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Free Germans in the French maquis, the story of the Committee "Free Germany" in the West. 1945

Komitee der Bewegung "Freies Deutschland" für den Westen
London: I.N.G. publication, 1945

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FREE GERMAN'S in the FRENCH MAQUIS

Der Bewegung
Deutschland
den Westen

6. August 1944

WEHRMACHT! Richte die Generalshenker!



VOLK UND VATERLAND

GENERAL
Volk u. Vaterland
Deutschland i. d. Westen - Mit 1944

DIE RUHE VON DEM STURM!

SOLDAT IM WEF RETTET DICH

FRIEDEN

JETZT IST ES GENUG KAMERADEN!

UNSER Vaterland

ORGAN DER BEWEGUNG „FREIES DEUTSCHLAND“
HERAUSGEGEBEN VON WILHELM JENSEN UND FRIEDRICH
IN GROSS-PARIS
Anfang September 1944

Der Dolchstoß

Kassel

DAS KOMITEE „FREIES DEUTSCHLAND“ i. d. WESTEN an alle DEUTSCHEN in Gross-Paris - 20. August

Die Naziratten wollen das Schiff verlassen, ihr aber so untergehen.

DIE BESETZUNG DEUTSCHLANDS UND UNSER VOLK!

Komitee der Bewegung
„Freies Deutschland“
Paris den Westen

THE STORY OF THE COMMITTEE "FREE GERMANY" IN THE WEST

Translation by EGON LARSEN

[Committee der Bewegung "Free Deutschland"
für den Westen]

FREE GERMANS IN THE FRENCH MAQUIS

**The Story of the
Committee "Free Germany"
in the West**

**Edited by the Free German
Movement in Great Britain.**

I.N.G. PUBLICATION, LONDON, 1945

Introduction

The question of a "hard" or "soft" peace for Germany and the measures considered necessary to prevent a third world war are the subject of very heated discussion. In numerous articles and in the speeches of statesmen and politicians the question of the degree of responsibility of the Germans as a people and as a nation for the acts of the Nazi regime is vigorously contested.

The Free Germans in their publications have many times stressed the historical responsibility of the Germans as a people for the crimes committed by the Nazi Government. As Germans they told their people that, by their continued support of Hitler, they every day further endanger the existence and the future of Germany. After this war the Free Peoples will know how to safeguard the peace against future German aggression. This necessity does not arise from plans of power politics directed against Germany, but is solely the consequence of the fact that the vast majority of Germans have not yet carried out any visible and effective acts against Hitler which could contribute towards a more speedy termination of the war. Firm measures of security to safeguard peace are in the interest of all free peoples, and not least of the German people themselves.

Is it then contradictory if after these statements we now offer to our British friends this material, describing the heroic and admirable fight of old and new anti-Nazi Germans in France under the Nazi occupation? Have we not just spoken of the responsibility of a whole people for the vile acts of its government? On every front in this war and in Germany itself there have been tens of thousands of Germans from every section of the people and every political party who have paid with their blood for their fight against Hitlerism. By telling of them and of their deeds, of their efforts to lead the German people back to the path of peace and humanity, we are showing the whole measure of responsibility of the German people who gave them no hearing. They cannot say that within their ranks there were none to show them the right path. They were there, but they were not followed. More, by their active or passive support of Hitler the German people enabled the Gestapo and Himmler's

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bloody executioners to exterminate in large numbers the only true Germans. The larger the responsibility of the German people for the crimes of this war and for permitting the extermination of the best men and women among them, the more brightly shines the glory of those Germans who swam against the stream!

A "Committee Free Germany in the West" was formed in France. Its history and its origin are described in the following pages. Free Germans fought with the Maquis. Free Germans fought alongside Frenchmen on the barricades of Paris during the battle for its liberation. Free Germans fought on French soil, alongside and with the mighty support of the F.F.I., a hard illegal struggle against the destroyers of their people.

Where did these men and women find their immense courage? They found it in their deep unshakable belief that their people, in the midst of a national catastrophe, would find the necessary strength to bring about the rebirth of a truly democratic, peaceful Germany, if shown the way. They are driven by the will to end the misery of German history, to make certain that the German people will not again miss a historic opportunity to deliver a death-blow to the dark forces of their imperialistic past and present.

History may well consider their deeds small. And we are the last who would encourage exaggerated expectations as to the result of their work. But who can suppress admiration for these men and women when looking at the documents which tell us of their work! And who would not hope that the hour will come when a renewed Germany and its people will understand their debt to these men and women.

