

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET

SECRET

M JANOWITZ
5

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
Psychological Warfare Division
INTELLIGENCE SECTION

II-4A

Ref: S.M. 88IR/I.S.204

27 November 1944.

THE FRENCH POLITICAL SITUATION.

The following Report, which is for information only and is not to be quoted in any non-Secret document, represents the views of a single observer stationed in Paris and should be read in that light.

I. Attitude to Allies

The taking of Strasbourg and other French military successes of the week have done much to restore self-respect amongst Frenchmen, both military and civil, and have confirmed the recognition of France as one of the Powers. In consequence there has been less criticism of the Allies and more interest in the war: less grumbling about lack of arms, and more interest in the work being done by the armies. People who a week ago were indifferent or despondent about the war are now full of optimism; and there is a tendency to expect a repetition of the break-through on the Normandy front.

No violent reaction to the Belgian crisis has been encountered, nor any disapproval of the action of the British military authorities there. Conversations endorse the newspapers' standpoint that any similar action in France would be an infringement of sovereignty; and would not be warranted even in face of an internal crisis. The fear of Russia, much dominating bourgeois circles, seems to have its counterpart in a fear, amongst the working classes, that America would intervene in the event of a popular uprising in France.

II Grievances

One of the main topics of the week, which has found its way into the press, is the favourable treatment meted out to German prisoners. In various conversations with people of different classes, reference was made to their belief that German prisoners get three good meals a day and are supplied with such luxuries as cigarettes, chocolate and even oranges. They naturally contrast such treatment with that which French prisoners undergo in Germany.

A tour of prison camps, to which members of the French press were invited, has merely tended to confirm popular opinion, since the reporters published lists of rations including, among other things, milk, and generally gave the impression that under the Geneva Convention a German prisoner is better off than a French workman in France.

Two interpretations of our lenient treatment have come to hand; the first that it is given as an inducement to surrender and merely bears out the promises made in leaflets, etc.; the second, that it is intended to ensure good treatment for American prisoners in Germany.

There are signs of continued discontent with the effects of liberation. The propaganda of the last three years led people to believe, whether justifiably or not, that the coming of the Allies

SECRET

done

would bring a general improvement to the standard of living. In the words of a working class man, "On nous disait que c'était les Boches qui prenaient tout. Maintenant qu'ils sont partis nous avons moins qu'avant."

III Attitude to Germany

The presence of French troops on the Rhine has led to a reawakening of interest in the fate of Germany, a subject which had lapsed during the last two months. Widely divergent views are held. While there is every indication of a widespread popular demand for some form or other of revenge, those who see the problem in its historical aspect are more interested in rational solutions. The first attitude may be typified in the words of a workman who said, "Il n'y a pas une famille en France qui n'ait des siens soit prisonniers soit deportés. Si on (le Gouvernement ou les Alliés) ne les venge pas le peuple n'aura plus jamais confiance. Il faut détruire L'Allemagne, sinon ils nous tomberont dessus de nouveau d'ici vingt ans." The other point of view is more complex, but was the subject of a long discussion between several very intelligent Frenchmen of the professional classes; it may be summarized thus: Whatever happens, Germany will remain a highly disciplined and dynamic force. Any attempt to split this force would fail and would only increase the internal resistance of the country and lead again to war, for which Germany is already preparing. If the Western European powers fail to understand this and fail to give Germany a chance, she will inevitably seek a military alliance with Russia, who would thus come to dominate the whole. The solution proposed lies in three parts: to deprive Germany of all industries required to prepare a war, e.g. chemicals and armaments; to colonise Germany with a view to creating a new tradition of culture and education; and, at a later date, to introduce Germany into a Western system of collective security. With regard to the first condition, a reliable source with good contacts in official circles states that the French are already planning to transport German heavy industries, together with their cadres, to France, e.g., the heavy industries on the Lake of Constance. The man who propounded the second condition has had many personal contacts with returned French workers and prisoners, and he holds that a great many of them actually liked working in Germany even in wartime and will wish to return there after the war. (He holds that this is the first time that there have been personal contacts between Germans and Frenchmen and that these contacts were far from being unsuccessful. Already in 1940 the population of France was amazed at the correct and even courteous behaviour of the German conquerors, and though in 1944 German atrocities caused a profound shock to public opinion, these were laid at the door of the Nazi fanatics and their French collaborators. Even in the press a distinction is made between the German people and the Nazi tyrants). The arguments used to support the third condition are that a people of eighty million, with great industrial and organizational gifts, living in a relatively poor country, and having many affinities with their Anglo-Saxon neighbours to the West, cannot be denied a place in the sun. These speculative points of view find support amongst the upper classes fearful of Russian penetration. They are opposed by those who argue that it is the German people as a whole who is and will again be responsible for producing leaders to initiate further wars.

