

Memorandum from the Luxembourg Government to the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force (27 May 1945)

Caption: On 27 May 1945, Pierre Dupong, Luxembourg Prime Minister, sends a memorandum to General Sir George W. E. J. Erskine and General Arthur E. Grasset, commanding officers at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in Belgium, stressing the need to remedy the shortage of raw materials and labour in Luxembourg as quickly as possible.

Source: Archives Nationales du Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Ministère des Affaires étrangères. Instituts internationaux - Institutions spécialisées - Organisations internationales. Unité Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. UNRRA - Correspondance classée chronologiquement 1945, AE 8088.

Copyright: All rights of reproduction, public communication, adaptation, distribution or dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

The documents available on this Web site are the exclusive property of their authors or right holders respectively.

Requests for authorisation are to be addressed to the authors or right holders concerned.

Further information may be obtained by referring to the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/memorandum_from_the_luxembourg_government_to_the_supreme_headquarters_of_the_allied_expeditionary_force_27_may_1945-en-56edbe39-1c20-4faf-9334-f75727b9c729.html

Publication date: 04/09/2012

Memorandum for GENERALS GRASSET and ERSKINE (27 May 1945)

Grand-Duché de Luxembourg
Ministère d'Etat.

1. Industry

The Luxembourg Government rendered the Military Authorities attentive already a month ago on the critical situation of the steel industry which occupies approximately 30 000 workers. This industry is working at the present time and since last November at an average monthly production of 8 000 tons of steel, all destined to the Allied Armed Forces. Out of 32 blast furnaces there are only four working in comparison with 12 in Belgium. Between Luxembourg and Belgium it was agreed that the production capacity of the two countries should be in a proportion of 2 to 3. Belgium is at present producing about 50–60 000 tons of steel monthly and we think that under these conditions Luxembourg steel production should be at least approximately 40 000 tons of steel per month. We understand that in Belgium about 40 % of the steel production are destined for civilian uses where in Luxembourg nothing is turned over for local use. As 50 % of our country is devastated and the reconstruction work very heavy and urgent we are not even able to provide steel for the reconstruction of communal housing or to provide repair facilities for our people. Even railway and road bridges cannot be rebuilt out of lack of steel.

The Luxembourg Government understands that the critical situation is due mostly to a great lack of coal and coke. In this connection one of the biggest Luxembourg steel companies offered through the SHAEF Mission to Luxembourg months ago their services to the Allied Military Authorities asking them to accept their help in working back to production the coal mines of the Saar, Aachen and Eschweiler basins which are the property of the said company. Twice a small delegation was allowed to visit these coal mines and it was agreed, on the occasion of the last visit, which took place more than six weeks ago, that a working delegation, consisting of Luxembourg engineers and specialists should be allowed to go to these fields and assist in the exploitation of the coal mines. Until now we have no answer and no coal. Arbed is paying every month since the liberation, the amount of 40 000 000 francs to their workers and they will be unable in the near future to continue the payment of these large amounts. The Luxembourg State will have to support this supplementary financial charge. This situation is much more critical and disagreeable for Luxembourg as the country has really only two industries. First the iron and steel industry and secondly the agriculture. Iron and steel industry stands idle; agricultural ground is about 50 % devastated and in the remaining 50 % agricultural work is very much hampered out of lack of horses, labour and machinery.

The position of the Luxembourg Government and the danger of political unrest are imminent and the Luxembourg Government has asked SHAEF Mission many times to do urgently their utmost and provide Luxembourg steel industry with a minimum of 70 000 tons of coke per month.

The same critical lack of coal exists for the medium industry and for civilian uses. One of our pottery factories which got a military order of half a million of cups and saucers, already four months ago, is unable to fulfil its obligations out of lack of coal. The same plant, which is occupying in normal time 300 workers, could be also used for making urgently needed household items for the reconstruction areas.

Power plant and railroads must cease operation within the next few days out of lack of coal and this same situation has been going on since November 1944.

2. Communications

Luxembourg has not yet received international telephone or telegraphic communications. The lack of communications inside and outside the country are hampering severely the official and economic life of the country.

3. Accommodations

a) The Luxembourg Government is insisting since the withdrawal of the larger units of the Armed Forces to get the houses freed which belong to returning deportees and political prisoners.

