
G e r m a n y s p e a k s

[Heft 4,
4th June, 1940]

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Vorbemerkung

The enclosed reports of events, of the attitude and feeling of the German people and the German press are intended to help in the struggle against the Hitler Regime. The "Sozialistische Warte", from which they are taken, has carried on this struggle for many years and with increasing success. For the broadening of this successful action, the Editors have decided to publish an English edition of the reports from Germany under the title "Germany Speaks". It appears twice monthly.

We hope that the reports will be reprinted. In this case will you please mention the source "Germany Speaks" and send a copy to

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In Germany to-day

(Report on a journey)

I had come from Italy and was bound for Berlin via Munich. When I arrived, special editions with large headlines were coming out with the first news of the Allies' withdrawal from Norway. The newsboys were loud in their shouts of "Victory, victory!" They did a roaring trade; their customers read the reports of victory and walked off without a word! Not a sign of joy or enthusiasm; but equally, none of repudiation or indignation; not a voice raised in opposition! Not the slightest gesture to betray what they were thinking about the German victory of which they had just learnt.

I went into a hotel in the West of Berlin, the manager of which I had known for some years. I told him what I had observed and asked him, "What am I to conclude from their reactions?" What are these people thinking? What is going on behind the iron mask which is drawn over almost every face?"

The manager replied,

"The average citizen doesn't know what to think of the news. He can't understand why the little Norwegian nation should be attacked. He only feels that this victory is not a victory over the Western powers in the sense that it will bring peace; he sees in it at most an extension of the war demanding new sacrifices. That is why none of us is enthusiastic. But as we dare not express our doubts we just say nothing. We long ago lost the habit of expressing our opinions. We still have them, some of us, but there are many nowadays who neither express their opinions nor have any to express. We are nothing but senseless pawns in the hands of the State."

"The Nazis have brought this war on us."

From Berlin I went on the Pomerania, from there to the Rhineland, then to Württemberg via Baden, and back to Italy via Bavaria. The mood prevalent among the German people has altered considerably since the beginning of the war and even since Christmas. At the beginning of the war wide sections expressed their feelings in this way: "Well, war with its horrors is upon us, sure enough, but we can't help it; we must just stick it out till victory comes." Today very wide sections are of the opinion that this war is unnecessary. In various forms the feeling is expressed over and over again that "the Nazis brought us this war." Very often, I might say, generally, this is accompanied by the further observation that "we could have peace if it wasn't for the Nazis." In the course of such a conversation a close acquaintance of a friend of mine put to me the question, "Do you happen to know why we Germans are at war?" I replied, "Surely you can answer that question better than I." To which his answer was, "Listen. You don't know. Neither do I. I've put that question to a lot of people; but nobody knows the answer. Not a soul understands all this stupid talk about plutocrats. We've got people rolling in wealth in our heavy industries just as much as they have in Paris and London!"

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"Why don't you send them to the devil?"

I often asked my friends and acquaintances the question: "If you are convinced that the Nazis are to blame for the war and that they constitute the sole obstacle to peace, why not change it all? Why don't you send the Nazis to the devil?" The answer was usually a pitying smile, as much as to say, "Little do you know about it. You have little idea of the conditions here." A man who had taken part in public life for many years and who still has good contacts with widely different sections once gave me the following answer to this question:

"There are people even today who have the courage and the determination to fight against the Nazis and even to risk their lives in doing it. But the wide net of the Gestapo robs them of the possibility of organising themselves. There is therefore not the slightest prospect that anything they could do would be attended with success. I even know people who would be prepared to allow themselves to be publicly burnt if they saw any hope of their martyrdom inspiring wide sections of the people to action. But to allow oneself to be slowly tortured to death in a concentration camp without one single person hearing anything about it, is pointless."

I asked my friend, "Are the sections which are prepared for such a struggle very large?" He said, "Those who have preserved their intellectual independence and their moral backbone in those times of terror and brutality, are amongst the best types in the nation. There are of course very few of them. Unfortunately - and this is the saddest experience of my whole life - the majority of the German people have given way to a mood of fatalism. They can no longer find the strength for opposition to the Nazis; their moral backbone is broken. They put up with anything that is ordered by the powers that be because they feel that resistance is completely hopeless. I'll show you what I mean by an example which is no isolated case, but typical of the behaviour of hundreds of farmers, each one of whom is representative of hundreds of other farmers."

