

BRITISH ARMY OF THE RHINE

OBJECTIVE

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THE POST-WAR TASK IN GERMANY

(This pamphlet is the first of a series which will try to answer certain questions concerning the occupation of GERMANY. The answers will not always be given directly, but it is hoped that a sufficiently clear picture will be given to enable them to be worked out without difficulty.)

The Problem

One of the reasons why we have a difficult task in GERMANY is that BRITAIN was not the aggressor in this war. An aggressor nation begins a war because it wants to achieve certain definite aims—for example, possession of the Ukrainian wheat country, control of the MEDITERRANEAN, the elimination of BRITAIN as a trade competitor or even more simply a supply of cheap or slave labour to work in its factories. On the other hand, the war aims of the opponents of aggression are negative—to prevent the aggressor from reaching these objectives and from imposing on other nations a way of life which would be intolerable. Consequently, when the aggressor is beaten in the field, the victorious Powers find themselves faced with a problem to which they have had neither the time nor the energy to devote much attention. The problem is:—What must we do to prevent the aggressor from troubling the peace again?

As long as there was a German Army to fight, very few people asked "What are we in the Army for?" The answer was too obvious. Since the German Reich was a menace to our ideas of freedom and to our very existence we fought its armies wherever we could outside GERMANY and, finally, inside GERMANY itself. It has been a long road, but now that we are at the end of the journey and look like staying there for some time, people are beginning to ask what it all means. "Why," they ask, "must we sit in GERMANY and why can't we go home? Our job is done."

Why We Are Here

The answer is not as simple as it appears at first. It is true that the armed forces with which Hitler carried out his acts of aggression have been destroyed and therefore there is no danger of aggression by GERMANY in the near future. That is the first of the objects we set out to achieve in 1939. But we have also to see that GERMANY is never again able to start a war in EUROPE. To ensure this, GERMANY'S industry must be controlled—in particular, her heavy industry which produced the weapons of aggression. We must also see that members of the Nazi Party and influential persons like the industrialists who supported Hitler are removed from power. But that is not enough. We must do something positive. We must *educate* GERMANY so that she may become a democratic and peaceful country. But we must not forget that the re-education of a nation requires at least a generation for its completion. That is the aim which GREAT BRITAIN, the USA and the USSR set themselves at the POTSDAM Conference.

To do all these things a government is necessary. It cannot at present be a German one, because GERMANY does not possess a national government and is not at present capable of organising a democratic one. German local administration has already been set up, but owing to the long period of Nazi domination its authority requires the powerful support of the occupying Powers. Therefore, we have to rule through a Military Government. A Military Government is one run primarily by soldiers, although a large civilian element is required to provide the technical experts which the Army does not possess. Military Government maintains law and order, if necessary by the employment of troops. That is why you must remain in GERMANY as part of the forces of occupation. By doing so you not only ensure that German Resistance Movements—of which so far there has been very little sign indeed—cannot interfere with the task of disarming and re-educating GERMANY; you also by your mere presence as members of the British armed forces make it quite clear to the Germans that they have lost the war. This is an important point, because after the last war the myth arose in GERMANY that she had not really been defeated in the field but was “stabbed in the back” by politicians. This time you have carried the war into the heart of the country, and you are a continual reminder to the population that they have been conquered by force of arms. They fought to the end and lost.

We have seen that our long-term objects are to disarm, demilitarise and re-educate the Germans. But in the meantime

there are pressing problems to be dealt with. GERMANY must be fed, light industry must be restarted, and some kind of local administration set up. You may ask why we should trouble to help the Germans to set their house in order. They started the war; why shouldn't they take the consequences?

Why Not Allow the Germans to Suffer the Full Consequences of Defeat?

