

To begin with they trusted him; they respected his old age; but that feeling has long since changed to anger. Naturally Vichy has its followers, especially among young boys who are more easily seduced into accepting Nazi ideals. They have been enrolled into what is called the Vichy Militia. And now that the Germans are obviously going to get beaten, these young men have become vicious and even more German than the Germans. And they are being used for terror purposes, but when the German Armies are forced to retreat the Vichy Militia will have to go with them; it certainly won't be safe for them to stay in their own country.

If a Frenchman openly opposes Vichy, he is persecuted, and age does not save him. I remember one elderly man I met one night whose story was typical of many. Once he opposed Petain and his Government; that was three years ago, but for three years he has been a fugitive, constantly on the run. If he is caught he will be punished; it does not matter about his age, and it does not matter that he has given a lifetime of service to his country.

Waiting for the Allied Armies

The French people admire the British—for myself, I feel sure of that. They admire our going on alone after France had fallen. Their hopes are centred on us and our victory. When we bomb French towns they do not blame us; they understand. When the B.B.C. announcer tells them the news, they believe it, as they certainly don't the Vichy newspapers and the German radio stories. I was in scarcely one house where they did not tune into the B.B.C. every time it came on the air in the European Service. They are waiting for the arrival of the Allied Armies, and they hope it will be soon. In my case they sheltered me, and fed me and guided me, and they refused to take anything in return. I knew that food was scarce, and yet, despite my protests, they insisted on feeding me very well, although I felt they would be going without after I

had gone. Once I asked a man whether a certain venture we were up to was safe. "Yes," he said. "You see if we are captured at least you'll have a trial, though I'll be shot like a dog." When it was all over and I would have liked to give him a souvenir he said: "No, don't spoil it. One day your armies will land; that's all I want, just that chance to fight again."

I could go on for a long time with stories of the care the French took of my safety; but I will leave it there. You will understand why I admire and love them, and why a lot of my preconceived ideas about them have altered. France is a sad country to-day—unspeakably sad. There's an awful sense of oppression. It is like a blight over the land, and you feel it everywhere you go—in the towns and in the countryside. You rarely see people smile in the street. The houses are unpainted, the fences are down, the leaves lie in the streets. Many people told me it was not shabbiness or hunger that affected them; it was this awful fear of something impending—a new levy, a new arrest as hostage, or the disappearance of a friend. They are itching for the moment when they can openly join in the fighting again to free France.

But in spite of everything they have kept their sense of humour. I saw it often; it's a thing the Germans cannot do anything about. I'm no beauty at the best of times, and at that time I was looking even less fetching than usual. But one day walking along a road I got quite a build-up. I passed a mother and her small daughter going in the same direction. I heard the little one say: "Mummu, is that man a German?" "Oh no," her mother said. "All Germans carry guns and swords and they are all ugly." I shall never forget the way the French helped me, a fugitive, nor the inspiration of their courage. And I keep hearing those words they used to say to me so often when I was thanking them or saying good-bye: "It is nothing—it is for France."