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FOREIGN OFFICE AND MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC WARFARE:
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LAGE IM RUHRGEBIET
(Situation in the RUHR Area).
Photostat copy of copy (i) of letter to Hitler
Dated 11.Nov.44.

Text: German

Contents:

My Führer,

The situation in the Ruhr Area has reached such a point that it was necessary to call a meeting of the "Zentralen Planung" (Central Planning Board) in order to clarify the situation as regards armaments and war production.

Before I start to discuss this situation however, a summary of the instructions issued by me for the Ruhr area will be given:

1. On my insistence the Reichsbahndirektionspräsident Dr. -Ing Lamertz from Essen was made Reichsverkehrsminister (Reich Transport Minister) for the Rhenish Westphalian industrial area.

In this capacity he will take all decisions connected with transport for the whole of this industrial area, as well as the decisions for local transport and inland water transport.

He also has control over Reichsbahndirektionen (Reichs Railway directorates) Münster, Essen, Wuppertal and Köln as well as the Schiffahrtsstellen (Shipping offices) in the Ruhr area and the Nahverkehrsbevollmächtigten (short distance transport directors) in the areas of Münster and Düsseldorf.

It was very necessary to take this step as the then prevalent situation demanded a unification and even distribution of all available means of transport in the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial area. On top of this came the constant destruction of communications, which made it impossible to maintain a unified programme of transport, controlled throughout from Berlin.

2. After experiments, which I ordered to be made, it has been found possible to run the 55 and 45 P.S. Lanz-Bulldog on Steinkohlenteeröl (coal tar) and Marine-Heizöl (Naval fuel). I have declared my willingness to allot to the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial areas an extra 5.000 tons per month.

With this amount it will be possible to bring 4.000 Bulldoggschleppern (tractors) into operation, with the possible traction power of 15 tons each. With this amount of transport available a partial

bridging of the transport difficulties will be possible, at least so far as to assure the feeding of the population. It will be ascertained how many of these 4,000 Schleppern are in the Ruhr area, the rest should be transferred from the rest of the Reich and loaned to the Ruhr area.

But this is only possible as long as agriculture can spare them i.e. in the winter months.

4,000 Schlepper are about 10% of the total available in the Reich.

3. In addition 8,300 Anthrazitschmel-koks-Generatoren will be made available for use in the Ruhr area. They are to be installed locally in order to provide additional transport capacity, even though there is a lack of fuel.

The relevant administrative departments in the Ruhr will make every effort to combat difficulties arising in connection with the supply of the necessary Festtreibstoff (solid fuel).

I have asked the Gauleiters to give all necessary help.

4. Reichsleiter Bormann has at my request, made 50,000 foreign workers available for the repair of the transport system. These had been engaged in the building of fortifications (Schanzarbeit): another 30,000 will be released by the German armaments industry (Rüstung) for the same work, and also to restore the badly injured Industries of the Ruhr area.

5. 4,500 specialists will be called from the Reich, in order to employ them on repairs. Mainly electricians, pipe layers and welders.

Reichsleiter Bormann has also upon my request, asked the Gauleiters to make good the damage done to communications. If necessary through the employment of the population (Volksaufgebot).

I had also made previous arrangements that 10% of all mine workers should be available as immediate help. And that, if these numbers are not sufficient, further mine workers should be released, by the reduction of mining.

6. The repairing of the canals, which is just as important as the railways, has so far not been carried out with sufficient speed.

Measures have been taken to ensure immediate help in the event of damage:

a. young water engineers who have been active for a long time in the Todt organisation, will be posted in small groups to the danger points in order to supervise building activities.

b. they will be given the use of the necessary vehicles.

c. Mr. Pleigert will make himself personally responsible to see that the adequate number of mine workers are available for the repair job. He will also make himself personally responsible for the repairs on the spot.

d. at the danger points of the canals clay deposits and bales of straw will be distributed to make the dams water tight.

It must be noted that in the event of a flooding the whole of the population is expected to help. This may be facilitated by forming a Deichgemeinschaft (Dyke Squad).

7. In order to provide the 1,000 foreseen A.A. Guns (Flakrohre) for the protection of the Verkehrsknotenpunkte (Communication centres). 500 heavy A.A. Guns (Schwerflakrohre) will be available in a short time, through the sacrificing of A.A. defences at the most important Arms factories, even in the Ruhr area.