If we were to remove our occupation forces from GERMANY now and leave her to her own devices, she would be free once more to start planning fresh destruction for the world. She would be free to devote her reviving energy again to the production of engines of war—to the development of long-range rockets and to the misuse of atomic energy—which would spell disaster for the future of civilisation. This we can only prevent by directing her energies into other channels and by controlling the rebuilding of industry. You may ask—Must German industry be rebuilt? This is a most important question, and the way it is answered will have far-reaching consequences not only on the future of GERMANY and of EUROPE, but on the future of the world. We must accept that, in taking over the responsibility of governing GERMANY during the period of her defeat and her struggle to survive, we must do our best to see that the people do not starve. There are three strong reasons for this. Firstly, on the grounds of humanitarianism, we cannot allow fellow human beings to perish of starvation as long as we can help them. This does not mean that we must starve ourselves in order to keep Germans alive. We must try to ensure that a minimum ration is available to support human life. Secondly, if we allow starvation and hunger to become widespread we shall make our task far more difficult because we shall be troubled with riots and unrest. Thirdly, starvation always brings disease in its wake, and if we allow a pestilence to sweep through the country we shall not be able to escape its ravages ourselves nor to keep it within the frontiers of GERMANY.

To ensure the distribution of food and to prevent the outbreak of disease, we must rebuild the country's communications and reorganise public services. Until these essential things are done, it will be impossible to start any constructive plan for the re-education of GERMANY.

Apart from the effect on the Germans themselves, a chaotic and unproductive GERMANY would affect the whole future economy of EUROPE. A prosperous and static EUROPE depends a great deal on GERMANY. German produce is required by other countries, and she is required as a

market for goods produced in other European countries. Unless we include GERMANY in the future economy of EUROPE, we shall upset the whole balance of European trade. The RUHR, the largest single industrial area in the world, is of vital importance not only to GERMANY but to the whole of Western Europe. We cannot simply eliminate the RUHR, with all its resources, from the European economy. We urgently require the coal it produces, and many of the products of its light industry. The question of how far we need to restore German industry and the problem of reparations will be discussed in later pamphlets.

Some Population Figures

To understand the tasks which Military Government is asked to carry out, you must know something about economic conditions in GERMANY. Firstly, it is necessary to find out how many people there are in the British Zone, for then some idea can be formed of how great are the problems of feeding and clothing them.

Before we consider the German civil population, however, it is necessary to mention the Displaced Persons and German prisoners of war. Of the former, there are still over 550,000 awaiting repatriation; of this figure, approximately 450,000 are Poles. All of them have to be fed and provided for by the German people whose rulers brought them here as slaves. This number will be reduced as quickly as possible.

Next comes the German troops still remaining in camps in the Zone and those already demobilised. There are still half a million men including sick in our hands, although over a million and a quarter have already been demobilised.

It is not so easy to say how many German civilians are in the British Zone. Air raids at first drove people from their homes; then the battle-fronts approaching from EAST and WEST completed the disorganisation. No really accurate account of population figures can therefore be given until a census is held; this cannot be done until next year. At present it can be said that the population is about 20 millions (roughly the peace time figure), but this figure is increasing owing to migration from other parts of GERMANY, mainly from the EAST.

First Priority—Food

These, then, are the people whom Military Government has to control, and whose immediate needs have to be provided for unless the country is to lapse into chaos. Most important and urgent of these needs is food. At the beginning of the war

GERMANY, as a whole, could produce 80% of her agricultural requirements. But the industrial North-West, now the British Zone, could produce only a much smaller proportion of its own food. Now that surplus food cannot be switched easily from one part of GERMANY to another, each zone has to supply its own larder. Since the British Zone includes the great and densely populated industrial area of the RUHR and the badly damaged RHINELAND, the task is not an easy one.

The first problem was to bring in the harvest, without which a food supply for the winter could not be ensured. Under the well-known "Barleycorn" scheme nearly half a million German troops have been demobilised to help in the work and make up for the shortage of labour caused by the release of slave workers. Although sowing was interfered with by Military operations and the month of August brought heavy rain, the harvest has realised an average of 80% of normal for grain crops, and 50-70% for oil-seeds. All efforts are now being concentrated on bringing in the beet-root crop and getting it to the beet factories, in order to ensure the supply of sugar in the British Zone up to next autumn.

