

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
G-3 Division

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SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
Psychological Warfare Division

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OSD REVIEWED 06-Aug-2009: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

NOTES ON TRIP TO WESTERN RHINE-  
LEND AREA, 21-28 March, 1945

1. The following notes are based on personal interrogations of members of the civilian population of several Rhineland cities, especially Cologne, Bonn and Bad Godesberg. No greater significance should be attached to them than would ordinarily accrue to the informal narrative of a traveller freshly returned from a country once familiar to him. The value of such impressions may lie chiefly in the assistance they give to more thorough assessments of the problems upon which they bear and it is in this sense that they are presented. Any conclusions which may be drawn from them must necessarily be of a preliminary and tentative nature and require the scrutiny of a more detailed and painstaking research for ultimate corroboration or rejection.

2. The Scene

The Rhineland has suffered heavily. Cologne is almost completely destroyed. From any point of the city, the view toward the cathedral is unobstructed. The main thoroughfares have been cleared of debris, but many smaller streets, especially in the residential areas, are still impassable.

The university town of Bonn, on the other hand, has retained some relatively intact areas. The central part of the business section, as well as the university buildings, however, are in ruins. Reconstruction, unthinkable in Cologne, or at least as far as the major part of the city is concerned, could be successfully undertaken here.

Bad Godesberg has been the most fortunate of the three cities. A large portion of the built-up area is only partially damaged. The condition of the numerous small country towns and villages of this section of the Rhine varies from utter desolation to complete intactness, depending upon the fortunes of war. It was observed, however, that farmers from still inhabited places were busy in the fields, pastures and vineyards. Many of the small truck gardens, however, near railroad lines and the main road approaches to the towns, have been tossed into huge heaps of earth by heavy bombs and would require a fleet of bulldozers to merely level their surfaces. An early spring has brought out the first buds of the shattered fruit trees and plants. There is very little civilian traffic along the roads and highways, with the exception of a crowded farmer's cart or a few bicycles and pedestrians. One or two small groups of foreigners, apparently French or Belgian, were met in some remoter regions. Officials state that civilians continue to trickle back into the towns from the outlying districts in spite of road control and that the population of a given locality tends to exceed the number of registrations. Billowing clouds of dust raised by the endless columns of Allied motor transport trace wavering lines on the horizon.

3. The People

Along the streets through which the vehicles pass, the very young and the very old stand and stare. The expression of the stolid faces reflects not fear, but wonder. Only the very children gesticulate and shout. They do not cry "Any gun?" and for once America's password seems to have called forth a response. Soldiers silently eye village bellies but not the said. Non-fraternisation seems to have taken a firm hold in G.I. mind.

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When road information is asked for, the passing pedestrian replies with alacrity, often hurrying across the highway to offer advice with an eagerness bordering on servility. Other civilians may come running out of their houses, arguing among themselves with what seems to be a genuine desire to assist the "foreigner". Greetings, if any, consist of an apologetic "Guten Tag" or a touch to the cap, but the children's arms outstretched in excited welcome are still stiffened in the familiar gesture of an enthusiastic "Heil". They have never learned how to wave.

Just what proportion of the population has remained in or near their former abode will not be known until registration has been completed. Some towns and villages seem as dusty and peaceful, except for our supply columns, as in the days before the war. The townsfolk go about their business, not speaking much, and careful to keep out of the way. In other less fortunate localities, the destruction has been too complete for further human habitation, and, as in Dueren, scarcely one German is encountered along the cratered, twisting road through the ruins. Here and there, feeble efforts are being made to repair a damaged house, and an old man or woman is poking about in what was once a front parlor, and lately a sniper's hide-out. 15-year old boys and 50-year old men trudge about -- there are no men between these ages to be seen. It is astonishing how many cripples and paralytics there seem to be -- half the male population of some small villages stumps along or carries a withered arm or is led by the hand. Oddly enough, people are decently clothed and look as if they still washed. Cellars are neatly kept and the Germanic passion for cleanliness appears to have lost none of its power even under the appalling conditions. Faces look thin, however, and the children have that characteristic pallor of malnutrition so familiar throughout Europe. The policy of guns for butter has left its mark.

What are the true sentiments of these people of the cities, towns and villages of the Rhineland? To what extent do they reflect what we must expect as we thrust eastward into the heart of the Reich? To what extent are they Nazis in the accepted sense of the word, and to what extent are they just "Germans", i.e. German speaking men and women of the Rhine valley?

Any answers to these and similar questions received from German nationals will be colored by one all-pervading, paramount feeling -- immense relief from fear. No more bombs, no more "carpets", no more incendiaries. Four and a half years of aerial warfare has had a profound effect upon the Teutonic mind, and especially upon the not-too-strong-hearted Rhinelander. For him it suffices that he has somehow survived -- his cares for the immediate future are for himself, his wife and his family. As far as he is concerned, ideological discussions can wait.