The larger holdings here in Württemberg and those farming families in which the father or the son had been called up, were given either one or two Poles according to choice. It was a cold winter's day when the Poles arrived in a fairly large market town in these parts. The farmers had turned up in large numbers from all over the

neighbourhood to secure a Pole. There were no interpreters, so that communication was only possible by means of signs. The farmers passed along the rows of Poles, eyed them up and down, felt their muscles to see if they were fit for the work, sometimes scrutinised a face to see if its owner was the type of person they liked, and then made their choice. It was easy to see that many of the Poles had an interest in remaining together, married couples for instance, parents and their children, brothers and sisters. If a farmer's choice had fallen on a Pole who had his wife with him, and if the farmer had need of one person only, he was not told to look for a single man; the Nazis simply separated the married couple out of hand. There were many tears shed by the Poles, and it was terrible to have to look on at it at all. The farmers, seeing how the married people cling to each other, were often willing to revise their choice and find another hand, but then came the Nazis, separated the married couple by force and absolutely forced the farmer to take the husband. Not one of the farmers had the courage to tell the Nazis to their face that they would have no part in this inhuman treatment and would therefore not take these Poles, separated by force in this way from their wives.

The farmers had been informed beforehand by police decree that they were forbidden, on pain of punishment, to sit down together with Poles at the same table. Now just try and imagine the situation. As a rule a farmer's dining room has only one table, at which everybody sits. What is the farmer to do? Make the Pole sit on the ground? It is exactly the same when work is being done outside in the vineyard, where there is a table made out of four uprights and a board laid across them, at which farmers and labourers alike take their meals. Today they are forced to make their Polish labourer sit on the ground. There was a time when, if this had been asked of them, our Württemberg farmers would have rebelled against it. They would have got together

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and declared that they would have nothing to do with such practices. And if no other opportunity had presented itself of opposing this decree, they would have declared with one voice that under these circumstances they would do without the Poles altogether; and not one single farmer would have turned up when the Poles were being assigned.

And today? Our hard-headed farmers are so cowed by years of terror that they put up with even this.

And that is not the end of the story. As the farmers do not often come into the market towns, they naturally wanted to stay a little while longer on this occasion to chat with each other and have a drink of cider or coffee. But what were they to do with the Poles in the meantime? They dared not invite them to have a drink with them. The landlords would not even let the Poles come inside. They declared that they personally had nothing against the Poles but they had been expressly forbidden to serve them and they dared not risk their livelihood by disregarding the order. So they were kept waiting in the cold and had to stand outside in the street; they were instructed to stand where the farmers could keep an eye on them through the windows.

You know, it made my heart bleed to see how the farmers of Württemberg, who have always been noted for their good-naturedness and human sympathy, could bring themselves to keep other human beings waiting outside in the street while they themselves sat drinking in the inn, in the same way as they were ready to go out and fetch them. Certainly there is a difference between doing such a thing of your own free will and doing it because you are forced to - but things have gone so far today that people are doing the things they are forced to do and scarcely realise any longer that

there was once a time when they would have indignantly refused to do them.

There was a case a little later on of a farmer presenting his Pole with a small box of cigarettes as a token of his appreciation for the hard work he had done. The farmer was denounced and had to pay for his indiscretion with three months imprisonment!

Some time ago the Nazis stuck up notices beginning with the phrase: 'A nation must come to its own aid.' I am of the opinion that the German people can no longer come to its own aid. If aid does not come from outside, then we are all lost. At the very least, such aid will have to be sufficient to cause the Nazi system to begin to tatter. It may be that moral forces will arise once more if people see that their sacrifices have some prospect of not being made in vain and that they may result in the shaking off of the Nazi yoke. Today, the Nazi stifle every cry of indignation, every call to reason, every stirring of kindly human impulses; their method of doing so is one of blood and terror. But once the regime shows signs of beginning to topple, millions will rise and call the tyrants to account. And I can send you on your way with this assurance: compared to this calling of the criminals to account the French Revolution will look like child's play. It will be such that National Socialism will be exterminated for ever."

The "Peace" Party Congress!

Right up to December of last year the German people were promised that the war would be over by Christmas. The disappointment was great and led in many cases to considerable bitterness. Today it is being officially announced that the war will be definitely over in August. And in order to confound the sceptics, large-scale preparations are being made for the "Peace" Party Congress which is supposed to take place in the autumn. Even non-party members are being invited to send in their names to take part in it.

