

Washington Digest

Stricken Europe Needs Large Imports of Food

Never Able to Raise Enough Fare for Its Teeming Masses, Old World's Demands Aggravated by Ravages of War.



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I've just come up from the barnyard of a Maryland farm. In the barn was a comfortable crop of hay and wheat, outside a herd of fat Guernseys of all ages from a two weeks' old calf up. Most of the chickens were already cooling themselves in a locker. There was only one thing for the farmer to complain about and the hogs got a break out of that—the oats.

"Just too wet this year," he said. For fear it would set the barn afire, if he stored it in that condition, the farmer explained that he "had to dump it" and a batch of shoats were leaping around in the spoiled grain like jack-rabbits. Most of the farmers hereabouts lost their oats, too.

All week in Washington, I'd been reading, talking and thinking about farm products along with our other reconversion problems. We, in the United States, are going to get only about three-quarters of what we raise this year, according to unofficial estimates. Europe is going to need about 25 per cent more food and textiles than she normally needs.

I hear the questions asked: Why should we be expected to send all this food to Europe? Why can't she produce her own? Are the people too lazy, or inefficient or what?

I put those two questions to a member of the department of agriculture who is just back from an inspection tour of Europe.

"Europe has always imported food, in peace and in war, in fat years and lean," he answered. "To send food to Europe is the natural thing. Not to send it would be unnatural."

Food Production To Dip Further

"In 1945, Europe's production was 10 per cent under her normal production. Next year, production will be 15 per cent under this year. That means the people of Europe will need 25 per cent more than in normal times. It does not necessarily mean that the United States will furnish a total of 25 per cent more of everything. For instance, Canada will furnish more wheat than before so we won't have to increase our quota, but we shall probably be called upon for more of the protein foods, especially the milk products."

Before answering my second question, my friend explained the paradox that peace has cut down Europe's producing power. While the European nations were overrun with a conquering army, he elucidated, while part of the fields of the continent were being riddled with shells and later gutted with tanks, production fell off only some 10 per cent from normal. This is the reason:

The Germans had to maintain a working economy in the nations they occupied and also they did not wish to destroy the resources of territory which they hoped to exploit. When they knew they were beaten, they stole what they could eat or carry and tried to destroy what they couldn't move; much breeding stock had already been slaughtered.

Of course, we must not be led astray by this figure of 10 per cent—the decrease in the total production in Europe in wartime. There was a sharp cut in certain products and an increase in others. The entire pattern of the agriculture was altered. For example, the livestock raisers always imported feed. When it was cut off there had to be a shift from livestock to root crops. Potatoes and beets make for a very monotonous diet, but they were filling while they lasted.

The Germans organized and regimented farm labor in all countries including their own. They maintained transportation fairly well until just before the invasion. Now transportation is utterly disrupted, there are millions of displaced persons, farm machinery is broken down.

But this doesn't answer question number two: Why can't Europe feed herself in normal times? Are the people so much lazier or behind-the-times that they can't make things grow as we do?

Before answering that question, my friend reminded me that it was

true that nobody always works at maximum efficiency, that most people can do more when they have to than when they don't, especially when there is some extraordinary urge such as war. Take our own case: with thousands of farm boys in the munitions factories and with the armed forces, what did America do?

American farm production in 1944 was increased, despite its handicap, 36 per cent beyond the 1935 to 1939 level.

Britain's Farm Output High

But what about England where the boys were in the army and the munitions factories, too; where farmers had to farm in the blackout and around the shell-craters in their fields? The British increased their production 65 per cent—they were nearer to the front than we were. They had a greater incentive.

For the same reason, the distribution was far better than in America. Regimentation was more stringent. The government in England bought all the food and distributed it itself. It cracked down hard on the black markets. In this country, popular opinion prevented such interference with private enterprise. And so in America we permitted the processing and distribution industries to operate at a profit. In Britain, it was a non-profit, government operation. Rationing was stricter, too.

So much for Britain's wartime effort. Now, what about the efficiency of her production in normal times?

My informant gave me some impressive figures.

He pointed to America's two typical farm states which taken together are just about equal to Britain in area: Iowa and Indiana. Believe it or not in normal times Britain produces more wheat, barley and oats than those two states combined.

