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THE NAZI COLLABORATIONIST FRONT

As Nazi ties with the outside world have been cut by Allied military advances and declarations of war by formerly nonbelligerent countries, the Germans have assembled inside the Reich a number of foreign "governments" and committees which together form a collaborationist front. Considerable effort has been made to expand and exploit these collaborationist groups by giving them radio transmitters, newspapers, training schools, and camps. The original purpose of this extensive program was apparently to obtain the maximum use of all available foreign manpower in the Reich. Its present aims appear to be to further subversive activities inside countries liberated by the Allies and to prepare for a post-war European Nazi underground.

The Nazis have employed no hard and fast rule in selecting the institutional form for each collaborationist group. They range all the way from recognized "governments," to "national committees" and "liberation committees". The Italian, Hungarian, Rumanian, and Bulgarian "governments" have full rosters of ministers which, however, are not identical with the Cabinet in power before the German withdrawal. The French representation, on the other hand, based on Petain's authority as "chief of state," is mainly a continuation of the old Vichy regime, but it has merely been given the status of "French Government Committee for the Safeguarding of National Interests". Generally the less formal committee form is employed for collaborationist groups which do not represent an established state but comprise movements which aim at territorial reorganization. Examples of these are the Walloon Liberation Committee, and, most important, Vlassov's Committee for the Liberation of Russian Peoples.

The Nazis also appear to follow no regular system in selecting the leadership of these collaborationist movements. The tendency apparently is to cover the field comprehensively, rather than to propagate one political line. Thus organization within the various "governments" and committees has been kept flexible and adaptable to different circumstances. In addition to the de Brinon committee, for example, the following other French organizations have been identified: a French Liberation Committee, evidently the skeleton of a French Fascist Party; a National Independence Front, which claims to operate inside France; and an *Alliance Franco-Allemagne*, charged chiefly with the organization and indoctrination of French workers and war prisoners in the Reich. Likewise the Vlassov Committee, an over-all organization for the peoples of the USSR, functions as a central agency to which sub-committees of

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the following various nationalities are subordinated: Ukrainians, White-Ruthenians, Caucasians, and Turkestanians.

These collaborationist groups "look after the interests" of the large number of their nationals in the Reich and are the principal media through which the nationals are organized and supervised. These groups originally were chiefly useful in the field of manpower mobilization. Foreign labor services are legally integrated into the collaborationist machinery and afford the collaborationist organizations an opportunity to influence and indoctrinate foreign workers of their respective nationalities.

All the collaborationist "governments" and committees have military organizations. Degrelle's Walloon Liberation Committee and the Latvian Freedom Committee appear to have been drawn largely from former Waffen-SS formations. A variety of French collaborationist military units have been consolidated under the political control of Darnand in the SS "Charlemagne" Brigade. By extensive recruiting among Soviet prisoners and workers in Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Norway, the Generals on Vlassov's Committee are reported to be extending the "independent" command of all purely Soviet groups in the *Wehrmacht* which recently was given to their leader.

The collaborationist groups also engage in subversive operations inside countries which have been wrested from Nazi control. Reports from France confirm that a small amount of military activity is carried on by remnants of Darnand's *milice* behind Allied lines, which, in turn, is greatly exaggerated by the German press. Vlassov, similarly, claims that his agents have penetrated Soviet lines and insists that the bulk of his supporters lie behind the Soviet front. The recent capture of agents in Bulgaria disclosed that the Tsankov "government" is selecting men for sabotage and terrorist activities who are trained and equipped by the Nazi Security Service in Vienna before infiltration into Bulgaria by plane. These agents are under orders to contact the remnants of former fascist organizations still at large in the country.

Components of the collaborationist front act as nominal sponsors for the radio propaganda which the Nazis beam at France, the Balkan states, and the USSR. This propaganda follows no consistent line but attempts to exploit all possible local situations. The "Bulgarian National Radio" has been fulminating against the purge trials in Sofia. The "Voice of National Serbia" has made clever use of the cause of King Peter. The black propaganda station "Red Flag" beamed at Hungary seeks to create difficulties for the new provisional Hungarian government by preaching crude Marxist demands for the abolition of private property and for the immediate incorporation of Hungary into the USSR.

These collaborationist groups are also used to "legalize" actions taken by the Nazis against foreign nationals, especially hostages. When the purge trials of prominent French collaborationists were opened in Paris, Nazi leaders declared that the "real French government" in Ger-

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many would exact retaliatory measures on Gaullists in Germany in return for all acts perpetrated by the de Gaulle regime against collaborationists in France.

By assisting the German government to control foreign workers, by supplementing the *Wehrmacht's* manpower reservoir, and by stimulating unrest in liberated territory, the collaborationist front probably justifies the effort which the Nazis have spent in its organization and support. It appears probable, however, that this structure also has some post-war purpose. Obviously the collaborationist front as a coherent system cannot survive the Nazi regime. Its basic framework, publications, and radio stations will disappear with the collapse of the Nazis. The collaborationist leaders are by now so well known that their chances of escaping detection are very slim.

Still, the collaborationist front can further Nazi post-war aims by indoctrinating their non-German nationals, who after the war may constitute a dissatisfied element likely to create unrest and encourage the resurgence of fascism in their respective countries. Significantly the propaganda and indoctrination carried on by the collaborationist groups follow very general lines. The main themes—the old fear of Bolshevism, the old appeal to anti-Semitism, and a vague sort of “socialism”—constitute no definite political program but possess a disintegrating character adaptable to the most varied local situations. One other ingredient strongly represented in collaborationist propaganda is nationalism. The different groups frequently stress that they speak for no other power, that they are not even pro-German, and that they represent only the true interests of their own nation which would lose its independence should such non-European powers as the Soviet Union, Great Britain, or the United States win. Such propaganda is consistent with the Nazi aim of impeding the reconstruction of a stable Europe so as to facilitate an eventual Nazi reconquest of power.

The creation and recognition of these collaborationist groups has in several respects compelled the surrender of cherished Nazi doctrines. Nazi concessions, announced recently by Vlassov, accord Eastern workers treatment more closely in line with that given Western workers, but they represent sacrifices to Nazi racial ideology. The concept that Germany needs to rely upon other European nations tends to contradict the basic Nazi idea of German domination over Europe. The sponsorship of these collaborationist groups is a recognition that Nazi diplomatic relations with outside powers have almost vanished. It reflects the bankruptcy of Nazi foreign policy and emphasizes that the only activity now possible in that field is preparation for a future following defeat.

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