In addition 350 Flakrohre will be diverted for this purpose from the November production. It is also necessary that the remaining 150 should be diverted from the November production if possible.

The Verkehrsknotenpunkte (Communication Centres) to be protected will be decided upon by the Reichsverkehrsministerium.

In conjunction with this the Water Communications Centre Minden (Mittelland Kanal-Weser crossing), which has been attacked several times, must be given adequate AA protection.

8. Lately shipping has been subjected to the same type of low level attack as the Railways. An urgent desire has been expressed that the Schleppzüge (convoy of barges) should be given some light A.A. protection, in the same way as the goods trains have been given. (2 cm. Flak in Beton-Kuppel). This has been ordered in the meantime.

9. Additionally 2 cm Flak must be built up at the danger points along the canals.

I have made claims against the Luftwaffe. If these are not fulfilled shortly, some decision must be taken.

In spite of these measures it will be impossible, to even improve slightly, the situation which the entire absence of the Ruhr area production creates in German economic life.

Part successes may be possible, but they will not be quick enough to change the present situation. Since my verbal report on the 3.11. the production situation has become even more acute, and produces situations which lead to the heaviest failures to meet finishing schedules.

Judging by the report of the Reichsvereinigung Kohle, which was made to the Zentrale Planung on the 8.11.1944. It must be stated that we are at the threshold of the greatest coal production crisis, since the beginning of the war.

A sign for this is the figures for the production for the supply of service coal for the Railways in the last 2 months,

Position of winter supplies

on 10.9.1944	1.839.750 tons = 19 days
on 5.11.1944	1.026.520 tons = 10.9 days.

the winter supplies have sunk by 813,000 tons i.e. practically by half. And this after consideration of the fact that the transport difficulties in the Ruhr only started at the beginning of October.

Owing to insufficient replacements, the store of coal for the railways is diminishing by about 40,000 tons per day.

Especially the west German Rail directorates, not counting those in the Ruhr area, but also others show supplies far below average. Partly only 5 days supply. (Berlin 5 days, Stuttgart 2 days).

/I have

I have therefore decided that all coal suitable for the railways is to be supplied to them forthwith, with no consideration for any other receivers.

But even after this step it is impossible to ascertain whether, owing to the present transport crisis, coal deliveries of large enough quantities can be made in some of the hard hit yards of Germany.

The coal requirements of the Railways are very great. It is 96,000 tons per day which is 25% of the whole daily transport load. And as the coal used must be of special quality, it is 80% of all available coalstocks in the Reich.

Like difficulties are manifesting themselves as regards to bunkering coal for the ships in the north west of Germany.

The Reichscommissar for the Shipping has since weeks declared a state of emergency in Hamburg and the ports of Schleswig-Holstein and considerable damage to the shipping.

The deliveries to the electrical power stations is so behind hand that the winter supply

of 1.237.100 tons	(3.8 weeks)	on the 1.9.44
to 865.000 "	(2.5 ")	" " 20.10.44.
sank by 372.000 tons		

Many of the important power stations are struggling on under insufficient transport facilities and on reserves which have already sunk beneath the 10 days limit, to carry on (Hamburg, Farge, Herrenhausen, Narbach and others).

Some works are practically at the end of their tether (Kiel, Afferde, Gevelsberg and others). A few power stations have posted their closing notices (Oldenburg Hanau).

Especially critical is the supplying of gas works, as the absence of fuel supplies from the Ruhr area, cannot be, in any way, bridged by supplies from elsewhere.

Numerous West and Middle German gas works have sunk below the 10 day supply margin.

In many areas the gas works have exhausted their supplies and have closed down.

Even the severest rationing of gas, mainly in households now only stem the eventual running down for a few days at the most because the replacements are insufficient and far below the daily requirements.

The most urgent calls for help came from the West and Middle Germany, with no means of help at hand.

Most important metal-producing works are practically at the end of their tether and are in danger of having to close.

(Ilseder Hutte, Peine 8 days supplies; Norddeutsche Hütte, Bremen 8 days supplies; Herman Goring Werke, Watenstedt 7 days supplies).

The supplying of the chemical industry in the area Wiesbaden had to be suspended.

