

Excerpts from Ernst von Salomon's Answers to the 131 Questions in the Allied Military Government Fragebogen (1951)

Abstract

All adult West Germans were forced, under threat of punishment if they did not comply, to fill in an extensive questionnaire of 131 questions, at the end of which they had to certify that all statements made were true and that "any omission or false or incomplete statements are offenses against the Military Government and will be subject to prosecution and punishment." It is illuminating to read this questionnaire carefully also to appreciate the contents of the U.S. High Commissioners report and West German responses to it (both also featured in this chapter). It was Ernst von Salomon who wrote, in the form of an autobiographical novel, a scathing attack on Allied policies that was first published in 1951 and became a bestseller that was also translated into English (1954). Von Salomon's attack is all the more intriguing because he was a former free corps fighter and right-wing radical who was involved in anti-Weimar putschism and assassinations. His life and work after 1933 are more difficult to define. Though not involved in the Party and its offshoots, he wrote several nationalist books and later also wrote screenplays containing anti-democratic and antisemitic messages. The Gestapo considered him part of the proscribed Gregor Strasser camp of the Nazi movement, however. Among his friends were men who later became involved in the "Red Orchestra" underground resistance group, and his partner was a Jewish woman whom he protected from deportation. After the war he was interned because of his political past, but after his release he returned to writing and screenwriting in the 1950s and 1960s until he died in 1972. In the context of the Nazification and de-Nazification of Germany, his biography is therefore well worth studying.

Source

MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY

Fragebogen

WARNING: Read the entire Fragebogen carefully before you start to fill it out. The English language will prevail if discrepancies exist between it and the German translation. Answers must be typewritten or printed clearly in block letters. Every question must be answered precisely and conscientiously and space is to be left blank. If a question is to be answered by either 'yes' or 'no' print the word 'yes' or 'no' in the appropriate space. If the question is inapplicable, so indicate by some appropriate word or phrase such as 'none' or 'not applicable.' Add supplementary sheets if there is not enough space in the questionnaire. Omissions or false or incomplete statements are offences against Military Government and will result in prosecution and punishment.

I have now read the entire Fragebogen or questionnaire carefully.

Although not specifically told to do so, I have even read it through more than once, word for word, question by question. This is not by any means the first questionnaire with which I have grappled. I have already filled in many identical Fragebogens, and a great number of similar ones, at a time and in circumstances concerning which I shall have a certain amount to say under the heading Remarks. Apart from that group of Fragebogens there were others: during the period January 30th, 1933, to May 6th, 1945, which is usually called the 'Third Reich,' or with cheap wit 'the Thousand-Year Reich,' or briefly 'the

Nazi Regime,' or correctly the period of the National-Socialist Government in Germany—during those years, too, I was frequently confronted with Fragebogens. I can confidently assert that I invariably read them through with care.

In order to satisfy any doubts on the matter let me say at once that the perusal of all these questionnaires has always produced the same effect upon me: a tumult of sensations is let loose within my breast of which the first and the strongest is that of acute discomfort. When I try to identify this sensation of discomfort more exactly, it seems to me to be very close to that experienced by a schoolboy caught at some mischief—a very young person, on the threshold of experience, suddenly face to face with an enormous and ominous power which claims for itself all the force of law, custom, order and morality. He cannot yet judge the world's pretension that whatever is is right; at present his conscience is good when he is in harmony with that world, bad when he is not. He cannot yet guess that a happy moment will one day come when he will weigh the world and its institutions in the scales of that still dormant conscience of his, will weigh it and will find it wanting and in need of rebuilding from the foundations up.

Now in view of the matters which I have had to discuss in my answer to Question 19 of this Fragebogen, I am clearly nowise entitled to express my opinions on matters of conscience. Nor is it I who wish to do so. Yet how am I to account for the tone and arrangement of this questionnaire if its general intention is not a new incitement to me to examine this conscience of mine?

The institution which, in all the world, seems to me most worthy of admiration, the Catholic Church, has its system of confession and absolution. The Church recognises that men may be sinners but does not brand them as criminals: furthermore, there is only one unforgivable sin, that against the Holy Ghost. The Catholic Church seeks to convert and save the heathen, who is striving to be happy according to his simple lights; but for the heretic, who has once heard the call and has yet refused to follow it, there can be no forgiveness. This attitude is straightforward and consistent and entails certain sublime consequences. It leads directly to the secrecy of the confessional. It also means that each man, in his search for grace, is very largely dependent on his own, innermost determination. A fine attitude, and one that I might myself embrace did I not fear that the very quintessence of the Church's teaching—yes, the Ten Commandments themselves—were in painful contradiction to a whole series of laws that I have recently been compelled to observe.