IV Attitude to "Collaborationists"

There is persistent dissatisfaction with the handling, or mishandling of the collaborationist problem, which is one of the touchstones by which the government's efficiency is judged. Some among the poorer classes are convinced that the main offenders, who had made enormous profits during the occupation, are not being affected, and that a few

misguided "Miliciens" are being made the scapegoat. Even amongst the upper classes there is disgust at the impunity with which former friends of the Germans continue to circulate noticeably in the company of the Allied forces. It is interesting to note that Renault's heirs have appealed against the State confiscation of his fortune and property on the grounds that his collaboration with the Germans came as a result of a written petition signed by a large percentage of his employees.

V. Attitude to the Government

Representatives of many social classes have been heard to criticise the Government persistently for lack of firmness or for failing to take various measures for which they had hoped. These measures range from effective action against collaboration and against those who made wartime profits to a show of force sufficient to restore order in the provinces. In the opinion of one eminent Frenchman, the extremes are not incompatible; he believes that the Government's only hope of restoring the law and order essential to its survival would lie in taking the hard measures demanded by the Left, whilst at the same time displaying sufficient force throughout the country province by province, to affirm its authority and reassure the Right. Whilst Gen de Gaulle's personal prestige is still high and his speeches universally admired, many of his associates are criticised either for their past activities or for their incompetence. Thus, a French colonel made it clear that Gen. Juin's breach of parole had not been forgotten in the army, whilst another intelligent Frenchman belonging to the professional classes stated that there was not a man in the Government, including M. Pleven, the Minister, who understood anything about finance.

VI. Communism in France

The disbanding of the Milice does not appear to have been effective as a means to disarming the Communists. One source, whose father and uncle are both "cheminots", states that no arms have been or will be surrendered by the railwaymen who constituted one of the most powerful and highly organised elements of the Resistance. The reliable source already quoted in Section III reports that an armed attack (by the FTP) last week on a barracks at Avignon led to several deaths amongst the garrison. The bourgeois are still highly nervous of the Communist threat. One cynical attitude, that of a lawyer formerly a member of the Resistance, is worth recording in his own words: "Nous ne sommes pas encore tombés assez bas. J'attends le retour de Thorez et la pagaille qui s'en suivra. Ça durera quelque temps. Ensuite, j'espère que nous aurons une bonne dictature militaire pour remettre de l'ordre."

According to the second source mentioned above, the Communist Party in France has ample funds, upwards of ten billion francs: a large part of these funds is thought to have been taken from Treasury printing works.

Thorez remains the unknown quantity. One source, in close contact with de Gaulle's entourage, says that the Gaullists themselves believe that Thorez holds the casting vote.

Two reliable sources (of the professional classes) said that the Communists are making definite advances toward the peasants as in Belgium, by playing on the difference between the prices paid in the country and those in the towns after produce has passed through the hands of middlemen. They added that the peasants, who in fact made immense profits during the occupation, are frightened by the Government's veiled threats to invalidate such fortunes, and may hope to escape reprisals by supporting a new regime.

It should be added that many members of the upper classes, including diplomatic officers, financiers and industrialists, are said to be preparing to meet the possible advent of Communism half way. The words of a source with high service and official connections and a good record in the Liberation, "La machine sa a' granche; celui qui enayera de l'arreter ce fera casser les veins" prompt an attitude of precaution towards Communism, an attitude which is becoming more and more apparent in influential circles.

VII. Industry and Labour

The manager of a large metal warehouse expressed the following opinions:

The relationship between employer and employee is deteriorating. Employers are unable to find the raw materials with which to provide steady work, and the men, used to idling under the occupation, are listless and discontented. What stocks of raw material and implements there are are scattered throughout the countryside, and labour too is dispersed, many of the skilled men being still in Germany or in parts of the country to which they retired. There is a growing fear amongst industrialists that French industry will not be able to compete with foreign enterprise, and that France will simply become an agricultural market, buying her manufactured articles from abroad. On the other hand it is reported that the equipment for the F.F.I. will to a large extent be manufactured in France. The French entertain little hope of recovering the material and machines levied by the Germans: they do however hope that Germany will not be allowed to make an economic recovery to the detriment of French economy. Lack of power is another cause of discontent and disagreement. Industries dependent on the supply of current are forced to work by night rather than by day; and 25% overtime has to be paid to workmen. Owners consider this overtime pay a dead loss; and many of them, uncertain as to whether they can work at a profit, prefer not to work at all; this has the added appeal of not exhausting stocks of raw material which is sound capital, but can only be replaced at ever-increasing cost.