A large number of important armament works have come to a standstill.

/(e.g.

(e.g. Deutschewaffen und Munitions A.G., Lubeck, Phönix, Harburg, Ming, Braunschweig).

Under the present situation there is no possibility of preventing these stoppages.

The food manufacturing plants have for the most part been able to keep up production, with the use of existing supplies.

The supply to the sugar industry in the area Hanover is insufficient, so that the carrying through of the campaign is not assured.

The oil and margarine works in Hamburg are on the verge of a standstill.

In private fuel consumption (such as bakeries and small dairies etc) it has been found to continue supplies was only possible after all local stocks had been confiscated.

Coal supplies for hospitals and convalescent homes is totally insufficient in Central and Southern Germany, owing to the complete absence of supplies from the Ruhr area.

The general situation as regards private fuel consumption will probably stay the same until the middle of December.

After that owing to the vast increase of the population, through evacuation and the flight from the enemy, fuel allocations can only be made for the absolute essentials of cooking and heating.

But as railway coal has absolute priority, it will be impossible to ease the supplying of the population.

In fact the situation may become worse.

The situation for the German armament and war industries will be even made more difficult, since besides the attacks upon the factories themselves and upon communications and systematic blasting of the steel and iron production has taken place. One Blast Furnace after another is successfully attacked.

As the released workers in the Ruhr area, are insufficient to restart these works, workmen throughout the whole of the Reich and in every industry have been called out for this purpose.

That the enemy is following a close pattern in the destruction of our steel production can be deducted from an aeroplane leaflet in which it says:

"3 of the most important steel works in Germany, the Hermann-Göring-Werke in Salzgitter, the Ilsederhütte in Peine and the Georg-Marien-Hütte in Osnabrück, all receive their smelting coke through the Dortmund-Ems-Kanal, have only limited stocks left, and will have to lie idle if the canal is not repaired soon.

But as at that time the transport situation was so bad, that it was not able to cope with the removal of part finished products from factory to factory, our first care was to regain control of the transport system.

Owing to fairly good stocks the situation can possibly be preserved for another few weeks, as regards the armaments industry.

But the lack of munitions will make itself felt in November. After estimations which are definitely not pessimistic it may be expected that the munitions output total will be reduced by 25 to 30%.

/For

For over 6 weeks there has been a danger that the Ruhr area would be technically sealed off from the areas which it supplies. More and more this is becoming a reality.

It seemed for a time that the waggon allocation for coal would improve from 7,000 to 11-12,000 per day, actually the number sank to the record depth of 4-5,000 per day.

The number of waggons used per day in the Ruhr area should be 18-21,000, in order to supply not only the coal needed inside the area, but also in order to cover the export to middle-, north- and south-west Germany. At that time though the waggon number was not even large enough to meet the internal needs of the Rhenish Westphalian industrial area, which in normal times used 10,000 waggons per day.

The hope that the Mittellandt Canal would be ready for use 8 days after the first air attack has, owing to renewed attacks come to naught.

If no more attacks are made, it may be expected that the Mittellandt Canal will be completely ready for use again by 20th November.

All possible ways of evening out the coal situation have been exhausted by the Reichsvereinigung Kohle.

The reserves of the industries in the distressed areas which, at the beginning of September still had 4-5 weeks reserves, have now sunk to less than 8-10 days reserves.

They will be finished by the end of November, if there is not a considerable improvement in the supply situation (i.e. transport).

In addition it must be remembered that the reserves now used of 4-5 weeks fuel are needed every autumn in order to equalise higher consumption owing to cold, and deficiencies in supply owing to the cessation of inland water transport through ice.

For all long term planning, it must be remembered that the prevailing catastrophic transport situation is only a passing phase.

For it has been shown that it has always been possible to bring the transport system back into action in a comparatively short time. Here, the practice and experience gained will be useful.

On the other hand we must see with all clarity what can happen.

It is better to do this now than in 2 or 3 weeks when under the circumstances we might find an irreparable heap of rubble instead of an industrial area.

Although long distance planning should be made with a view to a more optimistic transport situation, it is of the first importance to start an emergency programme of the war and armaments industries, under the present strained circumstances.

because

1. Owing to the dispersal of industry only some factories are hampered by the present transport situation. The others should suffice, if properly used, to complete half finished articles which otherwise would only be fit for scrapping.