Looking to the future, the general policy is to increase the amount of food for direct human consumption—that is to increase grain and vegetable crops and cut down the amount of pasture for livestock. This plan is now being put into effect; large areas are being ploughed for the first time in an effort to make up for the loss of imports from the Eastern zones and other countries. One difficulty is the lack of fertilisers, because in accordance with their slogan "Guns before butter" the Nazis made explosives from the chemicals required to enrich the land. Besides, bombing and shelling have damaged much of the plant where these chemicals were manufactured. This reduction was already being felt before the end of the war, and its effects must be expected to continue so long as GERMANY'S industry is at a low ebb. So by attempting to make GERMANY produce enough food to support herself, we are logically led to restoring industries which make farming possible. Nor are these industries confined to the chemical ones. It has been necessary to produce binder twine for the harvest, sacks for grain and all sorts of agricultural equipment. Many essential consumer goods have also had to be manufactured and distributed.

The net result of all the problems of supplying food to the Zone is that the standard civilian ration is now approximately 1500 calories a day, which is a little more than half the British civilian ration in 1944. It is obvious that the Germans are not being pampered. For the present this official ration can be

supplemented by stores of food and home-grown produce, but in winter, when these are no longer available, many Germans will be living at a level much below that necessary to maintain even a moderate standard of health. Even now it has been necessary to import wheat and flour into the Zone to prevent complete starvation in the big cities and the need for such imports will not decrease during the next six months. Naturally, any supplies to GERMANY will take second place after food for the liberated countries.

After Food, Coal . . .

Rivalling even food as a vital necessity in GERMANY today is coal. Coal is required for every activity needing power, for running the railway, grinding flour and baking, generating electricity and gas, pumping water and so on, and at the same time coal production has never before been as low as it is today. Output of hard coal from the RUHR, the greatest coal producing centre in Western GERMANY, is increasing but it was not until the end of September that it exceeded 120,000 tons a day; the total produced for the month of August was $2\frac{1}{2}$ million tons, a quarter of normal, of which half is used in local power plants and coke ovens. The reason for this exceptionally low level of activity is partly the destruction of mines and railways caused by the air raids and partly the acute shortage of manpower for work in the mines. The situation has been aggravated by lack of accommodation and shortage of transport. Every effort is being made to increase the coal output, particularly by giving privileges and priorities to the miners, and production is now slowly but steadily on the increase.

Transport . . .

That is the coal problem, but transport is also needed to bring life back to some sort of order. Existing transport resources are not yet able to distribute the increasing quantities of coal being produced. GERMANY'S main canals are blocked for many months to come and the vast railway system was so disorganised by the deliberate Allied bombing programmes and Nazi demolitions that some semblance of order and of an organised rail network is only now beginning to appear. There is, too, an acute shortage of rolling stock due to the inability of the Germans to produce new stock or to repair damaged and worn-out waggons. As for German industry as a whole, only factories producing such immediate requirements as lorries, tyres and equipment for coal mines can be allotted sufficient coal to

begin work. Much of German heavy industry will never operate again but even the limited amount to be left cannot start until more coal is mined, and can be distributed.

And Housing

Housing is another activity depending on coal output, for bricks, tiles and girders cannot be made or distributed without it. Skilled labour in the building trades is extremely short and cannot be replaced at short notice. The Germans are being urged by every means available to repair sufficient houses with the available materials to provide shelter during the winter; a season more severe in GERMANY than in ENGLAND.

Food, coal, transportation and housing are the major problems at the moment and are certain to remain so through the winter. Mention can only be made of problems such as the shortage of currency and decrease in returns from taxes, the possibility of unemployment during the winter, the re-establishment of the postal and telegraph systems and the reorganisation of the police, medical and a host of other services. These and many others are the tasks which Military Government has to face. For the present, however, the all-important problem is how to get GERMANY through this next winter without an enormous increase in disease, unrest and disorganisation that would by no means stop at her frontiers.