

Not all were happy...

A surprising number of letters contain ideological opinions that differ from Nazi dogma. On March 24, 1943, Erich S. writes from Italy with bitter irony:

“The soldiers are numbed by speeches about soldiering, the joy of following orders, about pride, human dignity etc., while in fact we are being educated to behave in subhuman ways. All I have to do is to look at the simple infantrymen. They don’t really know anymore that they were once human beings. . . . I hope this letter will be opened so that the appropriate authorities have something to laugh about and they can see that some of us want to preserve our humanity.

(different look at picture painted by Nazi propaganda about the German army’s glorious marches through Europe was a far cry from the reality the ground.)

Others, however, openly condemn the Nazi system, as in the following sarcastic epistle by Martin D. from June 31 [sic], 1943.

“All feelings for the homeland are taken from you, even if they say in the newspaper, “Germany is becoming larger and more beautiful.” Here you have the total insanity of it all miraculously before your very eyes. All of our magnificent youths must devote themselves to this “glorious fateful battle” and pay homage to those insane and “asocial” types and their call for destruction and mass murder in battle. . . . Many human beings suffer now and no one does anything to stop it. How could we have become so stupid? You begin to wonder whether people who don’t stand up against all this deserve any better. We call ourselves the crown of creation, because we are endowed with reason. But half of us are subhuman. We should hate them.”