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France and Germany

The French weekly „Libertés" reproduced a few weeks ago an article on „The Position of the German Workers" written by a German trade unionist living in this country, which was a reprint from the October issue of the „Railway Service Journal" **[1]**. In answer to it a French worker wrote the following letter which was published in "Libertés" of February 16th, 1945:

"What do the German People think?"

I lived fourteen months in Germany, in Berlin; from October, 1942 till December, 1943. Together with five hundred and eighty workers from my factory I went as a worker for the `releve' (exchange of French Prisoners of War in Germany for French civilian workers). We were sent to various engineering works in the capital of the Reich.

I tried to get to know what the German workers thought and at our fortnightly meetings we compared notes regarding the situation in the German factories, and the reaction of the German workers to the events of the war.

In Berlin we never came across any trace of a German clandestine organisation; there was never a leaflet in the workshop, never a inscription in the underground or any other public place, nothing; we did not see anything of the Communist Party nor of any other workers' organisation. There was nothing on the part of the foreign workers either; I tried to bring the French trade unionists who were deportees like myself into some form of organisation. But they refused, making all sorts of excuses; the comrades who had belonged to the Communist or Socialist Party were not to be persuaded either.

In spite of this lack of organisation there are anti-Nazi elements within the German working class and amongst the small tradesmen; the lack of organisation is due to the vigilance of the police and of the members of the Nazi Party inside the factories and inside the workers' blocks of flats.

I want to give some examples which come into my mind in this connection:

One evening on my return from work to the camp I called upon the Camp Leader (Lagerfuehrer), as was my habit, in order to submit to him our claims regarding our billets, our mail, the cleaning of our rooms, etc. That evening he said to me: `Radio, dead.' I did not understand him as his set functioned perfectly and I fetched a comrade of mine, an electrician. Then we got the explication: his set had to be repaired and he had taken it to town; there they had taken out the sort wave lengths. To his great joy my comrade put them in again. I said to him: `Are you listening in to the Tommies, the British?' `No, no.' But then he put his finger to his mouth and said: `War lost for the Germans'.

I often went to have a glass of beer with some good comrades in a little inn near the camp. The daughter of the innkeeper

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spoke a bit of French and sometimes we went into the kitchen and sat around the family table to polish up her French. Naturally we put questions to one another about life and people in our countries. One of the comrades dropped a remark about the picture of Hitler in the shop (all shops have such a picture) and asked the girl: 'Are there many Germans who like Hitler?' The girl started thinking, looked at her father and mother and answered: 'It is difficult to say, for the simple reason that it would not do us any good to say that we do not like him.' We then put them the question: 'What if you would remove the picture from your shop?' The father answered: 'It is better to leave it there, so that no one knows what we are thinking.'

One evening in the factory (I worked eight days night shift and eight days day shift) a German worker, a turner with whom we often talked, said to me: 'I am a Communist'. I wondered, was he serious or was this a provocation? What a dilemma! I replied that I was a Republican, as this was not a dangerous thing to say. I immediately warned my comrades to be careful with him and he soon noticed that we did not trust him. During the night he showed me his old C.P. cards. Now, at last, I sang to him quite softly the International and the Red Flag. He pressed my hand with tears in his eyes and I also could not control my emotion. He was the only one I knew who wished for the defeat of Germany and I spoke to him about the Spartakusbund, about Scheidemann^[2] and about Rosa Luxemburg^[3].

One day a comrade in my factory who worked next to me fetched me to come to his machine; there one of our German fellow-workers drew a swastika on his apron and, pointing to some German workers, said to us: 'No good, be careful, Nazis.' We understood and within a week we knew who were the Nazis in the factory.

The pace of work in Germany was slower than in France, that surprised us very much. But it did not prevent some Frenchmen from working very fast; they did it not in order to help the Germans but to earn more money, they even asked to be allowed to work on Sundays. There were not many of them, however. When we arrived the German workers produced one aeroplane wing per shift; the Belgian and French, and specially the Flemish, produced two, three, and later four. The German workers cursed about the pace and the big output of the foreigners. Together with some comrades I felt obliged to change that, much to the satisfaction of the German comrades.

