

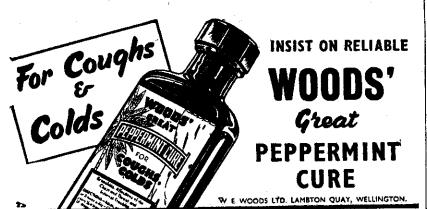
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GERMANY'S FOREIGN WORKERS

WITH the Allies thrusting into the Reich from two sides, thousands of foreign workers in Germany, as well as prisoners of war, have already been liberated and the number will be increasing daily. What is likely to be the attitude of these "labour slaves" towards their former masters? One answer to that important question is suggested in the following article from a recent issue of "The New Statesman."



growing out of that damned Marxist solidarity stuff, particularly so far as foreign workers are concerned. The line you ought Marxist take with them is to stress your pride in being Germans.

≺HUS shouted Dr. Ley, chief of the Nazi "Labour Front," at a mass meeting of German workers commanded to listen. It was in 1942, well over two years before General Eisenhower's timely appeal to the Nazi regime's foreign labour slaves; but it was neither the first nor the last time that the regime proved to be painfully aware of the danger of fraternisation between German and foreign workers, while all the time the ever more desperate shortage of manpower would demand further increase of forcibly-imported labour.

As early as November, 1940 (and not counting close on a million Polish and French war prisoners working either in factories or on the land), there were 1.2 million civilians, about half of them Poles, doing forced labour. In 1941 the figure rose only by a few hundred thousands, but in March, 1942, there were 2.2 million civilian foreign workers and 1.6 million p.o.w. workers and an additional 300,000 Russian war prisoners employed on road work, etc., close behind the fighting zone. In the summer of 1942 the figure rose only slightly, but in September a new conscription drive was started, and ever since the figure has risen steadily to well over five millions in 1943 and to somewhere between ten and twelve millions to-day.

Favours to the Danes

Working conditions and wages have varied and fluctuated very considerably. The worst treatment, at all times, has been the lot of the Russians and Poles. Danes once were among the more favoured, as can be gathered from this report of a Dane employed by the Junkers Works in Halberstadt:

unkers Works in Halberstadt:

We work from 7.20 a.m. to 6.20 p.m. Most of us live in private houses with German families, where we only have to pay R.M. 15 per week for lodging, supper, and laundry. A meal at the works canteen can be had for 25 Pf. Wages are from 68 to 78 Pf. an hour, which after deductions leaves R.M. 30 to 35 a week, with the possibility of making an extra 33 per cent by piece work. Most of us can afford to send home R.M. 60 a month. When we get leave we pay half the fare (R.M. 51), the Company paying the other half.

This was in 1942, however, whereas in recent months (particularly since the various risings in Copenhagen) the treatment of Danish workers has deteriorated. In the case of other nationalities, however, there has been recent evidence of special inducements and privileges, such as facilities for marrige (even by proxy), permission for food parcels, better wages and housing conditions, etc., all of which,

"I do hope that, at long last, you are of course, is due to the ever more crying need for not too unwilling manpower.

Fraternisation Frowned On

As to fraternisation with German workers, the Nazi rulers have, at all times, done their damnedest to stop it. Ever since 1941 this set of official rules has been displayed in every factory:

The German workman is our brother.
The foreigner is the enemy of our nation.
A foreigner must not under any circumstances be entrusted with control of German labour,

It is strictly forbidden to talk to foreign workers, except in connection with the work being carried on.

No works owner or foreman may invite foreigners to his home or sit at the same table with them.

This and a great many similar orders and appeals have been consistently disobeyed. To quote only some non-German evidence (out of masses available), here is Jiri Hronek in an official Czech publication:

They are making frantic appeals to the German workers' racial pride, and, when this fails, the Nazis resort to threats and severe punishment for making contact with foreign workers.

Or this Daily Telegraph interview (March 4, 1942) by Peter Matthews with a Polish officer-cadet who, after his escape from camp, was helped on his way to freedom by a good many Germans providing him with food and shelter:

The Nazis are afraid of fraternisation with foreigners, and very heavy penalties are imposed upon Germans for acts of kindness...despite this official attitude, however, many Germans regard the foreigners more as fellow-sufferers than as enemies, and they are surprisingly frank in their conversation.

Prisoners keep themselves informed of the true state of affairs by getting accounts of the BBC broadcasts from the Germans working beside them in field and factory ...

Or this interview with a Czech escaped from slave labour in Germany (Daily Telegraph, August 8, 1941):

watching foreigners on forced labour, they watching foreigners on forced labour, they watch the German workers too. In their own factories, indeed, the Germans are under observation like convicts. Discipline is very strict and, besides the technical supervisor, a kind of disciplinary officer, who is created in every workshop. armed, is posted in every workshop.

I have deliberately picked some fairly old examples from a time when the regime's war effort was still prospering; but there is also more recent evidence, such as various papers of July, 1944, describing how the Kattowitz Court sentenced two women to 15 months and two years' hard labour respectively for showing sympathy to a foreigner, or the Munchener Neuesten Nachrichten of June 20, 1944, reporting sentences of one and a-quarter and two and a-quarter years respectively for a similar "crime."

'Crimes" of Kindness

The Court columns of the German press are indeed a constant source of