This state of mind makes any investigation of the basic attitude of the Rhinelander towards the Allied occupying forces, towards his former leaders, and towards his own responsibility for the world disaster of which he is forced to now assume his share, exceedingly difficult. Some salient facts, however, do appear. None of the civilians interrogated, from the janitor's wife to the university professor, gave evidence of sensing personal guilt in the situation. No Objection To Declassification in Full 2010/08/30 : HIA-BAUMER-4-A-3-2-2  
individual political leanings, must bear the mark of being simply not occurred to these people. Affirmations of hatred of their "Nazi" masters, expressions of relief at the arrival of the Allies -- especially of the Americans -- are too frequent and commonplace to merit attention. Some referred to their "Government" as "criminals", but others, like the janitor's wife, obstinately declined to employ any term stronger than "those idiots", these "idiots" who are insisting, as she inferred, upon the senseless destruction of the "Fatherland". This latter case

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is interesting, because it reveals the disciplined, inherent loyalty of any German to ~~the~~ an established regime. No admission was to be made to a member of the occupying forces that it was a regime composed of anything worse than mentally unbalanced individuals. Again, a complete lack of a sense of guilt.

A university professor, a man of international reputation, when presented with the question of how to explain the depths to which a large proportion of his countrymen had sunk, shook his head in confusion. That such trends to brutality might be fundamental and achieve horrid fruition under the National Socialist regime is still far from his mind. He, and naturally his wife and family, he feels, are merely the victims of an historical development and he and his friends suffer along with us in a common catastrophe.

The impression is gathered that these Germans, now "safely" in our hands, rather expect life to go on much as it did before, with us to help them to their feet as speedily as possible. True, individually they have suffered -- but with no conception whatever of the calamity they, collectively, have brought upon others. If they are chastened, it is solely because they have lost son, husband, brother, house, home, their worldly possessions -- in short, what the loser in war may expect to experience. If, as of course often occurs, Hitler, and now more often Himmler, is named as the chief criminal, the interrogator is left to feel that this subject is in no way related to these men or to their colleagues, that there is no inner connection, no link between the rulers and the ruled. Naturally, every possible argument is adduced to prove this to the interlocutor -- ardent Roman Catholicism, intense dislike of "Prussianism", independence of the Rhineland, even active membership in an opposition movement.

If care is not taken, these people may succeed in convincing some of us that in the final analysis, they, as Rhinelanders and Catholics, are nothing more than innocent bystanders at the scene of the crime. They will have forgotten their enthusiasm when Hitler "recalled" the Saar to the Reich, when the bands played the Wehrmacht over the Hindenburg bridge into a jubilant Cologne, when their triumphant mechanised soldiery swept across the Lowlands and into the heart of France. They have forgotten -- these memories lie buried beneath the dust of their cities.

Three fundamental attitudes toward the occupying forces have become discernible. First, there is the fanatic, who, disguising his convictions, has remained behind to live to fight ~~another~~ another day. But in the majority of instances, he and his family have fled eastward, and their shops and houses are deserted. It was noted, however, that in at least one case, as at Bonn, a notoriously Nazi firm was busy repairing its damaged premises on the main business street. It was apparent that the Allied authorities had not got wind of the political connections of this potential "resistance group". Cooperative Rhinelanders stated openly that there were any number of Nazis still circulating in Bad Godesberg and Bonn, and this may well hold true of other localities. Proper screening can be carried out only with the assistance of reliable persons intimately familiar with the population.

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Secondly, there is the Rhinelanders who genuinely considers himself "liberated". For him, freedom from the hated Nazi yoke has been brought by our Armies and he is apt to give full -- and

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very loud --voice to his feelings. There are many of these people among both the so-called upper and lower classes. In individual cases, they may have suffered directly under the Party rule, and, in a few instances, have persisted in non-cooperation or even active resistance. There can be no doubt, however, that now the wind is blowing from the other direction, the weather-cock has swung full about and "convictions" with it. Most frequent lament is "how we have been duped by those brigands". Then follows the inevitable claim that in fairness to those who have always "opposed" Hitler and what he represents, the Allies must differentiate between Germans and Germans and favor professed anti-Nazis and willing collaborators.

