made a great impression, all the more as during the rapid German advance most Germans regarded the Russians as inefficient soldiers.

Most politically interested people have no conception as to the future political parties and movements. In Southern Germany the overthrow of Prussianism and

militarism is expected. People also reckon that Prussia might be separated from the rest of Germany.

All want severe punishment of the Nazis when they have been overthrown. The leading Nazis will not succeed in escaping or hiding themselves. There are sufficient anti-Nazis who are already keeping lists of them and watching them closely. Some old Nazis are now trying to efface themselves. But the anti-Nazis are not to be deceived about their identity and they have not forgotten their deeds.

People who were active in the Weimar Republic are hardly ever mentioned in connection with the reconstruction of Germany. Reliance is placed mainly upon the Allies and the help of the anti-Nazis."

Q.: "What is the situation in the Wehrmacht?"

A.: "As to desertions no details are known. But we hear about deserters from soldiers on leave and from personal friends. If they are caught they are cruelly punished. Unpolitical people in the Wehrmacht are just as sick of it as those who are fundamentally opposed to the war. Only the S.S. and the Hitler Youth are fighting fanatically. They know that

[Seite im Original:] - 7-

they will get no quarter.

The relationship between the S.S., the S.A. and the Wehrmacht has obviously deteriorated. Every soldier on leave mentions this fact when he is at home and can talk freely. The authority of Hitler has been very much undermined and decreases with every defeat.

It is terrible how uninformed about the events on other fronts the soldiers are who return from the front. In fact they get to know nothing at all, unless they go home on leave."

Q.: "What is the effect of Allied propaganda?"

A.: "Leaflets containing factual reports and statistics, especially if they are illustrated, are very welcome and make a great impression. Such leaflets should stress above all that after the war anti-Nazis will be treated in quite a different way from the Nazis. Such assurances encourage anti-Nazis in their activities. If however, they are always told that their future will be no better than the Nazis they lose heart to continue their dangerous work.

All my friends listen in to foreign wireless stations, mainly to the B.B.C. They would specially welcome instructions as to how they should behave as the Allied armies advance and what measures on the part of the Gestapo are to be expected. Unfortunately, the workers' news in the evening is always very much jammed. It would be a great advantage if a way could be found of avoiding this because then people could hear without having their wireless on loudly.

Many chain letters are in circulation, they mainly contain prophecies concerning military developments. They find the best response amongst the agricultural population."

Q.: "What attitude do the bombed-out people take with regard to the continuation of the war?"

A.: "German propaganda is spreading many lies concerning the mood of those who have been bombed out. In most cases they are completely apathetic and glad to be still alive. Later on they become aware that they have lost all, as it is practically impossible to replace destroyed goods. The money compensation they receive is soon spent on the Black Market. Furniture cannot be bought. As regards clothing, the utmost they get is one outfit.

The authorities still keep a strict control. The

[Seite im Original:] - 8-

labour exchange and the labour front compete in getting bombed-out people back on to the labour market. Non-Nazis are very bitter against Hitler. In a much-bombed town slogans were chalked: 'Down with the assassin of the people Hitler!' (Schlagt den Massenmörder Hitler tot!)

Sometimes the wrath of the people is also directed against the Allies. Some naive people think that the Allies could bomb the factories and the houses of the Nazi leaders without hitting working class houses.

We were surprised to find that some districts have not yet been bombed although they have new industries - which have been moved away from danger zones - aerodromes, railway lines, etc. This holds good, for instance for parts of Southern Germany where during daylight attacks important military targets could have been hit without much injury to the civilian population.

The idea that the will to fight has increased among the bombed-out people is a pure invention of Goebbels. In Southern Germany there have been very angry scenes between the local population and the evacuees from Northern Germany. The reason for these was partly that the evacuees intensify the already existing shortage of consumption goods."

Q.: "Have the Churches gained in moral authority?"

A.: "The moral authority, especially of the Roman Catholic Church, has increased because in their sermons the priests have often shown great courage in expressing their views on the present regime."