For it is not the Catholic Church that has approached me and requested that I examine my conscience, but another and far less admirable institution, Allied Military Government in Germany. Sublimity is here at a discount. Unlike the priest with the poor sinner remote from the world in the secrecy of the quiet confessional, A.M.G. sends its questionnaire into my home and, like an examining judge with a criminal, barks its one hundred and thirty-one questions at me: it demands, coldly and flatly, nothing less than the truth; it even threatens twice—once at the beginning and once at the end—to punish me, and the nature and scope of the punishment envisaged I can only too vividly imagine. (See Remarks, at the end of this questionnaire.)

It was representatives of A.M.G., men in well-creased uniforms with many brightly coloured decorations, who made it unambiguously clear to me that every man worthy to be called a man should study his conscience before deciding whether or not to act in any specific way. They sat in front of me, one after the other, those agreeable and well-groomed young people, and spoke with glibness and self-assurance about so great a matter as a man's conscience. I admired them for their apodictic certainty: I envied them their closed and narrow view of the world.

Whenever I have attempted to reconcile any proposed action with any type of conscientious judgment, I have invariably found myself confronted with a hoary dilemma: either I must doubt the legality of conscience or I must give up the very idea of doing anything at all.

Neither the tone nor the content of the Fragebogen reveals the reasons for my being asked all these questions. I have approached many a representative of Military Government, and always without success, in an attempt to find out what could possibly be the purpose of, say, Question 108. When I examine my conscience to see whether I am justified in filling out the questionnaire, I am bound to decide that to answer some of the questions—for example, No. 18 or No. 25 or Nos. 102-120 or Nos. 126-128—would entail flagrant damage to the rights of others and would therefore involve me in something that I regard as basically immoral. In view of the general tenor of the Fragebogen, and knowing that almost every German—at least in the Western parts of my country—has been compelled to fill it in, I can, after searching my now fully aroused conscience, reach only one conclusion: I must fear that I am taking part in an act which, in these uncontrollable circumstances, may result in damage to a country and a nation to which I unquestionably belong, damage done in the interest of foreign powers whose supremacy is based solely on two facts, the military collapse of Germany and an agreement made with men who were assumed by their co-signatories, at the time the agreement was signed, to be criminals.

These foreign powers won, in war, the right to every supremacy save one—supremacy over the law in the name of which they set out to conquer Germany. By so doing they created a vacuum into which we may now move, we, who surrendered our claim to every sort of right save only one—the right of the law.

But enough. I shall fill out this Fragebogen, even as I have filled out others.

[...]

E. MEMBERSHIP IN ORGANISATIONS

io. Indicate on the following chart whether or not you were a member of and any offices you have held in the organisations listed below. Use lines 96 to 98 to specify any other associations, society, fraternity, union, syndicate, chamber, institute, group, corporation, club or other organisation of any kind, whether social, political, professional, educational, cultural, industrial, commercial or honorary, with which you have ever been connected or associated.

Column 1: Insert either 'yes' or 'no' on each line to indicate whether or not you have ever been a member of the organisation listed. If you were a candidate, disregard the columns and write in the word 'candidate' followed by the date of your application for membership. Column 2: Insert date on which you joined. Column 3: Insert date your membership ceased if you are no longer a member. Insert the word 'Date' if you are still a member. Column 4: Insert your membership number in the organisation. Column 5: Insert the highest office rank or other post of authority which you have held at any time. If you have never held an office, rank or post of authority, insert the word 'none' in Columns 5 and 6. Column 6: Insert date of your appointment to the office, rank or post of authority listed in Column 5.

