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### **Why the Germans fight on.**

**Mann, Erika**

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WHY THE GERMANS FIGHT ON .

by  
Erika Mann

The postman always rings twice. But the Germans - the Nazis at home, as well as the "better ones" abroad - ring so often; they play the same tune with such hypnotizing persistence that anyone near them will soon find himself humming the intrusive bit of melody, whether he likes it or not.

I do not like the song which Mr. Fritz Sternberg is wont to sing into the ears of NATION readers whenever an opportunity seems to present itself. Be it that, as an expert on economics, he sets out to prove the indispensability of an industrially powerful Germany to the economic welfare of the world; <sup>cf.</sup> (The Nation, - date ?) be it that, as a military authority and a connoisseur of the German Soul, he repudiates the allied demand for "unconditional surrender" which, (The Nation, January 27th, 1945) he is very much afraid, may prolong the war, he is on the job for the good of the fatherland. Untiringly he and his fellow-Better-Germans seek to impress upon liberal America two apparently ~~unreasonable~~ <sup>irreconcilable</sup> theories. They are:

- 1.) In the face of the Gestapo the Germans could not possibly organize any strong underground- or resistance movement. ( Implication: don't complain if no such thing has been discovered in the Aachen district!)
- 2.) Nevertheless, Germany is rich in "uncompromising" <sup>Anti-</sup> Nazis who, however, are forced to compromise after all; forced, not by the Gestapo; forced, by the Allies; "some challenging action" of which they are capable won't come off, unless "a change in allied policy" makes their effort worthwhile. No lesser truth-lover than Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels has said so himself.

It is for two reasons that I wish to break in on the Sternberg-Goebbels duet. 1.) The effectiveness of repetitious propaganda can be broken only by equally repetitious counter measures. 2.) I have just returned

from occupied Germany and the hundreds of conversations which I had with German civilians should entitle me to a short solo recital of my own.

My findings may be summed up as follows:

1.) The Germans are indeed politically apathetic - this is where Mr. Sternberg is right. While many of them profess to be tired of Nazism, I have ~~not~~<sup>not</sup> met a single one who even claimed to have been engaged at any time in any anti-nazi activities. Asked, whether to their knowledge opposition forces were active in the Reich, they said that they didn't think so, but that, of course, they had no real way of knowing. Nor did they seem to be interested in, or impressed by, the possible existence of a number of underground heroes. Rather they referred to them as to a species with whom respectable citizens like themselves would not even now care to associate. The majority admitted that in 1939 - and 40, when matters "looked so rosy", they'd been wholeheartedly behind the "uehrer". Those few who insisted that they had disliked him even then, complained of his shortsightedness in underestimating <sup>and consequently provoking</sup> both Russia and the U.S. . Moral considerations did not enter the picture at all. Germany's leading criminals stand <sup>lame</sup> accused today not of being criminals but of being failures .

2.) Like Mr. Sternberg, some Germans blame the Gestapo for their failure to organize resistance. Were it not for Himmler - they say - the average German soldier might be ready to quit. Yet, when Strasbourg had fallen and the beaten Wehrmacht had withdrawn across the Rhine, two hundred German soldiers entrenched themselves in two apartment houses near the river, shooting at anyone who came near them, killing a great many people and serving their "Fuehrer" to the worst of their power. These men were no "professional Nazis". They were "normal" Germans, ~~elderly~~, most of them, or of poor health, who'd been stationed or hospitalized in Strasbourg before the fighting there started and were now forgotten, cut off from the German main force in Kehl. In their back there was no Gestapo to frighten them and in their midst

no Nazi officer to prevent their surrender. They merely kept on killing because they wanted to. No S.S. crack unit could have done better .

3.) ~~When~~ German leaders <sup>high</sup> ~~have~~ <sup>has</sup> done - and <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ doing- <sup>its</sup> ~~their~~ utmost to make the horrors of war appear tolerable as compared with those held by an allied victory. But neither "Unconditional Surrender", nor the Eisenhower pro~~cl~~amation; neither "Vansittartism" nor the Morgenthau Plan furnished Goebbels with adequate material. No authentic manifestation of allied thought has become so "popular" in Germany as the weird phantasy known there as "The Roosevelt-Kaufmann Plan".

Haunted by the sufferings inflicted on his fellow-Jews, one Theodore Kaufmann - an American citizen - sat down early in 1941 and composed a scheme for the complete elimination of all things German. The Reich, he wrote, must be distributed among its neighbours. All Germans must be sterilized; their language must be forbidden, their books burned and not a trace must be left of what was once Germany. Needless to say Mr. Kaufmann failed to find a publisher and himself had to pay for getting his dream printed. Few Americans have seen the pamphlet. Most Germans have. Kaufmann, they were told, was Roosevelt's confidante and closest collaborator; his "plan" was the President's brainchild and would be applied without fail to a defeated Germany.

Even today, almost four years after Kaufmann launched his ungainly brochure, every effort is made to keep its contents alive in the German mind. Goebbels knows a V. weapon when he sees it and prefers his Kaufmann to anything Mr. Sternberg has to offer.

4.) As to the ~~Better~~ German contention that the Gestapo is still strong enough to keep nine to twelve million foreign slave labourers from rebelling, I have found it quite correct. <sup>As yet</sup> There are no reports of a widespread resistance movement among these unfortunates whose every move is guarded by their German torturers and every one of whom passes, twice a day, the gallows installed in the courtyard of his sweatshop. "Can anyone", asks Mr. Bhhhhhhhh

Sternberg, "be so naive as to believe that these people favor Hitler?" Nobody possibly could. But that anyone should be "naive" enough to compare their plight with that of the German nation - a nation armed to the teeth - is hard to comprehend. Any such comparison - as drawn by Mr. Sternberg - implies the innocence of ~~the~~ <sup>s</sup> German people, held in bondage by "The Nazis" ~~is~~. It also implies - unintentionally, one should think - an accumulation of awe-inspiring powers and gifts which an erring fate bestowed on Herr Hitler and his intimates. That they alone should have been able, ~~first~~ first to subdue their own nation, then to overrun the continent of Europe, and ~~then~~ that finally, when the whole world was enroute to Berlin, they should have dared to turn their <sup>helpless</sup> German slaves into an armed "Volkssturm" - surely, all this makes them look like a bunch of veritable supermen.

5.) Mr. Sternberg tells us "Why the Nazis Fight On". As a matter of record "The Germans" also fight on. Why? I <sup>have</sup> can only repeat what they ~~me~~ told me. Some - ten, perhaps, out of a ~~mixed~~ hundred of civilians and captured soldiers - placed the responsibility squarely on Herr Himmler's shoulders. Three or ~~four~~ <sup>propaganda</sup> ~~blamed~~ <sup>most</sup> allied ~~blamed~~, ~~in~~ particularly the "Roosevelt-Kaufmann Plan". The rest - about 86 percent - declared that the war must go on until the Allies are ready ( ~~when~~ ~~the~~ ~~German~~ ~~people~~ ~~are~~ ~~sufficiently~~ ~~tired~~ ~~and~~ ~~disunited~~ ) for "a decent peace". Just what this decent one would have to look like, they were hesitant to say. But I venture to doubt whether any peace which the Allies could possibly device without harboring suicidal intentions would be considered "decent".

The Germans, then, fight on for something they won't get, something, however, which they believe to be available, if only they keep fighting. Nothing but total defeat, nothing short of an all-engulfing, omni-present, irresistible national disaster will stop them. No imaginable "change of policy" will.

..-.-.-.-.-

Servants

(corrected copy)