I hold no brief for the Nazi regime; I got to know it only too well. I saw some comrades coming back from labour camps looking like walking corpses and we had to use what little money we had in our solidarity funds and parcels we received from our organisation in Paris to give them a bit of food. But to make wholesale accusations against the German people is another matter. Unfortunately, chauvinism is in fashion at present and our comrades are affected by it, even those in proletarian organisations.

To sum up and to conclude this long letter: There are in Germany sound revolutionary elements who are opposed to Nazism. They are, however, isolated from one another. What they need is cohesion, something to unite them. What will be this cement? "

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France

"The Populaire" of February 18th - 19th published the following article by Vincent Auriol, one of the French Socialist leaders.

"French Security

In the hearts of the French people France has not ceased to occupy the position she held throughout her history. True to her treaties and her loyalties she stood almost alone in 1939 when she took up the fight for Liberty. She faced the entire German force which was then not engaged in any other front. Thanks to de Gaulle she stood by her alliances on June 18th, 1940. She stayed in the war. She placed at the disposal of the United Nations her resources and the bases of her vast Empire. She has helped them to throw the enemy back beyond the Rhine. If to-day she is not in a position to mobilise millions of men this is due to the fact that her older age-groups are prisoners of war and her younger ones are short of arms, as owing to the shortage of raw-materials she cannot produce them.

To forget this or to penalise France because when she was deeply wounded she gave way to numerical superiority would be an injustice on the part of the Allies which would only harm the future peace.

The strength of a nation, however, is not solely vested in its army or economic power. In this respect France is no match to the big Allied nations who extend over whole continents. But her radiation, her prestige in the eyes of the free peoples, is immense, due to her traditional defence of universal human values. It is the mistake of our foreign policy to allow this to be forgotten, and even to forget it ourselves.

Certainly, we must safeguard our security. This problem is not the same to-day as it was a hundred years ago. The technique of war has brought about great changes. Montgomery [4] in crossing the Rhine, and Eisenhower [5] the Channel and the Mediterranean, have shown that strategic frontiers no longer exist. With the new chemical inventions what will war be like to-morrow?

But this gigantic struggle which has now lasted over five years has also shown that one people alone cannot win the war; that the security of the world is indivisible, just as the safeguard of peace [is] indivisible.

To sacrifice collective security, and even certain alliances, in exchange for territorial protection of doubtful value would be a grave mistake which would lower the prestige of France, involve her in risky adventures and do harm to her real security.

It is desirable that there should be in Europe - in the industrial districts of the Rhine and also of Eastern Germany - air and motorised contingents of an INTERNATIONAL FORCE which would forestall any danger. They would, at the same time, guarantee the INTERNATIONAL exploitation of those industries whose former owners, the industrial magnates of Germany, will be expropriated. This form of security, which has an international character, is the only one which can preserve peace and at the same time protect the soil of France.

An alliance with one nation, however strong it may be, is not adequate to secure a stable peace and world prosperity.

We have welcomed the Franco-Soviet Pact. We are perturbed, however, about the absence of Franco-British treaty, especially in view of some statements which indicate that its conclusion depends upon the recognition of our rights on the right bank of the Rhine. FOR US, HOWEVER, ALLIANCES CANNOT AND MUST NOT BE ANYTHING BUT FOUNDATION STONES FOR A FEDERALIST ORGANISATION OF EUROPE AND THE WORLD, COMPRISING ALL STATES AND ALL DEMOCRATIC NATIONS AND HAVING AT ITS DISPOSAL, LIKE EVERY CIVILISED COMMUNITY, ITS GOVERNMENT, ITS JUSTICE, AND ITS FORCE.

Idealism? Utopia? - To-morrow we shall see."

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[Internationalisation of the Sources of Raw Material]

The following short note appeared in the French Socialist Weekly "Libertes" of February 23 nd, 1945.

"The editorial of `Combat' (the biggest French Resistance paper) dared to advocate the internationalisation of the sources of raw-material.

Commenting on this `L'Humanité' [6], (the paper of the French Communist Party) dated February 17th, wrote that this was a `Hitlerite Demand', and that `Combat' was, in this respect, a tool of Goebbels.

We want to recall to our comrades of `L'Humanité' the following sentence:

They will endeavour, ... to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access on equal terms to the trade and to the raw-materials of the world ...