Preserving the Façade.

The food position is becoming slowly but steadily worse. Waiters in the restaurants can sometimes be observed making a special fuss of people who appear to them to be foreigners. The latter are often recommended to try meat dishes which do not appear on the menu and which therefore cannot be had by the German customers. If the waiter is asked for the explanation, he merely shrugs his shoulders and smiles.

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The difficulties in the clothing question are well-known; they are becoming still more acute. I was all the more astonished, therefore, to find very fine window displays in the Tauentzienstrasse and in the Kurfürstendamm. There was little sign here of the war and the blockade. Very attractive lines in shirts, suits, ties, boots etc. In astonishment I said to a friend, "You've got everything there that you need." He smiled: "Every foreigner falls into that little trap! These things are for the display window, not for us. They're not for sale." And when I looked at him somewhat doubtfully, he pointed to a beautiful piece of red material and invited me to come into the shop with him. He asked to have this piece of material from the window. After the shop assistant had satisfied herself that my friend had his ration card with him, she told him that she would not recommend him to have the material in the window, as it would require nearly all his coupons. She recommended another piece of material, much inferior to the first in quality and colour. When my friend insisted on his first choice, she said, "That material is for decorative purposes only; we're not allowed to sell it." So that there could be no misunderstanding,

I made a point of asking, "Are you keeping the goods in the window for other customers, or are you forbidden by law to sell them?" - "It is forbidden by law", answered the assistant.

Sermons composed by the Propaganda Ministry

It is characteristic of the deterioration in the morale of the people that everyone who writes for church magazines and every parson has been instructed to inveigh against the plutocrats; this is to be introduced gradually and become more and more strongly expressed as time goes on. The desire of the Nazis is to use the representatives of Christianity for an unrestrained campaign against England. With this end in view, some study has been made at the Ministry of Propaganda of the Bible, and they have collected all the passages which speak against Mammon. To these passages from the Bible they have then supplied hints for their explanation and interpretation complete with suggestions for their use against the English. Naturally the authors and the parsons have been enjoined to keep the strictest silence about these instructions. The whole thing is meant to look as if this campaign against Mammon and England has come from the depths of Christian feeling - a thing with which the Ministry of Propaganda has of course no connection!

Conditions in the German Army

(The following was written prior to the Nazi invasion of Holland and Belgium, but it seems important enough to be published even now.)

In November of last year the German General Staff (that is to say, Brauchitsch^[1]) vehemently advised against an invasion of Holland. The political leadership bowed to the opinion of the General Staff, even though all preparations had been made for the invasion. Today the political leadership takes the view that it was a mistake to take the opinion of the General Staff on the matter. Today the conditions are much less favourable for an attack on Holland than they were then. It is believed amongst the political leaders that an invasion in November would have been successful and that, if only they had not listened to the advice of the "army experts", the whole of Holland would be in German hands today, providing them with the best possible air base against England. This splendid prospect did not come to fruition through the fault of the General Staff, and for that reason alone! That is why, when Norway was attacked, the General Staff (that is to say, Brauchitsch) was left out in the cold by the political leadership. The plan was worked out by an army technical expert, someone of the rank of say, colonel. The officers and troops who were used for the invasion were taken away from the control of the army and told not to consider themselves under the orders of the General Staff any longer. The whole plan was kept so secret from the General Staff that the first information they had of the details (the points attacked, the strength of the troops engaged, the use of aircraft, ships etc. etc.) was through the Press.

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If the example of Norway is taken as a precedent and if actions of such magnitude involving the employment of such a large number of troops, material and ships, are undertaken without the opinion of the General Staff even being asked for, it is natural to ask how in future there can possibly be any unified military command and how the General Staff can be expected to have a grasp of the situation as a whole when material difficult to replace is being used in large quantities at some point over which they have

no jurisdiction.

The essential aim intended by the political leadership to be realised by the Norwegian campaign was to get possession of the Swedish ore-mines. If the General Staff had been asked, it would have rejected the plan to invade Norway; in so far, the political leadership did right not to ask its advice! The General Staff takes the view that, apart altogether from the loss of men it entails, the loss of material (iron and other raw materials) is so great that it cannot be offset by the gain in iron-ore that may result from it. It would have been far better, so they argue, to have put strong pressure on Sweden to force that country to increase her exports of ore to Germany. Then, in the most favourable circumstances, Germany would receive raw materials in exchange for finished products; at present she has to pay for her raw materials by bills of exchange or other products, and further she has to convert her raw materials into goods at the expense of the German Reich. Besides, it is feared amongst the General Staff that the invasion of a neutral country may lead to serious reverses in the political sphere, especially with regard to the attitude of America.