	Yes or No	From	To	Number	Highest Office Rank Held	Date Appointed
41. National-Socialist Party	-	See below			-	-
42. General SS	-	" "			-	-
43. Armed SS	No	Not applicable			-	-
44. SS Security Service	"	" "			-	-
45. SA	-	See below			-	-

46. Hitler Youth 1 League German Maidens)	No	Not applicable	-	-
47. NSD St B	-	What is it, please?	-	-
48. NS Do B	-	“ “ “	-	-
49. NS Women's Org.	No	Not applicable	-	-
50. NS Motor Corps	“	“ “	-	-
51. NS Flying Corps	“	“ “	-	-
52. Off. German officials	“	“ “	-	-
53. DAF	-	See 71	-	-
54. Strength through Joy	-	See 71	-	-
55. NS Welfare	Yes	1944-1945?	None	-
56. NS Nurses' League	No	Not applicable	-	-
57. NSKOV	“	“ “	-	-
58. NS Tech. League	“	“ “	-	-
59. NS Med. League	“	“ “	-	-
60. NS Teach. League	“	“ “	-	-
61. NS Leg. League	“	“ “	-	-
62. Germ. Women's Union	“	“ “	-	-
63. Germ. Family League	“	“ “	-	-
64. NS Phys. Cult. L.	“	“ “	-	-
65. NS Vet. League	“	“ “	-	-
66. Germ. Stud. Org.	“	“ “	-	-
67. Germ. Parish Org.	“	“ “	-	-
68. NS War. Vet. League	“	“ “	-	-
69. State Prof. Union	“	“ “	-	-
70. State Culture Chamber	-	See 51	-	-
71. Ch. Germ. Writing	Yes	1935? -1945?	None	-
72. Ch. Germ. Press	-	See 71	-	-
73. Ch. Germ. Radio	-	“	-	-
74. Ch. Germ. Theatre	-	“	-	-
75. Ch. Germ. Music	No	Not applicable	-	-
76. Ch. Germ. Art	“	“ “	-	-
77. Ch. Germ. Film	-	See 71	-	-
78. America Inst.	No	Not applicable	-	-
79. Germ. Acad. Munich	“	“ “	-	-
80. Germ. Foreign Inst.	“	“ ”	-	-
81. Germ. Christ. Movement	“	“ “	-	-
82. Germ. Faith Movement	“	“ “	-	-
83. Germ. Fichte League	“	“ “	-	-

84. Germ. Hunters' League	"	" "			-	-
85. Germ. Red Cross	"	" "			-	-
86. Span-Amer. Inst.	"	" "			-	-
87. Inst. Jewish Question	"	" "			-	-
88. Comrades League USA	"	" "			-	-
89. East Eur. Inst.	"	" "			-	-
90. Nat. Lab. Serv.	"	" "			-	-
91. Nat. Col. League	"	" "			-	-
92. Nat. Air Def. League	Yes	1944 1945?			None	?
93. State Acad. Racial and Health Service	No	Not applicable			-	-
94. Union Germans Abroad	"	" "			-	-
95. Advis. Off. Germ. Econ.	"	" "			-	-
Others (Specify):	Yes	1936 to date			None	(Inactive member)
96. Vol. Fire Brig. Kampen/ Sylt						

[...]

The next morning I was ordered to the gate with all my possessions. "*Mak snell, mak snell!*"

I left everything behind. It was a point of pride with me not to take anything that had belonged to the Americans. I divided my blankets. I put on the clothes I had been wearing when I was arrested, the grey flannel suit now grotesquely large for me, my utterly torn and tattered shoes.

By the gate were assembled about a hundred men, the same who had been summoned for the 'final interrogation' at Nuremberg. It went alphabetically. The last arrangements took about ten minutes per man. When Herr Alinn returned with his papers in his hands I asked him to show me his release. It was a single, mimeographed sheet on which were about a hundred names. At the head of the sheet was nothing save the information that the following internees were to be released. Subject: Release of erroneous arrestees.

So I was to be released as an erroneous arrestee.

It was bound to be hours before my turn came. I ran back into the camp. I hurried to Ludin's barrack. He had constructed a sort of tent with the blankets, inside which he lay on his bed out of sight of his room-mates. I pulled back the blankets and cried quickly:

"Get up! Get dressed! The Czechs are here!"

Ludin got up at once. He was very pale. He dressed carefully, and I helped him by handing him his clothes. We spoke not a word. Only, when he walked across to the little, cracked mirror and ran his hand over his chin, as though wondering whether he should shave, did I say hastily:

"Don't bother about that, come along!"