This statement is part of Point 4 of the Atlantic Charter, signed by Churchill and Roosevelt [7]. We hope that `L'Humanité' will not accuse them of taking over the Nazi slogan of the internationalisation of raw-materials. Moreover, the Declaration of the United Nations of January 1st, 1942, to which the U.S.S.R. was a signatory, is based on the Atlantic Charter.

We expect therefore that the Russians will not refuse to place at the disposal of the international community the oil of Baku - after the needs of their ravaged country have been taken into consideration - as soon as the Americans and British submit to international control the oil of the Royal-Dutch and Standard Oil trusts."

Erratum

Our previous report should have been dated 27th February, not January.

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- 1 - „*Railway Service Journal*“, möglicherweise englische Übersetzung des Titels einer französischen Gewerkschaftszeitung für Eisenbahner. Daten konnten nur für eine britische Zeitschrift gleichen Namens ermittelt werden.
 - 2 - Philipp Scheidemann (1865-1939), sozialdemokratischer Politiker (Eintritt in die SPD: 1883) und politischer Redakteur sozialdemokratischer Zeitungen, Mitglied des SPD-Parteivorstands (1911-1920), MdR (1903-1918), Vizepräsident des Reichstags (1918), Staatssekretär in der Regierung Max von Badens (1918), Ausrufung der deutschen Republik (9. November 1918), Mitglied des Rats der Volksbeauftragten (1918-1919), erster Reichskanzler (1919), erneut MdR (1920-1933), Oberbürgermeister von Kassel (1920-1925), Auswanderung nach Dänemark (1933).
 - 3 - Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), Politikerin, Mitgründerin der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei Polens und Litauens (1893), Übersiedlung nach Berlin (1899), SPD (ab 1899), führende Theoretikerin des linken Flügels, mit Unterbrechungen inhaftiert (1915-1918), zusammen mit Karl Liebknecht Initiatorin des Spartakusbundes (1917), der sich von 1917 bis 1918 der USPD anschloss, Mitgründerin der KPD (Jahreswechsel 1918/1919), nach dem „Spartakusaufstand“ Verhaftung, zusammen mit Karl Liebknecht durch Freikorpsoffiziere ermordet (Januar 1919).
 - 4 - Bernard Law Montgomery of Alamain (1887-1976), britischer Feldmarschall, Frontoffizier im Ersten Weltkrieg (1914-1918), Oberbefehlshaber der 8. Armee, die in Afrika (El Alamain) die Wende der alliierten Kriegsführung einleitete (1942), Landung auf Sizilien und Vormarsch auf Süditalien (1943), Oberbefehlshaber der 21. Heeresgruppe bei den Landungen der Alliierten in der Normandie und beim Vormarsch nach Nordwestdeutschland (1944), Oberbefehlshaber der britischen Besatzungstruppen in Deutschland und Mitglied des Alliierten Kontrollrats für Deutschland (1946-1947), Chef des Britischen Empire-Generalstabs (1946-1948), Stellvertreter des Oberbefehlshabers der NATO-Streitkräfte (1951-1958).
 - 5 - Dwight David Eisenhower (1890-1969), US-amerikanischer Militär und republikanischer Politiker, leitete als Oberkommandierender der alliierten Streitkräfte im Zweiten Weltkrieg u.a. die Invasion in der Normandie (1944), in seinem Hauptquartier in Reims Unterzeichnung der bedingungslosen Kapitulation aller deutscher Streitkräfte (1945), Generalstabschef des Heeres (1945-1948), Oberkommandierender der NATO-Streitkräfte (1950-1952), 34. Präsident der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika (1953-1961).
 - 6 - „*L'Humanité*“, französische Tageszeitung, 1904 als Organ der französischen Sozialisten von Jean Jaurès gegründet, nach der Parteispaltung Zentralorgan der französischen KP (ab 1921), Sitz in Saint-Denis bei Paris.
 - 7 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), amerikanischer demokratischer Politiker, 32. amerikanischer Präsident (1933-1945), mit Churchill am 14. August 1941 Verkündung der „Atlantik Charta“, im Dezember 1941 (Pearl Harbor) Eintritt in den Zweiten Weltkrieg, der zur Niederlage der Achsenmächte führte.