The German army has seen another interesting development which is becoming of increasing importance. The morale of the troops, most of whom do not know why they are fighting this war, is not good. Last winter was an extremely severe one, and the next is looked forward to with dread. If it is possible at all, the war is to be finished this year. Among the political leadership it is hoped to deal England a succession of such severe blows in the course of the summer that she will be ready to sue for peace. But as it is impossible to tell how things will develop and as the Allies are certainly reckoning with the possibility of a second winter, they think it as well to take all possible precautionary measures. The political leaders do not believe that under similar circumstances to those of November 1918 the Generals and officers would stand with the troops as a bulwark between the people and the Government. For this reason steps are being taken to strengthen the S.S. divisions with a view to having twenty such divisions, fully equipped. An attempt is being made to get together the necessary personnel in the following way: The S.S. and the S.A. leaders go to all the S.S. and S.A. men who have not yet been called up and say to them: "You must sign this form and then you won't be called up for military service! You'll be put into a S.S. division. You won't need to go to the front straightaway, you'll get marvellous food and be treated excellently etc. etc." Those who refuse to sign are subjected to a pressure which varies in strength according to the circumstances. The moment he has signed the form, the S.S. or S.A. man is withdrawn completely from the jurisdiction of the Army authorities. He is under the sole control of the S.S. divisions. The officers of these divisions are for the most part being drawn from the army; the selection falls upon those who in their opinion have not received the promotion which they consider to be their due. There exists therefore the extraordinary state of affairs that in addition to the regular army with its General Staff there are two other military organisations with their own General Staffs. These two bodies are numerically by no means insignificant:

1. The army divisions reserved for special duties as, for example, Norway.
2. The twenty S.S. divisions.

Do these three General Staffs with their three distinct armies increase the strength and the powers of resistance of the German military forces, or is all this a sign of impending collapse?

The Führer on the Scrap-Heap

The following incident took place in Düren (Rhineland).

A working class man turned up at the depot for collecting scrap metal with a large dust-bin containing all sorts of metal objects. The compulsory nature of this "birthday present for the Führer" had brought a very large crowd to the depot, and the people waiting in the queue soon noticed a very extraordinary thing. From a heap of old tinned-meat boxes and broken lead toys there rose a large bust of Adolf Hitler, about twenty-five centimetres high. It seemed to have been deliberately placed on the top so that it could not possibly fail to be seen. Horror-struck, or perhaps scenting a sensation, about fifty people among whom the rumour of this incredible thing had gone the rounds, waited breathlessly for further developments which could surely only result in the arrest of the worker.

When his turn came and he coolly tipped up his dust-bin in such a way that the Fuehrer came into full view, the brownshirted Nazis on duty went purple. The worker was immediately taken aside into a little office, where he laid on the table a newspaper cutting containing a statement made by Goering^[2] to a representative of the D.N.B. (Deutsches Nachrichten Büro^[3]). It stated that Goering had also "contributed to the collection some busts of leading personalities of the Reich, and that people need have no qualms about giving such busts to the collection of waste material, if they were artistically valueless!"

The brown-shirted one was completely at a loss, and after his name and address had been taken, the worker, to the great astonishment of the bystanders, was allowed to go. We are not in a position to say whether or not the Fuehrer was put back on the scrap-heap!

England, the Chief Enemy!

Glancing at the German newspapers one gets the impression that after the invasion of Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg the most important non-military offensive is the attempt to drive a wedge between the British and the French General Staffs and also between the French and British people. On the 21st of May, 1940 the military Correspondent of the "Frankfurter Zeitung"^[4] wrote quite openly:

"We have reason to believe that there is no complete agreement between the English and French General Staff concerning the conduct of the war. The military unanimity of the Western powers is now crumbling."

The official Deutsche Nachrichten Büro writes even more strongly to the effect that among the many thousand prisoners that the Germans have made only a few thousand were English. It continues in the same strain:

"These figures are a proof that the English also on the Western Front have not taken up the struggle in the same degree as their allies."