2. Many factories have a large stock of parts to be used or completed elsewhere, e.g. the U-boat steel industry has enough steel sheeting, to complete 230 large and 140 small U-Boats. Under all circumstances it must be avoided that these ready cut steel sheets are wasted.
3. In the building industry also, stoppages must be expected. The cement-production will be severely curtailed if not stopped owing to the lack of coal. Also the necessary iron will not be available. Hence here an emergency programme must be followed. All nearly completed buildings must be finished, and therefore released workmen utilised for repair work in the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial area.
4. There are certain factories which must not close under any circumstances even in the worst hit areas.

(e.g. some finishing works in Stuttgart or the ball-bearing works in Franken).

Everything is being done to provide the necessary coal, even from Upper Silesia.
5. The situation demands that the steelworks, in the area Braunschweig, be closed (Peine, Salzgitter). The emergency plan here provides that the smelting ovens which provide steel for the munitions etc. will be closed so that the electrosteel ones can be kept open.

1 to 2 months reserves of munitions are available.

It must be possible to build up a part production even if the Ruhr area is completely unusable. All attempts must be made, that once this part production is organised, to keep it going.

This task is very difficult and the plan will be ready in a week, and will then be brought before you for decision.

The coal shortage is even more serious for the armament works as 55% will have to be diverted for private consumption (cooking, heating etc.) and for the use of the railways.

The gas and electricity supplies must not be allowed to stop as this will have catastrophic consequences for the population.

Hence the percentage of coal left for the armaments production is very low.

Production may not sink as a consequence, because reserves are unevenly distributed.

The emergency programme is to be applied only where absolutely necessary.

The aim is still the same. It is to hold and carry on the now current production.

It is possible that production will have to stay in some areas, owing to lack of coal.

And it must be made known within those areas, which production must carry on under any circumstances.

/I have

I have ordered a complete census of all rolling stock to be taken. And it is hoped that by the strongest control it will be possible to transport half finished goods to their finishing bases.

The bringing into use of gas, electricity, coal, the production of iron and other metals must, by force of bad communications, be controlled locally.

Again coal has transport priority over everything, and the needs of the railways has again priority over everything else.

It must be understood that the complete elimination of the Rhenish Westphalian industrial area is impossible for the German economic structure and cannot be endured if the war is to be continued.

Actually at this time the Ruhr area, with the exception of internally completed production, is completely eliminated for the German economy.

We have seen, that during bad weather periods the transport situation betters itself rapidly and if the new strong labour forces, which we are sending to help in the repairs, start taking effect the recovery should be even more rapid.

Better pace must be kept with the damage.

And one must always remain on the stand point, that it will be possible to repair, at least to some measure, the damaged transport system, although a 100% recovery is out of the question.

In the same way as in 1943 (Spring) the fight for the Ruhr production was won. It is the same fight now only in a much greater measure.

All places must be clear what the issue is.

It remains to discuss the consequences which a long elimination of the Ruhr area production would have upon the rest of Germany.

The measures which we have taken in various areas are not exhausted yet. If one takes into account the unemployment question and the closing down of whole branches of finishing industries, which will occur through the present situation, no help is too big or small, and no ensuing discomforts too big or unbearable.

In this case it is better to help the Ruhr without any consideration of losses. But this help must be properly planned.

The Rhenish Westphalian industrial area must have the feeling that all help is being sent from the rest of the Reich.

On no account must pessimism be allowed to spread, as it has already done among some of the leading personalities who feel, and that rightly, that they no longer can cope with the situation.

It must be ascertained repeatedly that the helping measures we are taking are the strongest possible. Never must it be allowed to be said that we have wasted or misused even one day in this fight.

/As

As difficult as the situation is, and as hopeless as it may seem at first:

We must never tire, we will put everything into this, for the fate of our country, decisive fight for the Ruhr, in order to win.

Heil Mein Führer.

signed

SPEER.

P.M.N.

Photostats of these documents have been lent to EAB by USSBS through EAB 3 BBRM to whom application for inspection should be made. Every effort is being made to obtain copies for EAB. Applications to H.H. Library will be met as soon as possible.

(Source ref. USSBS report of 24.5.45.)