The reader, when he has read in this pamphlet of the successful work of the "Committee Free Germany in the West," will ask himself: "Could not we British offer the members of the Free German movement in Great Britain opportunities for similar work which is so effective an assistance to the Allies in the final destruction of the Hitler war machine and the regeneration of Germany which must follow?"

THE EDITOR.

FREE GERMANS IN THE FRENCH MAQUIS

TO GENERAL DE GAULLE

The first conference of the " Committee Free Germany in the West " met on September 27th, 1944. They discussed measures for intensifying the struggle within the German Army and the German people for the destruction of Hitlerism.

The Conference sent the following telegram:

**" M. le General de Gaulle,
Chef du Gouvernement provisoire de la
Republique Francaise.**

"The first Conference of the provisional committee of the movement ' Free Germany in the West,' attended by representatives of our movement from all parts of France, sends to General de Gaulle, Head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, most sincere congratulations on the occasion of the liberation of France and on the heroic fight of the French people, to which our movement made its modest contribution.

" We pledge ourselves to continue this struggle at the side of the French people for the complete destruction of Hitlerism and for the formation of a democratic, peaceful and independent Germany."

THE STORY OF THE FREE GERMANS IN FRANCE

June, 1940! Armistice in France! Paris, beautiful Paris, occupied by hordes of German troops without even a struggle! The whole world seemed paralysed. Almost the whole of Europe was enslaved by Nazi imperialism. Barbarism seemed to have won. A few months later the " Battle of Britain " began, that gigantic preliminary to the planned invasion of Britain. The first ray of light for the tortured

peoples of Europe. The mighty German air force had to retreat before the heroic, but numerically very much smaller, R.A.F.

These events gave mighty encouragement to the struggle of the enslaved peoples, whose efforts became even greater when on the 22nd of June the news spread through the world that Hitler had led his country into the crazy adventure of an attack on the Soviet Union.

There were thousands of Germans in France during these fateful days. As deadly enemies of Hitlerism, France had given them refuge. They experienced hard times and new merciless persecutions. The French people helped them, sheltered them from the Gestapo and the Vichy police, and enrolled them in the growing forces of the resistance movement.

From these beginnings the work of the German anti-Nazis developed, throughout four years of illegal struggle and organisation, into a considerable danger for Hitler's armies in the West.

The following report of the "Committee Free Germany in the West" illustrates the work and the results achieved.

FOUR YEARS OF ILLEGAL FIGHTING

In the autumn of 1940 German opponents of Hitler of every political and religious persuasion, working illegally, began to establish contact with German soldiers in the armies of occupation in Holland, Belgium and France, in order to combat the Nazi ideology inside the Wehrmacht and to conduct propaganda for peace.

Towards the middle of 1941 these German groups which had in the meantime been reinforced by fresh elements from the ranks of the Wehrmacht established contact with each other, and later with the resistance movements of France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg.

The "Sector T.A." (Travail Allemand) was formed at that time in close collaboration with the Resistance movement. The T.A. comprised all sections and individuals who for the most divergent reasons were opponents of Hitler and

who had access to official sources in the Wehrmacht, Organisation Todt, the administrative apparatus, the railway system and the factories. T.A. is also the name by which these anti-fascist activities were known by the Gestapo, the S.D. (Security Organisation), the Field Police and the Vichy Police. The objectives of the T.A. were: anti-Hitler propaganda whether written or verbal; and the formation of a national organisation on a broad basis working for peace inside the Wehrmacht and the German administration.

The chief organs of this illegal organisation comprised: SOLDIER IN THE WEST for France, TRUTH for Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. SOLDIER AT THE MEDITERRANEAN appeared after the occupation of Southern France. Co-operation between the T.A. and illegal French parties and groups, such as the radical socialists, Catholics, the movements of the French prisoners of war and deported workers, as well as Protestant circles, the S.F.I.O. (Socialists), the National Front, etc., increased during this time both centrally and locally. On Nov. 11th, 1943, members of the German Wehrmacht, representatives of different groups of the Wehrmacht and the Soldiers' Committee and representatives of other German anti-Hitler groups, united, on the basis of this preliminary work done under the most difficult circumstances, in the COMMITTEE "FREE GERMANY" IN THE WEST.

" RELEASE FRANCE "

On 12th November a proclamation was issued by the Committee to all Germans in the west: "Release France—You have no business in foreign countries—Our job is to save Germany and re-establish peace through the overthrow of Hitler—Do not fire on Frenchmen—Refuse to take part in arresting and denouncing them—Establish contact with the French population locally—Warn the population of reprisals and raids prepared against them by the Gestapo and S.S.—Prevent the deportation of French workers to Germany—Refuse to take part in bestialities and atrocities, and kill those who give you the orders—Desert with your weapons to the side of the French fighters for freedom—

“ Refuse to participate in looting, forcible evacuation of civilians, destruction of property, and every resistance offered to Frenchmen—Preserve human life by exterminating those who cause you to continue this senseless fight—Obey only those of your comrades and officers who lead you in the fight against the S.S., S.D., Gestapo and other units devoted to Hitler—

“ End the war—Stop hostilities—Establish contact with the nearest Allied and F.F.I. commanders and disclose yourselves as followers of the movement Free Germany.”