A third sector of German public opinion is beginning to take shape under Allied military rule. While the Nazis lie low and the anti-Nazis are in full cry, another type is finding voice behind closed doors. These are the people who, while disowning Nazism, emphasise their "Deutschtum", their "Germanity", and, in spirit, are "anti-Ally". In fact, this very expression is becoming current among the Germans themselves and collaborators or sympathisers with the x Allied cause are wary of this class. Interrogators, when questioning such individuals find a cool reserve indicating a morale surprisingly intact. It is reasonable to assume that for many of them the war and its outcome is an incident, the effects of which may be overcome as long as one does not lose one's identity as a "true German". The Party, as such, is itself only a phenomenon of history, and, in time, will be replaced by other leaders. Now, survival and the preservation of the Germanic spirit, have highest priority. Many members of this class recollect Germany's recovery from the occupation of World War I and see no reason why this ~~new~~ second experience should have a deeper effect upon a steadfast mind. The development of this attitude, supported as it is by some of the more conservative population, most of whom were not members of the Party, should be carefully watched. It is a potential source of the kind of resistance most difficult to eradicate, because, not being based on the relatively evanescent theories of a current ideology, it draws upon the national heritage as a whole for its source of inspiration. If such basic convictions are now forming in the Rhineland, what must ~~be~~ we expect in Central Germany and in other strongholds of national fanaticism? If the reaction among Rhinelanders is that perhaps the Nazis were wrong, but "we are still Germans", what will be the flavor of "inner resistance" in the forests of Thuringia and the fields of Frankenland?

#### 4. The Problem

The short-term problem, government by the occupying force, is being dealt with by the Allied military government teams. In the three localities visited, the problem was being faced squarely and honestly; how efficiently, results alone will show. To some M.G. heads, the size of the task was almost overwhelming. If governing the city of Bonn appeared feasible, how was Bonn-Land with its over a hundred thousand villagers to be controlled? If Burgomasters were to be murdered, how were they to be protected and with whom does the final responsibility rest? If M.G. teams were to follow each other in rapid succession, as at Bad Godesberg, how was an efficient occupying force to be achieved? With some degree of reason, Germans complained they had hardly learned the wishes of one official before he was replaced by another, and it was ~~that~~ not they but the job which suffered as a result. Fear of the "Feme" is strong enough to prevent some otherwise willing Germans from cooperating. A Bonn university professor begged not to be taken to the office of the M.G. in a jeep, asserting his name would be immediately noted by "watchers". Others feigned unconcern in their haste to climb on what they supposed to be the band-wagon of cooperation with the Allies.

The radical elimination of men of this type from positions of influence and the permanent restriction of their predatory instincts is absolutely essential to the peace of Europe. Every effort should be made now to identify, mark and, if necessary, wholly destroy, this clique of professional war mongers. With their aid, Nat  
of brutal conquest. whatever their relationship to the Party

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may have been, their war guilt as a class is beyond any discussion, and they should be given no opportunity to escape the consequences. Should they survive, they can count on the support of the anti-Ally, reactionary, conservative bourgeois, who, with them, retains his faith, if not in the "Fuehrer", so nevertheless in the Fatherland.

Their's is the original "underground movement". Its strength lies in its unparalleled capacity to survive national disaster, to concentrate all its forces upon one clearly-defined goal, and to hand down from generation to generation a heritage of hate. It must be our task, not only to disrupt for all time this tenacious continuity of purpose, but to combat with every means at our disposal, the veneration for the military caste so characteristic of the German nation as a whole.

#### 4. Summary

In an area severely damaged, but by no means entirely destroyed, a civilian population is seeking a return to normal conditions of living. At the moment, its members are suffering from shell-shock, and, in the majority of cases, is unable or unwilling to think for itself or assume responsibility. However, it is obedient to orders issued by the occupying forces, and shows only moderate or well-disguised resentment at the Allied policy of non-fraternisation. To many, such a policy is in their view difficult to understand, because, as was to be expected, they do not feel themselves in any way guilty. Food and housing are the two most pressing problems with which they have to contend, and it is obvious that they expect Allied assistance to help solve them. There is no fear of enemy forces. An anti-Allied feeling is growing among a certain class of the inhabitants of the Rhineland is potentially dangerous from the long-term view. Official Allied emphasis upon Party membership as a badge of total disqualification for posts of administration or authority may lead to inefficiency of military government. Potentially more dangerous to Allied long-term policy, are elements with technically clean slates but belonging to the military and landed classes, who may infiltrate into places of influence. Non-fraternisation, now adhered to by the lower-ranks, is less strictly observed by officers, especially where local emergencies has resulted in ~~the~~ billeting with civilians.

Our experience with that portion of the population which remained behind to await the arrival of the Allied forces, while providing an excellent preliminary training in military government and the science of occupation, does not provide reliable indication of the nature of our future problems. It may be assumed that in Central Germany, and in parts of the southern and northern provinces, many elements of the population will prove less cooperative than their more adaptable neighbours of the Rhineland.

JOHN P. DICKSON  
Captain USMCR