

Sharpen Misery in in All of Europe

**Disease and Chaos May Sweep
Across Weary Face of Continent
Already Hungry and Shivering**



The Americans blame the French for keeping the Reich divided in four; here refugees pass from the American to the Russian zone

In Berlin, the big white flakes drifted down from a sullen sky and melted on the tumbled stones, the twisted beams, and the piled rubble. From their requisitioned houses, the Allied conquerors watched this first snow of the season with foreboding. From their cellar hovels and patched-up rooms in the wreckage, the Germans saw it with a sense of doom. In Paris a mournful Armistice Day rain was followed by overcast skies and temperatures little above freezing. The rush of Parisians to lay in stocks of wood became more urgent.

Winter weather had come to Europe. . . It was by common consent the beginning of a winter that would probably bring more death and suffering than any since the Thirty Years' War three centuries ago. The New York Times ran a seventeen-column survey of the coming misery. Even in that space it could do little more than touch upon the problem. The worst will probably fall upon defeated, divided, refugee-ridden Germany. Other parts of Europe, particularly Poland, may be as hard hit.

But it is from Germany, the heart of the continent, that pestilence and chaos are most likely to sweep across the face of Europe.

Just Kaputt

The coming winter will be an extremely trying one for our occupation troops. If present conditions continue, there is certain to be starvation in Germany. The lessons of history are that riots and epidemics follow starvation. This will make trouble not only for our occupation troops but also for our western Allies, for epidemics cannot be kept within national boundaries.

To nearly every editor in the United States these words had the ring of absolute truth. They had been said before. But this time they came from Byron Price, former chief of the Office of Censorship, a man who had gained the respect and confidence of the journalistic profession. Price had just returned from a personal eight-week survey of conditions in Germany, made for President Truman.

OldMagazineArticles.com

Winter: 1945

Price added that in the Reich "all relation to civilization has gone. The clock has stopped: it is just kaputt." One of the chief reasons, according to Price, why restoration has been so slow in Germany lies in the deadlock of the four-power control commission in Berlin. Price put it bluntly: "Unfortunately, the French decline to cooperate in any move to establish a central government in Germany . . . Our Army has done a good job and the situation in Germany is not the Army's fault; it is the fault of the French."

The top-level conflict with the French was only part of the general disagreement on Germany's future. This disagreement was not even primarily between the various powers. It extended, for example, all the way through the American Military Government, the advocates of a so-called hard peace battling the supporters of a limited revival for German industry. It all underlined the failure of the Potsdam agreements to provide a guide to the shaping of the future of Germany as had been intended.

To Pasteurize or Not: The recent visit to Washington of Lt. Gen. Lucius D. Clay, General of the Army Eisenhower's deputy, spurred efforts to formulate a definitive American policy. However, there were as yet few signs that Washington had decided which it would follow of the alternative courses now facing the Allies in the Reich.

The first is the so-called Morgenthau plan. This would probably involve the death by starvation and disease of between 15 and 20 million Germans, although the advocates of the plan sidestep its obvious result. The Russians have adopted something akin to the Morgenthau plan but with important political modifications. They have already to a large extent "pasteurized" their zone in Germany by removing some 60 per cent of the industries. But they have also taken the lead in turning over political power to the Germans—mostly Communist or Communist-dominated. Many observers think that Russia's eventual aim is to withdraw from a desperate Reich and let the Germans resolve the mess themselves.

The second choice involves a considerable reconstruction of German industry and the feeding of the Reich by the Americans and British until this is accomplished. This is the policy that by and large has been adopted by the British. There has been less denazification and less emphasis on destruction of industry in the British zone than in any other. Furthermore, the British zone contains more heavy industry than the others.

The American policy so far has been one of drift between the Russian and British models. It was best epitomized by two events last week. In Bavaria two German explosive plants along with their valuable power houses and machinery were blown up. In Höchst near Frankfurt, American and German nutrition experts met and apparently decided that even the revised estimate of 750,000 tons of food to be supplied by the United States to the Reich was too low.

Newsweek

November 26, 1945: 44

OldMagazineArticles.com