Other clandestine German papers issued during the occupation include :

PEOPLE AND FATHERLAND—OUR FATHERLAND—
SOLDIER AT THE MEDITERRANEAN. For Belgium:
NEW RHENISH JOURNAL—TRUTH.

Apart from this, the movement “ Free Germany ” and our Committee continually issued appeals and pamphlets as well as German letters.

The printed and duplicated propaganda material of the Committee reached a circulation of about 200,000 copies per month ; numerous leaflets were also produced on the initiative of individual members and local organisations.

THE WEHRMACHT READS ANTI-HITLER PROPAGANDA

The publications were circulated in every conceivable way : by scattering them in front of barracks, cinemas, soldiers' hostels, tube stations, cars, drill grounds, etc. They were also distributed by soldiers and officers in the Movement in dormitories, lavatories, lockers, boxes, canteens, luggage, between official documents, in letters, on lorries, etc., by the field post and French postal services, through which tens of thousands of letters were sent to military and civilian addresses in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg. Soldiers on leave were issued month by month with thousands of copies of camouflaged propagandist material by the Committee for distribution inside Germany.

DELEGATES ON THE FRONT AND IN THE P.O.W. CAMPS

The immediate tasks of the Committee are :

- (a) to circulate publications of the movement "Free Germany" at the front and behind it ;
- (b) to send delegates to the fronts, their task being to get into immediate contact with German units with the help of loud speakers and leaflets, and to open personal negotiations, with the object of obtaining surrender and immediate cessation of hostilities ;
- (c) to appeal over the wireless to the Wehrmacht and the German people ;
- (d) to send delegates into prisoner of war camps in order, by spoken and written propaganda, to destroy Nazi ideology which is an obstacle to peace as well as to the creation of a democratic Germany ; and to organise branches of the movement "Free Germany" in prisoner of war camps.

The Committee then gives a report on the political aims of the movement, which are, generally speaking, the same as those of the Free German movements in other countries, i.e., to assist the Allies in the difficult task of destroying Nazism and German imperialism by the roots, and to give immediate assistance in this by the work of front delegates and the re-education of German prisoners of war.

THE COMMITTEE'S DELEGATES IN THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

The Committee reports on its "Experiences and Conclusions" :—

"The Prisoners' Camps of the Military Region of Toulouse and Limoges were visited by our representatives. The camp inmates represented all sections of society: officers on the active and reserve lists, youngsters of under 17 and old people of 60, even some women. The minority of these soldiers are actually Germans, the majority Russians, Poles, Yugoslavs, etc.

“ All the camps in the Toulouse region are dealt with by our Committee in Toulouse. According to the importance of the camps, each has one or more of our representatives there, who have offices in the camp and are assisted in their work by a body of prisoners, Nazis excluded, who are elected by their fellow prisoners. In the Limoges Region there are a number of small camps or posts where the prisoners were taken by the F.F.I. Only in a few of the more important of these camps do we have representatives.

“ Attempts are being made now to gather the P.o.W.s in every military region into a few large camps.

“ In the camps where our representatives are already developing some political life and where P.o.W.-Committees exist, we have the support of most of the officers and men. Our experiences in the other camps are as follows :

“ ‘ Soldiers and officers listened to the speakers with the greatest interest. On their faces was pictured deepest emotion. Some cried. But after the talk, not one wished to take part in discussion—they were all afraid. It is either the old Gestapo terror which they fear or else the terror which individual officers or Nazis still exercise in the camp. After we had made it quite clear to them that there was no longer any Gestapo or Nazi terror to be feared and that we would act ruthlessly against any attempted terror, the first began to speak. The ice is broken and discussion starts. In one camp we found a large number of medium and higher officers of the frontier guards. They were more or less indifferent, while workers, intellectuals and practising Catholics spoke openly against the Hitler regime.’

“ Another experience was confirmed by all the camp delegates to the Toulouse conference :

“ ‘ The youth of 16 to 20 are most enthusiastic followers of our movement, because they see in it a guarantee that there will be no more war, that they will at last learn a trade and get work. Youth is tired of war. Their fate was Hitler Youth—Labour Service—Army. They have learned no profession or trade and the long war has left them without hope for the future.’

