

Prospect 5730

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THE LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

511 Chester-Ninth Bldg.
Cleveland, Ohio

EUROPE speaks

Reliable inside material from Nazi-Europe
Provided through confidential channels by
Elizabeth E. Blencke [2]

[US-Ausgabe]

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The Mood of Labor in Germany

Anti-Nazi Reporter's Report

"In several large armament factories where I was able to observe conditions closely, I found the workers absorbed in the problem of finding ways and means of escaping the so-called commissions of death which from time to time conduct a comb-out in the factories to free men for service on the Eastern front. These efforts by the workers to remain in the deferred

S.S. Report - Nazi Report

"The demoralization of the foreign workers in Germany is growing to the same degree as the passive resistance in the occupied countries. The German inhabitants of all the occupied countries have become increasingly isolated as a result of the hostility felt towards the German army of occupation.

and reserved classes are openly admitted by themselves. And nobody finds such conduct strange - it is an ambition obviously shared by all. The sight of all the wounded and crippled in the streets has produced a deep depression in many circles.

"As the women do not need to fear being called to the front, they show greater readiness than the men to criticize the regime. They even reproach the men for having no courage. They say that there is nothing to be gained by keeping one's mouth shut forever.

"The workers help themselves by signifying their discontent through certain kinds of resistance. They do not do their work with the care it requires.

"But even amongst the workers themselves the pressure and isolation to which they have been subjected for years, together with the new wave of anxiety, have had some pernicious effects. Since the Trade Unions have for many years discontinued their educational work and since the German 'Labor Front' naturally does everything in its power to support every tendency towards demoralization, it is not to be wondered at that here and there demoralization does set in.

"Many high Civil Servants, officers and transport officials fear grave events in the rear while the army is preoccupied with the war on the Eastern front. Also officers of the Waffen S.S. are anxious about the reduction of the German army of occupation in France. But people generally comfort themselves by the thought that the British are so heavily engaged in the Mediterranean that they cannot become a great danger in the West.

"A new wave of criticism has been aroused by the food restrictions, the travelling difficulties and the mobilization of the youth. The opinions of the older people with their experience of 1917 and 1918 prevail against the arguments of National Socialists and of the younger people who are hopeful and optimistic. Critics of the government and the party point out that they have not fulfilled certain promises. There are the same signs of weakening morale as in 1917. Travelling difficulties and the mobilization of the youth are considered to be worse than during the last war. The delay in issuing the list of casualties arouses discontent; war cripples and wounded whose existence is becoming more and more noticeable have a depressing effect."

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Anti-Nazi Report

"This tendency is all the greater because in many of the newly erected factories in the armaments industry there is a very mixed personnel, the individual members of which have no trade union traditions. Hence the unlovely and all too frequent spectacle of the worker 'sucking up' to the boss.

Nazi Report

"In many cases they have had to be transported to Germany because sanatoria and hospitals abroad will be needed for new casualties, for instance, in Greece and in the Baltic States. The depression caused by these unavoidable measures has been deeper than we expected.

"Resistance on religious grounds is

"The old socialists and free trade unionists have, of course, remained untouched by developments such as these. Many of them are in prison, their arrests in a great many cases being obviously a precautionary measure to prevent them from influencing the factory workers or even their old friends especially in times like these when difficulties are more or less unpredictable. The renewed wave of terror and intimidation has caused some, at least of those who had retained their liberty to retire into the background so as not to make themselves too conspicuous in the 'springtime of fear', as they themselves call it."

A report about the wounded in Germany emphasizes the large number of cripples to be seen in the streets. A young mother wrote to the reporter from Germany that her little boy had forgotten how to walk properly because he is constantly imitating the war-wounded.

"The people of Vienna got very excited and spoke their minds in no uncertain terms about Hitler. In many factories acts of sabotage are on the increase and even the Gestapo men disguised as workers who were put into the factories have failed to make any appreciable difference."

assuming serious proportions. There are, for instance, these everlasting chain letters with their lamentations about the wickedness of the world which end up in filthy slander against S.S. leaders; they literally bristle with such insults. Such maneuvers which only lead to a softening of the people's morale must not be dealt with by soft methods.

"Recently several instances of the revival of socialist propaganda were reported. We have to reckon with an increase of this propaganda. For this reason, the leaders in those parts of Germany where there is a majority of industrial workers should order preventive arrests of socialist leaders as was done on similar occasions in the past.

"It is unavoidable that more and more detailed reports concerning the suffering of the population in the occupied countries should be brought to Germany, in the first place, through our soldiers on leave. People are shocked and frightened. Even soldiers, apart from those who are National Socialists, often share such feelings. The shooting of hostages in particular is condemned; it has now become known in Germany that innocent people are shot as hostages. Workers and Civil Servants in the occupied countries and our soldiers back on leave bring such reports home; recently also from Holland and Norway.

"A special order of the High Command of the 'Wehrmacht' February 1942, instructs the officers how to influence the soldiers on what they are writing home.

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Struggle between Army and S.S.

"An officer serving at the front gave it as his opinion and that of other officers that Germany is losing too many of her best men. `The occupied countries are keeping their best age groups intact and one day they will be fighting against us. We will simply be obliged, before this year is over to mobilize the whole of Europe, and even to send the troops of other countries into the very front line.'

"Most of the staff officers who had been relieved of their commands or even arrested have now been reinstated. About 200 staff officers are still under arrest. It is generally thought that this opposition on the part of the generals has been silenced for some time to come. It is true that the conspiracy still goes on amongst the officers and with a good deal more circumspection than before; they learned their lessons in the recent clashes with the S.S. But all the information at present available suggests that the plotting of these rebel officers will remain without any decisive effect. They were ruthlessly treated; several adjutants among the arrested officers were killed under mysterious circumstances at the front; others just disappeared. Patient attempts were made to convert many of those who had been arrested. They were shown a large number of memoranda compiled by Hitler which were alleged to demonstrate his genius."