Friction in the mines is reported by another source. This is due, according to him, to hostility founded on changes introduced in 1940, when owners took advantage of the German occupation to rescind some of the measures taken by the Front populaire.

VIII. Town and Countryside:

The situation in France has been likened by one observer to the Kerensky period in Russia, Government support coming from the country side and the Army, and opposition from the towns. In the opinion of the same source, the towns will vote Communist at the next elections whilst the countryside will favour the Government, in spite of Communist attempts to win the peasants to their cause. There is still great dissatisfaction in Paris owing to the abundance of apples and the lack of butter, which the Normandie peasants are accused of hoarding.

IX. Finance and Economy:

The liberation Loan is thought by many sources to be a failure, and certainly does not satisfy the demand that profiteers should be bled. In the words of one working class man, "Pourquoi emprunter de l'argent a ceux qui l'ont vole?" Another man, a professional, said that since the Loan aimed at attracting money put into circulation by the Germans, and most of which was in the hands of profiteers, it was essential to win the latter's confidence and not, as M. Pleven had done, to beg with one hand and threaten with the other.

One of the professional class sources quoted in Section III who had spoken to one of the counsellors of the Bank of France said that the banks had subscribed fifty billions which would have to be covered by the public, and that over and above this some thirty billions had been raised, but there was little hope of more.

If M. Pleven knew of more satisfactory measures by which to raise the money, why did he not use them or why did he not follow the measures taken in Belgium which had proved effective ?

X FFI and Army and Police

According to a French Colonel the work of integrating the FFI into the army is progressing well. Light of a different kind is thrown on the subject by a former member of Resistance, a lawyer with wide connections, who reported that, whilst all the better elements of the F.F.I. had voluntarily joined the new army units, all the dissident ones had gone back to civilian life, where they intended to continue using the lawless methods practised against the Germans.

The DGSS (direction Generale des Services Secrets) has absorbed the BCRA, which now comes under Diethelm.

A reliable report from the provinces to the effect that a former member of the Gestapo is now Chief of Police over a wide area, indicates the state of mistrust and uncertainty which prevails in many parts of the country. In Nimes there are said to have been fifteen different police organisations, each claiming the power of arrest. One of the leaders, claiming to be a captain in the FFI and in fact an escaped "prisonnier de droit commun" perpetrated over twenty assassinations before his own arrest.

XI. Resistance

There has been a recent crisis in the MLN ending in the resignation of d'Astier de la Vigorie, Pascal Copeau, and Morandat (Pierlot). At a recent meeting d'Astier proposed that the MLN should amalgamate with the FN, in order to present a united Resistance front. There is good evidence that Frenay and the centre (Jean Pierre Levy) opposed this, on the grounds that such amalgamation would inevitably bring the MLN under Communist control. d'Astier resigned from the committee and was followed (it is thought to his regret) by Copeau (Editor of Liberation) and Pierlot. d'Astier's personal prestige is great in Resistance circles, and though he no longer controls the policy of Liberation his influence and his critical attitude towards the Government may have far-reaching effects.

There is further evidence of dissatisfaction and disagreement within resistance circles. A recent report from the south confirms the release from prison of former gestapo agents; and the giving of official status to former collaborationists. The reaction to this is that where the law will not take action, resistance still can and will; and further lawlessness is foreshadowed.

XII. Rumours

There is no confirmation of the arrest of the Comte de Paris, but his aide-de-camp was apparently arrested and subsequently released. According to a source of high standing the Comte de Paris himself paid a short and unsuccessful visit to Paris last week.

DISTRIBUTION:

General McClure	12th A.G. (1)
Col. Kehm	6th A.G. (1)
Mr. Jackson	SHAEE Political Advisers
Lt.Col.Drummond-Wolfe	SHAEE, G-2
PWD (Rear) (2 copies -1 for PID)	SHAEE, G-5
OSS - Mr. Schlesinger	SHAEE Mission to Belgium (PW Section)