“ We have found women in only two of the camps. They understood us immediately. Their husbands, brothers and fiances were either dead or prisoners of war. They favoured the immediate termination of the war.

“ What about the officers? Their world is collapsing. With them the change proceeds most slowly. A few are determined opponents of Hitler, the majority is hesitant. They attach great importance to their oath to Hitler and some even now still believe in “victory. They do not yet understand the position. They order ‘community spirit,’ yet try to terrorise their men.

“Some officers possess cases full of all sorts of things, yet show no solidarity towards their men. This deepens the gulf between them and their men and increases the hatred which we found everywhere.

“ As our influence spreads among the prisoners, they will put us on the track of the war criminals known to them. There are many examples of this.

“ Generally speaking, correct work among the prisoners will give our movement a wide basis. We shall regularly publish instructional material, such as, e.g.; ‘What is Fascism?’ ‘Why no second Weimar,’ ‘Race Problems,’ ‘The Soldier’s Oath,’ ‘The question of responsibility,’ etc. With the help of the intellectuals we hope to establish a strong cultural life in the camps. Besides this we try to look after the material well-being of the prisoners, so they will see that we care for them.”

This very informative report, which, of course, does not necessarily represent the mood and opinion of all German prisoners of war, ends with the following proposals of an organisational nature for the work among the prisoners:

“ Our organisation must have the following structure:

A Committee of P.o.W.’s representatives in every camp.

A representative in every barrack.

One or more representatives in every labour group outside the camp.

“ Thus a close network of the movement’s representatives covers all the prisoner of war camps. Here the first concrete steps towards the re-education of Germans are taken. A problem on which so much theoretical discussion takes place is tackled here practically. Many—let us hope the majority—of these prisoners will not return to Germany as Nazis. Here in these camps in France—as also in the Soviet Union—a process is started, which might be called a revolution in the way of thinking of every German. A revolution of this type must seize every German, and, after the victory of the free peoples, it must seize the whole of the German people if the national socialist ideology is to be extirpated.”

A delegate of the Committee reports :

“ The delegates of the Movement are in constant touch with soldiers still serving in the German army. These supply them constantly with information about the morale of the German troops, as the following reports show :

“ An N.C.O. member of the Movement gives us a report which indicates how the actions of the anti-Nazis arise from their day-to-day experiences. Such slogans cannot be invented around a conference table. They derive from the uncanny atmosphere of the underground struggle.

“ An N.C.O. from Italy told our delegate : ‘ Kesselring published an order of the day to the Army Group C. The tenth army must hold on to their positions. Each soldier must realise that everything is at stake. I believe that the 71st Infantry Division was the first to be destroyed. Now it is the 362nd’s turn under General Greiner. He shouted : ‘ Hold out to the last man.’ But many comrades had learned their lesson. They started to sing

“ The division Greiner gets smaller and smaller,
Soon only one will be left, and that’s Greiner.” ’

An N.C.O. from the Mediterranean reported :

“ We had to line up. Then the C.O. shouted : ‘ I know that seditious propaganda is being published here encouraging the men to run away or retreat. But don’t think that you can just throw away your weapons and run as they did in 1918. Every man who makes such an attempt to escape will

be shot. You will fight to the last man.' ” “ But,” the N.C.O. continued, “ they are wrong as far as throwing away our weapons goes. We are members of an army group of ‘Free Germany’ and know that we shall need our weapons to defend ourselves against Himmler’s gangsters.”

An infantry man reports: “ Since the invasion has begun a certain nervousness is spreading. . . . They have stopped all contact with foreigners so we won’t get any news. As Goebbels said: ‘ If a man has too much time, he starts thinking.’ Of course, what they’d like best would be to turn off our thinking machines. But there have never been so many leaflets and papers of the Movement Free Germany before. Many former Nazis discuss them quite openly. And since we beat up a spy, there is no more informing. An N.C.O. had a talk with our lieutenant, and as a result the lieutenant pretends not to know what is happening. No one gets caught at the propaganda work and through the N.C.O. we get information about the numbers of lorries and where petrol is stored and the best way of obtaining arms quickly and which of the officers can be trusted.”

OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF THE MOVEMENT BY THE FRENCH HIGH COMMAND

The following is an extract from the agreement between the Delegate-General of the Committee “ Free Germany in the West,” Southern zone, and the leaders of the resistance movement (Committee Nationale de la Liberation) of the Toulouse area. This agreement was ratified by the High Command in Algiers in July, 1944 :

“ Official recognition of the movement ‘ Free Germany ’ as a resistance movement.