Britain also produces more cattle than Texas which is six times as large—more potatoes than all our chief potato states including Maine and Idaho, more dairy products than Wisconsin.

"Then why on earth," I interrupted, "can't they feed themselves over there?"

Back came the answer: "For the same reason that New York state with its skilled farmers, its splendid soil, its up-to-date methods, can't feed itself any more than the District of Columbia can. In Europe as in these more heavily populated areas in the United States, there are just too many people."

If we want these Europeans to live and prosper and earn the money to buy our automobiles and typewriters and other gadgets which keep our factories running, we'll have to keep on sending food to Europe as we always have.

Recently I was asked to make a recording which was to be deposited in the archives of George Washington university, as part of a series made for the use of the class of the year 2007. It is a somewhat fantastic idea to be sure, but it is seriously undertaken and I responded in as serious a vein as I could muster. I can't repeat what I said as that is supposed to be held as a big surprise for the class of 2007. However, the whole idea intrigues me so much that I have been thinking about it ever since.

The fact that this year begins what some people call the "atomic age" makes the speculation all the more interesting. In 1939 when the first successful experiment in "splitting the atom," and releasing the vast power which literally holds the world together was reported chiefly in scientific publications, as of great academic importance. One writer said the experiment might have no results of interests beyond the laboratory. Six years later continuation of those experiments ended the Japanese war.

The forces released, however, were largely uncontrolled and purely destructive.

Will the class of 2007 have to look up the word "coal" because it has been forgotten? Will all our modern means of generating power be displaced by the atom's forces, carefully controlled and directed to the uses of peace and progress?

Reconversion query: Will redeployment mean re-employment, or how soon will the redeployed become the re-employed?

Don't say American business can't come back fast—the day after surrender day a silk hose salesman called at my office. And I expect the re-tired auto salesman will be next.

Production of Civilian Radios Gets Under Way



Production of radios for civilian sale has started in full force. One of the first radio production lines in the country is pictured at a Plymouth, Ind., plant. The capacity of the plant will shortly be 2,000 sets a day. This will aid materially in making radio sets available for almost every need. Production has speeded up beyond earlier reports with every indication that the market will shortly be well supplied.

Cabinet Meets on Reconversion Planning Program



President Truman calls his cabinet to consider all angles of reconversion brought to a head by the Japanese surrender. Photo shows, left to right: Clinton P. Anderson, agriculture; Lewis B. Schwellenback, labor; John B. Blandford Jr., housing agency; J. A. Krug, WPB; J. E. Snyder, war mobilization; William Davis, economic stabilization; Leo T. Crowley, foreign economics; Henry A. Wallace, commerce; Abe Fortas, undersecretary of interior; Robert Hannegan, postmaster general; Henry L. Stimson, secretary of war; James F. Byrnes, secretary of state; President Harry S. Truman; Fred M. Vinson, treasury; Tom Clark, attorney general; and James F. Forrestal, secretary of navy.

Landing Map of Surrender Group



Official map released by the Japanese Imperial headquarters, showing where landing points were made available for the airborne troops accompanying General MacArthur and his staff. The main point of contact was the Atsugi airfield, 29 miles southwest of Tokyo. Following the landing by air, strong U. S. troops were to be provided with landing ports in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo bay.

Navy Father Enlists Triplets



As their mother looks on, Charles Allen, James Milton and Robert Winchester Hardin, left to right, triplets, are sworn into the navy by their father, Capt. David Winchester Hardin, USN, senior officer in the Baltimore district. The triplets plan to follow the navy as a career and later take Annapolis examinations.

After New Honors



Weighted with medals and shooting for the national swimming championship is 17-year-old Frances Kenney of Raleigh, N. C., three-time Carolina swimming champion. She also holds three junior AAU national medals as well as relay team first place.

DeGaulle at Capital



Photograph shows Gen. Charles de Gaulle with President Truman, during De Gaulle's recent visit to Washington. They are shown during the playing of the national anthem, as the White House troops paid honor to the French leader.