The "Frankfurter Zeitung" although it attempts to minimise the losses sustained during the German advance admits that one cannot alter the fact that, during onslaughts and fighting, men must be sacrificed. This is one of the laws of war.

The "Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten"^[5] reports concerning the most up to date German teaching:

"The lessons for children of eleven years upwards begin daily with the reading from the reports of the German General Staff."

The children are then taught by specially trained teachers and with the help of maps what the German invasion means in terms of "German Glory". It is also very significant that in this report about up-to-date German teaching it is mentioned that they sing with wild enthusiasm the well known anti-British song, as they did in the last war.

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The "Drang nach Osten"

It is interesting to note, that in contrast to this, another statement of the reporter runs „the most important subject dealt with in history lessons is the colonisation of the East by the Germans in the past centuries and the war against Poland. It is well known that the so-called political testament of Hitler demands the conquest of the East after he has safeguarded his rear in the West. The minds of the German Youth must be directed towards this future aim already today as the emphasis laid on the work of colonisation in the East illustrates. In addition there are other reports about the teaching in secondary schools and universities which give evidence that the studying of the Russian language and conditions in Russia is especially encouraged. It is obvious that this is not done in order to be of assistance of Russian language and conditions in Russia. Germans nowadays learn foreign languages almost exclusively for the purpose of building up a fifth column in the respective countries.

Juvenile Delinquency

We have received from Germany a cutting from the "Aachener Zeitung" **[6]** which reveals a dreadful picture of the conditions there. The following is a quotation from this Nazi newspaper.

"Investigations into a case of theft also brought to light the fact that on Sundays the gambling game known as 'the golden seven' has been played by persons of from 13 to 40 years of age in the Wenzelstrasse and the Virchowstrasse. Sums up to a hundred marks are said to have changed hands. Last Sunday both these streets were closed and the gamblers taken in the act.

The majority of the people involved are young persons of eighteen and under."

This report needs no comment; the very fact that young people between the ages of thirteen and eighteen and therefore necessarily members of the Hitler Youth, are in a position to risk considerable sums in gambling dens is a sufficiently damning indictment of the moral environment in which the Hitler system allows its youth to grow up.

From the Western districts more and more reports are coming in describing another form of juvenile delinquency, theft carried out by organised bands. Young persons of fourteen and fifteen form themselves into organised bands which admit into their ranks still younger schoolchildren who are mainly used as look-outs while their older comrades do the stealing. These gangs of burglars devote their special attention to the cellars from which they can filch preserved stuffs and other stocks. In the neighbourhood of the towns it is the chicken runs which are the objects of special attention. These thefts are performed in an atmosphere redolent of the most up-to-date terminology. The children are organised in what they call "spy troops", and the crib they intend to crack is the

enemy "block-house". Here one can see how the plundering instincts which animate the rulers of the Third Reich are being systematically fostered among the youth!

4th June, 1940.

Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - *Brauchitsch, Walther von (1881-1941), deutscher Generalfeldmarschall, Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres (1938- 1941).*
- 2 - *Hermann Göring (1893-1946), NS-Politiker, preußischer Ministerpräsident (1933-1945) und Innenminister (1933-1934), Reichsminister o.G. (1933), Luftfahrtminister (1934-1935), Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe (1935-1945), Generalfeldmarschall (ab 1938), federführende Beteiligung an der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft, vom Internationalen Militärtribunal in Nürnberg zum Tode verurteilt (1946), Selbstmord (1946).*
- 3 - *„Deutsches Nachrichten Büro" (DNB), deutsche Nachrichtenagentur.*
- 4 - *„Frankfurter Zeitung", 1856 gegründete Tageszeitung (zunächst „Frankfurter Handelszeitung", dann - seit 1866 - „Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt"), galt in der Weimarer Republik als eine der wichtigsten liberalen Tageszeitungen und nach 1933 als Aushängeschild der bürgerlichen Presse in NS-Deutschland. 1943 eingestellt.*
- 5 - *„Münchner Neueste Nachrichten", zwischen 1887 und 1945 erschienene Tageszeitung in München, in der „Süddeutschen Zeitung" aufgegangen.*
- 6 - *„Aachener Zeitung", Tageszeitung für Aachen und Umgebung, kann zwar für das Jahr 1849 sowie die Zeit nach 1950, nicht aber für die Zeit um 1940 nachgewiesen werden.*