“ In the event of a national rising (of the French people) or in the event of an Allied landing the leaders of the Resistance groups will be informed :

(a) that every German soldier, every member of the Organisation Todt, every German worker, in fact, everyone who shows his readiness to cease fire and surrender shall be treated as a prisoner of war; (The instructions to the Résistance

groups contain suggestions for the establishment of prisoners' camps);

(b) that every German soldier or officer, every member of the organisation Todt, all German civilian workers and employees who are injured or sick shall be considered to be prisoners of war; they remain under medical supervision until recovered and shall then be transferred to prisoner of war camps;

(c) that all German civilians and troops who are in military prisons, concentration camps or barracks shall immediately be brought into contact with a delegate of the movement 'Free Germany' who will take the most suitable decision;

(d) that the delegates of the movement 'Free Germany' are authorised to visit prisoners' camps, hospitals, prisons and all other localities to enable them to look after all persons of German origin, whether civilians or soldiers;

(e) that the delegates of the movement 'Free Germany' are authorised to make propaganda for their movement in the above mentioned places. Military formations, soldiers and officers, who show that they support the movement 'Free Germany' and wish to collaborate with it, are placed at the disposal of the regional delegate of the movement 'Free Germany,' who will have every opportunity to investigate their particular cases.

"These regulations also apply to the female members of the German army, the organisation Todt, and the medical and civilian services."

These are the chief facts which the Committee has published on its activities. We would add a few words. Everybody reading this report should remember that it has been written in blood. The Gestapo was watching and the work has required many bloody sacrifices among these German patriots. The Committee in its reports speaks of these, too.

WITH THE MAQUIS

"Groups of the movement first developed in the South of France. They were composed of political refugees and deserters from the German army. These groups received their baptism of

fire in a number of engagements against the field police and Gestapo, fighting side by side with the MAQUIS. They fought in the areas of Toulon, Toulouse, Nice. At this time Captain Albert, a member of the Committee 'Free Germany,' was an instructor to the MAQUIS. In the beginning of 1944 the MAQUIS—consisting of Frenchmen and anti-Nazi Germans—fought a battle with German police units near Albi-Montauban. The Hitlerites lost 40 killed and 60 wounded. One Frenchman and one German anti-Nazi were killed.

“ More than 100 active fighters of the Movement became victims of the field police, the Gestapo, the security battalions and the Vichy police. Seventeen Germans and Austrians were shot after terrible tortures. Besides these, a large number of supporters within the German army, soldiers and officers, were shot or severely punished. Three active members of the Movement were caught in Antwerp by the Gestapo while distributing leaflets in the Sports Palace. They were all three killed.”

AN EYE FOR AN EYE. . . .

“ It would require the pen of a great writer to describe the death of the German journalist Philipp KOHL. He had joined the Movement in Belgium. He was a fearless and heroic fighter, aware of his duty to his people. The Gestapo searched for him everywhere. Everywhere they found signs of his activities. . . . At last the bloodhounds caught him. Eye-witnesses report that when challenged in the street he remained completely cool. He shot first. One of the Gestapo officials fell dead. Beside him fell Philipp KOHL.”

THE DEATH OF AN ANTI-NAZI

“ Our Fatherland ” brings a long report of the Gestapo's murder of Thomas Berthold, known to many opponents of Hitler :

“ During the years of the Weimar republic Thomas belonged to the socialist youth movement. After 1933 he took part in the anti-Nazi struggle developing in the Saarland in connection with the plebiscite, and came to France in 1935.

During the Spanish people's war for freedom we find him in the front line at Madrid.

“ Like all other political refugees he was drawn into the French labour service when the present war broke out. When the police of Petain and Laval, working for their German masters, were hunting down Jews, they arrested him, a non-Jew, and sent him to Poland. At the last moment he escaped the fate which awaited his Jewish fellow-sufferers. He was transferred to Leipzig and condemned to three months' imprisonment for his anti-Fascist fighting in Spain.

“ He was called up into the German army and sent to the Eastern front, where he witnessed the atrocities committed by the S.S. and members of the army.

“ During leave he escaped to France and immediately joined a group of the French Maquis.

“ He took part in the transfer of two lorries containing food and ammunition for the F.F.I. The Nazis surprised them. The 12 Partisans were opposed by seven lorries, crammed with German soldiers. During the battle which started, nine of the Partisans were killed. A tenth remained on the ground, apparently dead. (He later told the story). Two were wounded, one of them Thomas Berthold. He had been hit three times in the thigh. In spite of this he was forced to walk two miles to be interrogated by the Gestapo. He was brutally beaten and finally shot in the neck. The body was disfigured beyond recognition.”

This cruel underground struggle demanded daily sacrifices. A few more examples from the report are cited here:

“ Nine of the Quartermaster General's staff in France, members of the Movement, were court-martialled in March, 1943, and executed.