We walked towards the gate. I said:

"Listen! It's all quite simple. When they call out my name you cry, Here ! go up, and get my release. Nobody will know. We're wearing almost identical suits, and the Amis certainly won't be able to tell us, apart. There is no one of our people who'll betray you. Take the money too, it's about eighty marks. You

can get a long way with that. Then just walk out through the gate. Do you understand?”

Ludin stopped walking. He held out his hand and said:

“You’re a good fellow. . . .!”

I said quickly:

“Don’t worry about me. I’ll stay here another week, which will give me time to produce the *Faust* play. Then I’ll just go up front and ask why exactly I haven’t yet been released. By then you’ll have disappeared long ago.”

Ludin was still grasping my hand. He said:

“So now it’s time to say goodbye!”

I said:

“Yes. Look after yourself.”

He said:

“I’ll do that. Never you worry’”

He took my arm and we walked on together. He said:

“When you’ve passed through that gate . . .” I stopped, but he pushed me gently forwards and said: “Don’t forget me! Don’t forget what I’m telling you now. I have acted at all times in accordance with my conscience. It hasn’t always been easy, but that is how I intend to go on. Whatever accusations they may bring against me, it will be nothing for which I was truly responsible. If I must die, it will not be for my guilt but because I represent the Reich. I am happy that I am able to go through with it. Don’t forget that!”

It was taking less time than I had expected. My name was called. When I went through the gate Ludin was no longer standing where I had left him. I walked along the road outside the wire. There were thousands of men standing inside the wire, gazing after me. Among them was Ludin, a single face among all those thousands.

A few days later Hanns Ludin was handed over to Czechoslovakia. The accusations against him were based on the allegation that the separation of Slovakia from the Czech land was an act contrary to recognised international law. The prosecution ignored the fact that after this separation Tiso’s Slovakia was accorded diplomatic recognition by a number of great states, and that the Soviet Union, until the outbreak of the Russo-German War, was represented by an ambassador even as was Germany. The prosecution denied Germany’s ambassador diplomatic status, accusing him of having represented a hostile power and of being accredited to a Government guilty of high treason. Hanns Ludin was condemned to death.

He was sentenced to die by the rope on January 20th, 1948. In Czechoslovakia this sentence was carried out not by hanging but by strangling.

Hanns Ludin, horribly emaciated in the grey flannel suit that was far too big for him, suffered the cord to be put about his throat. The executioner slowly tightened it. Hanns Ludin was dying for twenty minutes. His last words were a message to his wife and his son, Tille, and the cry:

Long Live Germany!

The statements on this form are true and I understand that any omissions or false or incomplete statements are offences against Military Government and will subject me to prosecution and punishment.

Ernst von Salomon September 1945-September 1950

Signed Date

CERTIFICATION OF IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR

(Verify that the above is the true name and signature of the individual concerned and that, with the exceptions noted below, the answers made on the questionnaire are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and the information available to me. Exceptions—if no exceptions, write ‘none’)

Unfortunately I am not in a position to write ‘none’ here. The man who answered this questionnaire has in several of his replies left room or doubt whether or not he is truly a writer. I believe him to be a writer, and even a good one, and this is what has led me to feel entitled to publish Ernst von Salomon’s completed questionnaire in book form.

Furthermore, contrary to the opinion of the man who answered this questionnaire, I would maintain that I have in fact read all his books, though this is not my unvarying habit so far as my authors are concerned. I have also read his answers to this questionnaire, and I am forced to admit that, while perusing those passages relating to Ernst von Salomon’s publisher, pearls of sweat appeared on my forehead. Not so do I see myself. My only possible consolation is that I envisage the man who answered this questionnaire in quite a different light from that in which he sees himself.

Needless to say I am incapable of verifying that the answers made on the questionnaire are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and the information available to me. But I can verify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief and the information available to me, the answers here given are honest. They are honest—and that alone is sufficient to raise simple statements of fact to the level of literature. And, in my capacity of publisher, that alone can interest me.

Ernst Rowohlt Publisher

Signed 15th January, 1951 Official Position

Date

Source: Ernst von Salomon, The Answers of Ernst von Salomon to the 131 Questions in the Allied Military Government ‘Fragebogen’, transl. Constantine Fitzgibbon, London: Putnam, 1954, pp. 1-3; 216-217; 544-546.

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