Until now only very slow progress was made in this connection and this fact makes the situation of the Government most critical. There are between 25 000 and 30 000 people returning from Germany, people who constitute the most interesting nucleus of the population and who do not understand why after four years of suffering they should again be treated as citizens of second class. Even the supplementary resort of Mondorf-les-Bains has been frozen without being occupied and this resort was the only means to house our deportees or to give them a rest.

b) Hotels are 100 % frozen or occupied by Military Forces, so that the Luxembourg Government is only able to house a very few diplomats or official visitors stopping in Luxembourg.

c) Schools in cities are mostly occupied by troops and even the only technical school of the Grand-Duchy, situated at Esch, was recently converted in a rest centre and all equipment and furniture taken out.

4. Recuperation of Luxembourg Property in Germany

During the second invasion of the country last December between 3 000 and 3 500 horses and about 35 000 heads of cattle were taken away and driven to Germany. SHAEF had authorized through General SCOWDEN the return of approximately 2 000 horses and half of the cows. General SCOWDEN and General STEARNS oc Com.Z. passed this information on the 12th Army Group. At Bitburg alone 400 horses were reserved for Luxembourg but could not be taken out because Military Government Authorities on the spot were opposed to it.

The agricultural situation of the country is most critical and the Luxembourgers do not understand in seeing their horses and cattle on the opposite side of the borderline why they should not be allowed to get them back.

Luxembourg farmers owning land on the border in Germany had permits approved by SHAEF to farm their land but are stopped daily by Military Government Authorities.

Through Luxembourg leather experts visiting Trèves with representatives of the GPA, about 200 tons of hides were discovered in various badly damaged tanneries. General Scowden and General Stearns arranged for having these hides sent to Luxembourg in order to have them treated and finished in Luxembourg tanneries for the benefit of American and Allied Forces. Only a very small proportion of these materials could be taken from Trèves to Luxembourg, because at a certain moment, without any explanation, Military Government Authorities on the spot were opposed to taking these hides away.

The same is true for tractors, busses and cars, which are still in Germany running around with Luxembourg licences. But by now of course most of these licences will have disappeared.

5. Military Equipment

which was agreed by SHAEF to be delivered to Luxembourg Armed Forces was of a very inferior quality and the second and most important delivery should have taken place before the 1st of June. Until now no equipment at all came in and the first two Luxembourg battalions should be formed the 1st of June. The Luxembourg Government is quite anxious to know what can be done in this connection.

6. Civil Import Program is not mentioned because we look to the SHAEF Mission Belgium for providing transport and observing that Luxembourg receives its just proportion.

7. D.P. Officers

SHAEF asked two months ago the Luxembourg Government to provide five additional D.P. Officers, which

would make a total of 10. Two D.P. Officers were called forward, four weeks ago. Three of the initial five are still waiting for their assignment in Germany. The Luxembourg Government is of the opinion that in view of the large number of Luxembourg prisoners and deportees, these three officers could be of great assistance to the Allied Authorities in Germany.

8. The fact that SHAEF Mission to Luxembourg was merged into the SHAEF Mission Belgium lessens the prestige and the moral position of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg.

Furthermore this was done without consulting H.R.H. the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, or the Government.

The Luxembourg Government has the impression that it is not receiving the consideration given to larger countries and this treatment is hampering its actions and makes its position more critical every day.

Only Com.Z. in Paris, with General Stearns, Col. Greason and their staff, have shown until now a great lot of understanding and have rendered Luxembourg very precious assistance.

The Luxembourg Government therefore asks SHAEF to urgently take the necessary steps in providing:

- 1) sufficient coke and coal to get the economic life of the country started again;
- 2) to put at the disposal of the Luxembourg Authorities engineer equipment and about 5 000 German P.W. with the necessary tents and cooking facilities and tools; out of this number 3 000 could be employed in reconstruction work and 2 000 in agricultural work;
- 3) a minimum of hotels for accommodation and to clear the houses belonging to deportees;
- 4) to allow Luxembourg nationals to recuperate in Germany their property taken away by the invaders;
- 5) to open telephone and telegraphic communications, at least with Brussels, Paris, London and Washington and to provide gasoline in sufficient quantities to help to rebuild the country and the economic life.

P. Dupong.
Prime Minister of Luxembourg.