“ The representative of the Committee in Northern France, Dolli, was fatally injured by the Gestapo in March, 1943.

“ Lieutenant Schneider and the representative of the Committee for Bordeaux were both murdered by the Gestapo in December, 1943.

“ Mrs. Helene Léger, editor of the Balkan Review and a member of the Movement, was arrested by the Vichy police, handed over to the Gestapo and deported. Nothing further has been heard of her.

“ Many Frenchmen, working alongside the Movement, fell victims to the Nazi and Vichy oppression.”

REVOLT IN AN OFFICERS' CONCENTRATION CAMP

“ In a concentration camp for German officers near Toulouse, the prisoners attacked their guards and many managed to escape. Fifty recaptured officers were shot as ‘ringleaders.’ They were accused of having had contact with the Generals’ revolt against Hitler. These officers had been sent to the concentration camp by special orders of General von Kluge.”

WATCH THE BANDITS!

Under this heading the Committee’s paper “ People and Fatherland ” (No. 53, July 1944) warns German soldiers against committing acts of violence against the French population :

“ Comrades! Keep away from the gangster organisations of the Security service and the Gestapo. They are war criminals. But you are not, and will not be as long as you do not support these filthy murderers. Passy 69-31, Anjou 24-24, Opera 21-90, Trinité 71-09, Jasmin 25-39, are some telephone numbers of these war criminals in Paris. They have all been carefully noted down. Do not carry out any of the orders which you receive from these criminals who have brought the hatred of all the European peoples on Hitlerite Germany. Avoid, isolate, despise and kill these worst enemies of our country. In this way you will show the peoples enslaved by Hitlerite Germany that you oppose these crimes and that you are true Germans.

“ In this way you will save your own lives and help to remove the shame which Himmler has heaped upon the name of Germany.

“ Listen in to the broadcasts of the station ‘ Free Germany ’ and help to spread our news.”

THE FIGHT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PARIS

The armies of the Allies were moving towards Paris. Nothing could stop them. From afar the population of Paris, who for four years had seen their city defiled by the Germans, could hear the thunder of guns. Now liberation was at hand: The Parisians swore that Paris should be liberated by her own efforts. Anyone familiar with this great city and its history knows how suddenly its appearance can change. The gentlemen of the Gestapo and of the German Command grew pale. Only a few hours ago they had hoped to leave Paris in an orderly manner, carrying with them their loot and leaving behind nothing but rubble and smouldering ruins. But they were too late. The people of Paris had gone into action. From all sides came news of barricades, encircled districts, interrupted communications. They were trapped like rats. The German soldiers realised that this was the hour of reckoning. In this great hour the Committee "Free Germany" addressed them.

" TO ALL GERMANS IN GREATER PARIS!

" Hitler has again betrayed his army!

" We are here in Paris, abandoned and in a hopeless position. Those who have brought upon us the hatred which surrounds us have fled. They have deserted us. Written us off as lost. The French fighters for freedom are firing at us. With our bodies we are expected to cover the war criminals fleeing with their loot.

" Paris is fighting fanatically for its freedom. The city is already in the hands of its people. Our soldiers and officers are going over to the French and the Allies in their tens of thousands. Every German who has not brought upon himself great personal guilt can go back and become a fighter for peace for Germany. Those responsible for the destruction of Europe will be exterminated. But we can still take the path against Hitler at the side of the French people.

" Our innumerable comrades who, in these days, are joining the movement 'Free Germany,' the Generals who have just surrendered in the West together with their staffs and troops, all

those soldiers and officers WHO DO NOT WISH TO DIE FOR HITLER BUT TO LIVE FOR GERMANY and, at their head, our committee 'Free Germany in the West' which has grown and developed in the hard underground struggle have decided. Not one order of von Kluge or of any officer of the S.S. will be obeyed from now on! We shall only obey anti-Hitler officers and comrades. Not one shot which prolongs the war. Not one shot against the French. We will not loot, or destroy or retreat for Hitler. We shall cease all fighting against the French. We shall encourage all our comrades TO SURRENDER THEIR ARMS AT ONCE. With our arms we shall stop the S.S. and other pro-Nazi adventurers from looting the city. We shall open all stores of weapons and ammunition to the French. We shall liberate all French and political prisoners. We shall shoot at sight every member of the Hitler gang, every member of the Gestapo and every war criminal of the S.S. We shall not enter into any discussions with representatives of the present government or party leadership. We shall wield our weapons at the side of the population of Paris, achieving its own liberation, in order to destroy Hitler and for the re-birth of a free, democratic, independent and peaceful Germany.

