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Newsletter:

Nazism Is On Upgrade In Germany

By Klaus Mann
Staff Writer

"You would like to know how many Germans have remained Nazis at heart? Well, I'll tell you how you could find out. All Allied troops should be withdrawn from German territory, or at least should make themselves invisible, leaving behind a clandestine army of reliable observers.

"At the same time, a come-back of the Fuehrer should be staged, in the style of Napoleon's return from Elba. The next day, all those putting out Nazi flags or wearing Party insignia ought to be arrested—and shot at dawn! You might have to liquidate 90 per cent of our population . . ."

The man who told me this is a good German patriot and a good anti-Nazi, now serving as a high-ranking official in one of the German regional governments. At the time of the Hitler regime, he left the Reich and lived abroad for some months. He could not stand exile, however—partly because of his longing for the Fatherland, partly because he did not get along with his fellow-refugees.

"Frankly, I was irritated by what I thought was their immoderately anti-German attitude," he told me. "Some of them insisted that about 75 per cent of our nation were loyally behind Hitler. At the time, that struck me as a wild exaggeration. Now I realize that their estimate was rather too optimistic."

NAZI RESURGENCE

My discouraged friend only confirmed what I had been told by many other trustworthy observers. There is no sense in fooling ourselves. Things in Germany are going from bad to worse.

A girl working as a gardener in one of the Berlin suburbs told me that she is boycotted by her colleagues on account of her political views. "The other girls know that I was in a concentration camp as an anti-Nazi," she said. "That's why they never talk to me. They have all been members of the BDM (Nazi organization of German girls), and most of them still believe that Hitler was a genius and a superman."

MORAL CRISIS

"It will take the Germans at least half a century to overcome their present moral crisis," commented a professor of Berlin University—an elderly scholar of liberal principles. "The process of ethical and political re-orientation has not even begun as yet."

"Right now, people here are more confused and stubborn than they were a year ago. I don't see any signs of improvement, especially as far as German youth is concerned. Most of the young men I am in contact with seem still to be under the spell of Goebbels propaganda."

"At least 60 per cent of my classmates still believe in Nazism." This I was told by a 16-year-old schoolboy and former member of the Hitler Youth, who now thinks of himself as an anti-Nazi. "As long as the war was on," he said, "all of us were for the Fuehrer—naturally we were! Then, under the first impression of defeat, quite a few of us changed our minds."

"Now it has become fashionable in our school to be anti-Semitic, anti-democratic and nationalistic again. Most of my friends believe that the Anglo-Americans are going to fight the Russians, and that this will be our chance."

PROPAGANDA

The same boy told me that none of his pals had seen a film on Nazi concentration camps now presented in one of the city's most popular theaters. "We don't believe in that kind of thing," he observed, contemptuously. "Propaganda—that's what it is."

When I went to see the concentration camp film myself, I found the theater practically empty. There were about 12 or 15 persons there. Some of them walked out in the middle of the show. An old lady sitting next to me kept making bitter remarks. "Those dead bodies up there on the screen," she hissed, "—I wonder where they may have picked them up! In one of our bombed cities, perhaps . . ."

These are just a few samples and instances characteristic of the mood and atmosphere prevailing in the German capital, a year after the end of the war. If the German disease is not incurable—it is certainly far from being cured.