TREASURY'S COMPLEX TAX PROBLEMS

(Ed. Note—In Drew Pearson's absence, Fred M. Vinson, secretary of the treasury, contributes a guest column on one of the most important problems of the treasury—tax evasion.)

Drew Pearson has offered me his Washington Merry-Go-Round column to present any subject of interest to the treasury department and to the American people. I know of no subject of more immediate concern than the treasury's campaign against tax evasion.

Here, in a nutshell, is the situation the treasury faces:

In 1940 there were 4,999,999 individual taxpayers. Today there are more than 50,000,000. In an effort to handle the vastly increased task of processing returns and collecting taxes the personnel of the bureau of internal revenue was increased from about 22,000 to about 50,000.

With the manpower shortage the bureau could not expect to increase its forces proportionately with the number of taxpayers. And in many respects bureau employees found their work increased out of proportion to the number of returns. Under the withholding program, a large part of the work formerly done by the taxpayer is now done in the bureau. The processing of wartime tax relief provisions also threw much additional work upon the bureau. Under these conditions the normal investigative work of the bureau inevitably suffered.

The bureau has always proceeded upon the theory that the average American is honest, and that a small but efficient force could deal with the dishonest.

But millions of us are now taxpayers and the honest must be protected against those among us who, tempted by war-swollen incomes and shortages in civilian goods and services, would cheat the rest of us. No city, however small, can afford to be without a police force. And no city, which has experienced a population increase of more than tenfold in a five-year period, would think of trying to get along without enlarging its law enforcement groups.

That is why the treasury is building up its investigative forces. Our object is to recruit and train 5,000 men.

This will be no Gestapo. It will be a taxpayers' law enforcement group protecting the government's interest in taxes, and at the same time protecting the honest taxpayer against the black market operator, the racketeer and every other kind of tax evader. And it will be good business, too. We expect to collect \$20 for every one spent.

When taxes are evaded the honest taxpayer loses, since every dollar evaded increases by that much the burden borne by other taxpayers. In many cases, the honest taxpayer has special reason to welcome the tax-evasion campaign. A reputable furrier or jeweler, for instance, could not continue in business if a next-door competitor should be permitted to sell furs or jewelry without collecting excise taxes. Any business firm which cheats the government by failing to pay for the services which government provides is engaged in dishonest competition, just as much as if it cheated the landlord out of his rent or workers out of their pay. Taxes are high, but they must be collected fairly. And so long as any substantial portion of the taxes due remains uncollected, it operates to defer the reduction of tax rates.

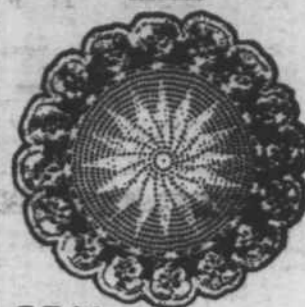
Much more than expedience directs this tax-evasion campaign. Fundamental morality is involved. The man who evades taxes picks his neighbor's pocket. And in these times, when we are asking so much from the men in uniform, any pocket-picking at their expense becomes unthinkable. As President Truman has said:

"We are not fighting this war to make millionaires, and certainly we are not going to allow the black-market operators or any other racketeers to be in a favored class, when the men in the armed forces, and our citizens generally, are sacrificing so heavily."

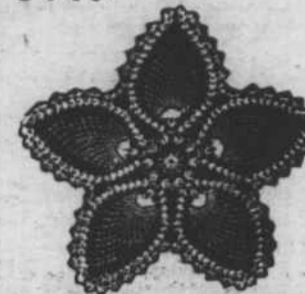
My readers may say, "All right. Tax evasion is indefensible. How bad is it? What are you doing about it?"

The answers to the two questions go together. The treasury is gathering, from many sources, information that will give the entire picture of tax evasion. That same information will serve as evidence to bring tax evaders to justice. The treasury is enlarging its investigating forces, as I have noted, to handle a tremendous backlog of fraud cases, accumulated during recent years and the cases now piling in.

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BARBS . . . by Baukhage

If the boys have to sell apples this time they may get them mixed with hand grenades.

The surrender day vigil at the White House spawned many epigrams. The secretary of state disappeared at one time. The officials would tell us nothing, so: "The state department fiddles while Byrnes roams."