"The officer should put himself on the same level with the soldier and say `We would like to write more facts, but we will not mention certain terrible experiences, which would affect the folks home too strongly.'

"The recent political struggles which have taken place within the "Reichs-Fuehrung" and the "Wehrmacht" have now been settled, since the new and definite constellation of power has secured once and for all that the will and the directives of the Fuehrer shall be paramount. As a result of the latest increase in its powers the S.S. has now become the highest controlling authority over all institutions in Germany. In this way, justice has been done to the achievements of the S.S., and the forecasts of the S.S. The strengthening of the S.S., the guaranteeing of its reserves and the constant renewal of its forces is now absolutely secured against the claims of the army. In spite of this, however, the army is still taking too many qualified men who really belong to the S.S. One must still continue to press for a considerable increase in heavy arms for the `Waffen-SS'."

Effects of Air-Raids and of Propaganda

Reporter's Report

"The casualty figures announced to the public after air-raids on Germany are called by every worker `a pack of lies as usual, of course'. But generally speaking the raids are now being faced with rather more equanimity.

There is no doubt, however, that it would be difficult to over-estimate the effect of the sustained bombing of German towns in its devastating effect upon the morale of the people.

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Reporter's Report

"It is true that they are becoming hardened to it; but there is ample confirmation for the statement that the populations of frequently bombed towns are inclined to outbreaks of despair.

"Fuel for these outbreaks of despair is provided by the wide-spread belief that the German towns are going to suffer as much as the English ones have done. This opinion is not accompanied by any feeling of hatred towards the English; on the contrary, there is the vague feeling that Germany is only being paid in her own coin.

"Opinion is divided on the question whether Germany will hold out until final victory. Even the younger soldiers now enter more frequently into discussions of this sort. There are not very many who expect victory to come this year. Optimistic opinions may be expressed when they are with members of the civilian population, but among themselves the soldiers are more honest, that is to say, they voice their doubts. The only thing that has an encouraging effect is the success of the Japanese. Another topic is the belief current among many that a miracle will come to the aid of the Fuehrer.

"A good deal of credence is given to the lies circulated by the Nazis about the food situation in England which they say is much worse than that of Germany. These lies help considerably in making the wretched food situation

Nazi Report

The following is taken from a special bulletin for the Officer Corps published February, 1942, by the German High Command.

"The importance of the enemy's weapon of spreading rumors cannot be under-rated. He relies on the effect of this poisonous weapon. The enemy has obviously a very low opinion of the German people. Only recently he let slip his opinion that one should lie unscrupulously. There is no rumor so stupid that it will not find some credulous souls in Germany. The following points concerning the technique of the enemy must be noted. 1) Rumors current in Germany are never spread by chance but according to a plan. 2) Moscow and London work together. 3) Rumor is a weapon which the enemy does not use on its own but he always links it up with propaganda from his secret wireless station and his leaflets. The enemy is by no means stupid. 4) The rumors spread by the enemy are very clever psychologically and are based on the weaknesses of the German people. 5) Credulous people and braggarts are the allies with whom the enemy reckons. Credulity helps the enemy because there are still people who believe that there is a grain of truth in every rumor. And the enemy reckons with the poisonous effect of this belief. In this way the credulous person, even if he only believes 10 % to be true, in realities swallows the poison of the enemy. The desire to brag is another help to

in Germany appear a little more bearable. If English propaganda would, in a convincing manner and as frequently as possible, broadcast the truth about the food situation in England, it would be of material help to the opposition within the Reich."

the enemy, because some people feel important when they can appear to be well-informed and can impress others by passing on unpleasant news."

THE CONTENTS OF "EUROPE SPEAKS" MAY BE USED FREELY IN CREDIT IS GIVEN TO ITS SOURCE

Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - *Grace E. Meyette (1890-1967), amerikanische Verbandsaktivistin, Sekretärin des YWCA (Yong Woman's Christian Association; 1927-1931), Gewerkschaftssekretärin mit der Aufgabe, die Rechte der weiblichen Arbeitnehmer in der Industrie zu stärken (1931-1935), Direktorin der „League for Human Rights“ in Cleveland/Ohio (1935 bis in die 40er Jahre, als die „League“ aufgelöst wurde), die es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht hatte, den Einfluss des Nationalsozialismus in den USA zu bekämpfen und deutsche NS-Propaganda zu entlarven, in dieser Funktion Verhandlungspartnerin des ISK (sowohl von Erna Blencke als auch von Willi Eichler).*
- 2 - *Erna Blencke (1896-1991), Lehrerin, IJB/ISK-Mitglied, Entlassung aus dem Schuldienst (1933), Führung einer Brotgroßhandlung zur Tarnung ihrer illegalen Arbeit für den ISK (1933-1938), nach der Verhaftung Fritz Eberhards Übernahme der illegalen Reichsleitung des ISK und der USG (1937- Februar 1938), Exil: Schweiz, Frankreich (1938), Internierung und Flucht (1940), USA (1941), dort Mitarbeit in verschiedenen Organisationen der Arbeiterbewegung, z.B. beim Jewish Labor Committee, Mitarbeit bei „Europe speaks“ (US-Ausgabe), Rückkehr nach Deutschland (1951), Leitung der Heimvolkshochschule Springe (1951-1954), Übersiedlung nach Hessen (1954), dort zahlreiche Ämter im Bereich der Erwachsenenbildung, Vorsitzende der Philosophisch-politischen Akademie (1978-1982), Betreuung des ISK-Archivs (bis 1979).*