"We support by all means and with our arms the just struggle of the French people for their Liberation.

"COMRADES!

"TO ACT THUS, IS TO ACT IN A GERMAN WAY!

"THE SALVATION OF GERMANY RESTS IN OUR HANDS!"

THE TUNNEL OF BUTTES-CHAUMONT

"People and Fatherland," No. 64, describes the following scenes in the struggle for Paris:

"During the fighting in the goods yards of North-Eastern Paris the German crew of a train was encircled in a tunnel at Buttes-Chaumont. Comrade Mende, who took part in the fighting, decided as a true German patriot to talk to these German soldiers and try to persuade them to discontinue resistance. He reported this incident to us: I advanced to the

entrance of the tunnel carrying a white flag and shouted : ' Comrades ! Surrender your arms ! You are completely encircled. Your resistance is now useless.' A soldier replied : ' I do not trust you. They will kill us all.' So I put my rifle on the ground and asked him to do the same. He followed my example and approached with two other comrades. I pointed out to them that resistance was utterly futile. ' As a representative of the Committee Free Germany,' I said, ' I can guarantee your safety.' They now trusted me and said they were prepared to lay down their arms. The lieutenant in charge of the troop and 26 men came out from the tunnel and handed over their arms, munitions and the train. At the station they were received by the F.F.I., and well treated as promised. Two who were wounded were transferred to a hospital. . . .

“ During his further activities Comrade Mende was seriously injured by the S.S. at a barricade of the Boulevard Mortieres.”

THE SURRENDER OF THE FORTRESS BICETRE is described in the same paper :

“ Inside the fortress of Bicetre near Paris a garrison of 280 men had been left behind by the enemy in the rear of the French. They went into action against the Paris population. A local unit of the F.F.I. had the task of clearing this dangerous centre of resistance. Comrade Amann, a member of the movement ' Free Germany ' and an active anti-Nazi known to the French patriots, quickly realised that here he might be of great use. After a long exchange of shots he approached the entrance to the fortress, accompanied by a French soldier and carrying a white flag. He asked the commanding officer to cease fighting and to surrender to the forces of the F.F.I. After a lengthy discussion during which the officer realised the hopeless position into which Hitler had brought him, he surrendered in the presence of an American officer.

“ According to reports of the field-police of the Greater Paris area 2,702 soldiers, N.C.O.s and officers disappeared between March and July, 1944, within the area of the military command of France. In the majority of cases desertion is the suspected cause.

“ On August 18th, 1944, more than 100 French workers who were used as a shield by a troop of the Waffen-S.S. were released between Meriel and Abbe-Duval by the action and threats of an infantry company of the First Battalion of the 173rd Infantry Regiment.

“ The guard at Isle-Adam handed political prisoners, who were being used by the security service for the loading of bombs, over to the French police for release.”

“ Watch Out For War Criminals ! ” is the title of one of the Movement's leaflets warning German soldiers not to partake in butcherings of the type perpetrated against the population at Ascq, Oradour and St. Gingolph. The soldiers were told: “ Anyone allowing himself to be used in this way against the F.F.I. does not only share the responsibility of the Hitler gang—he will not only be held responsible for every one of his acts—he does not only subject to reprisals German soldiers captured by the F.F.I. who would otherwise be treated according to international law—he actually fights against his own brothers, against Germans, and against Germany itself. It is not only the legal and patriotic duty of all comrades in the army to fight against the ill-treatment and shooting of F.F.I. prisoners and against all acts of terror directed against the civilian population, but they must avoid all fighting and persuade comrades and officers to go over to the side of the French Forces of the Interior and to make contact with the German resistance units and to declare their allegiance to the Movement ‘Free Germany’ in order to carry out the armed fight against the Himmler gang everywhere and by all means.

“ Thus alone do we act as real patriots and in the interests of the fatherland which is threatened with extermination by Hitler ! ”

“ FREE GERMANS ” IN GERMANY

The members of the Committee “ Free Germany in the West ” submit to a very strict discipline. A different type of discipline, of course, from the unthinking robot-discipline of the Nazis. On their own free will and the firm conviction

that every German must by his deeds help in the rebirth of his country, a large number of supporters of the committee remained within the German army in order to continue their work when these armies were forced to retreat under Allied pressure. They work in their units and during leave at home they carry their convictions into the towns and factories of the rear, trying to awaken their people from the mental darkness into which Nazism has thrown them.

Of this heroic struggle of single men and women the following are brief accounts:

“ On the line between Koblenz and Trier a goods train carrying Tiger tanks and Ferdinand guns was derailed by loosening of the permanent way. In spite of an offer of a high reward the saboteurs were not found out.

“ In the firm of Lanz A.G., Mannheim, an illegal group of trade unionists was arrested for reconstructing free trade unions and organising a strike. (July, 1944). The informer, Group Leader of the S.A. Herbert Wellner, was subsequently attacked by workers on his way home at night and killed.

“ In Dusseldorf the Gestapo tried to arrest a deserter who was suspected of having organised underground groups. The deserter opened fire on the Gestapo, killing a commissioner, Alfred Kunz, and a member of the Gestapo, Franz Schubert, and wounding two other Gestapo agents. He escaped.

“ 15,000 marks were offered by the Gestapo in Mainz for information leading to the arrest of a person who fired the petrol stores of a big factory on July 5th.”

“ This war is a crime against the German people. Hitler promised us peace, but robbed us of our sons. I want peace and quiet. My deeds are a small contribution towards it. I die gladly, for there is nothing left for me in this world. But if my deed is copied by many, then there will soon be an end to this fraud.”

These proud words were flung by the 60-years-old worker Lange from the Saarland at the “ People’s Court ” which condemned him to death. He was accused of having

destroyed a turret lathe at his place of work. He had been through the first world war, during which he had been wounded four times. Three of his four sons were killed in Russia during this war, the fourth was seriously injured in Yugoslavia. His wife died of grief.

The "People's Court" condemned to death three German peasants who assisted French prisoners of war to escape.

In the Dept. C of the Anilin Works at Ludwigshafen on Rhine, 14 workmen, among them the well-known social democratic trade unionist Hermann Muller, from Oppau, and the French workers Raymond Frossard, Emile Lamour and Paul Toussaint from Paris, were arrested by Gestapo officials under orders of the Commissioner and S.S.-officer Albert Fuchs.

They were accused of having formed a trade union organisation and of having committed acts of sabotage. The president of the special court in Speyer, Kurt Mayer, a high officer of the S.S., condemned them to death on August 15th, although there was no evidence of their guilt. They were executed the same day in a wood near Speyer by a special S.S.-commando.

THE VIEWS OF FRANCE ON THE "FREE GERMANS"

In the paper of the National Movement of French Prisoners of War and Deportees, "L'Homme Libre," of September 17th, 1944, M. Le Breton writes as follows:

"The French Forces of the Interior apparently make use of the Committee 'Free Germany in the West' whose members go with them into battle and address their German countrymen with loud-speakers, pamphlets, etc. On September 8th a Press report informed us of two successes of this type of work: in the tunnel of Buttes-Chaumont and at the Fort of Bicetre. . . . We see that there are people more suited than we for such work, these are the men of the Committee 'Free Germany in the West,' who, since 1940, have come together irrespective of politics and confessions, emigrants, refugees and German illegal anti-Nazis. We have been in touch with them

in Germany and France for a long time, and also with a number of other resistance groups. . . . We cannot understand why the government does not grant facilities for this very successful work."

M. Paul Hery published in the " *Courier Francais du Temoignage Chretien* " of October 7th, 1944, an article on the Committee " *Free Germany in the West,*" from which we give the following extract :

" During the occupation many of our readers have seen the minute duplicated German leaflets called ' *People and Fatherland.*' These were published by courageous men and distributed among soldiers of the German army.

" Today we can give some of the facts concerning this resistance movement within the German army. . . They had in November, 1943, approximately 2,000 active members. This number has considerably increased since that time. Through the influence of the Committee ' *Free Germany in the West* ' many German soldiers have surrendered to the French resistance movement or have, lately, collaborated with it. . . .

" By demanding the overthrow of the Nazi regime and the immediate ending of the war this committee undoubtedly does a patriotic deed. It indicates the only way in which a terrible bloodbath and Germany's total ruin can be avoided:

" We understand this language. . . But we ask ourselves: Does the Committee realise the whole extent of the task before it when it promises to destroy every trace of Hitlerism and militarism in the Germany of the future? And we must ask this question even though this promise arouses in us, too, the desire to see a free and strong Germany established. It is possible that the spirit of democracy is not altogether dead on the other side of the Rhine. . . .

" We see Germany approaching a suicidal crisis rather than a democratic revolution or a military revolt. Shortly before the liberation of Paris a young German, who had volunteered for the German army and who, though a fanatical Nazi, yet realised clearly the situation, confessed to a friend

his thoughts: He and his comrades of similar age cannot imagine a Germany without Hitler'; in the hour of catastrophe their only way out is suicide. . . .

“ To end on a Christian note: We fight against Nazi barbarism, yet we are prepared to defend our country to our last drop of blood. We say—without in any way reducing our sympathies for our brothers of the German resistance movement—that our programme remains one of unconditional surrender of their country!”



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