Message from General Eisenhower

6 August 1945.

To the German People in the United States Zone:

Almost three months have passed since the final defeat of Germany. During this period we have been engaged in the removal of Nazis from positions of prominence in German life. We have also re-established law and order, and have taken many steps specifically directed to provide a foundation for you now to exert your best efforts to minimize the problems which you will face during the coming winter.

Our denazification program has proceeded sufficiently so that it is timely now to speak to you of our plans for the occupation of the United States zone in Germany, plans which accord fully with the policies agreed upon in the recent conference of Allied leaders in Potsdam.

After two wars in twenty-five years, we intend to prevent Germany from ever again threatening the peace of the world. Nazism and militarism are being rooted out in all their forms. War criminals are being tried and punished as they deserve. Germany is being completely disarmed. In short, the German power to make war will be destroyed.

But our aim is not merely a negative one. We do not desire to degrade the German people. We shall assist you to rebuild your life on a democratic basis.

Your courts and schools are being reopened as quickly as they can be freed of Nazi influence. Justice and education founded on true liberal principles will be supported vigorously.

Already you are publishing some of your own newspapers, electing shop stewards to represent you, and serving on advisory groups for military government. Now these and similar steps will be carried further.

You will be permitted to form local unions and to engage in local political activities; and meetings for these purposes may be held subject to the approval of local Military Government. An initial aim of trade unions and political parties should be to help in the measures necessary now to prepare for the coming winter.

The full freedom to form trade unions and to engage in democratic political activities will be extended rapidly in those areas in which you show a readiness for the healthy exercise of these privileges. Your own actions will determine the time for removing remaining restrictions.

The coming months will be a time of trial. They will inevitably be hard. All signs point to shortages of food, fuel, housing and transport. These are the consequences of a war of aggression. Yet you have it in your power to reduce these hardships by steady work and by helping each other. There must be no idleness.
The prospects for the harvest are good. However, to make sure that it is fully gathered the people in the cities and towns must go out to work on the farms.

Coal will not be available for heating houses this winter. In the next few months you must cut and gather enough wood in the forests to take care of your essential needs.

Housing is your third major problem. While the weather still permits, damaged houses must be repaired to provide as much shelter as possible this winter, using salvaged material and lumber cut from the forests to the fullest feasible extent.

All of these are your problems. Their solution depends on your work. German civil authorities have been set up by Military Government in many fields to enable you to help yourselves until the time comes for you to select your own government. If you do your part, we can help you in other ways. Already I have made military transport available to help prevent losses of crops in the fields.

Members of my command are now permitted normal public contacts with you. In this way we will be able to understand better the problems which face you in the coming months.

Despite all hardships, you need not face the future without hope. You can redeem yourselves, both at home and in the eyes of the world, through your own efforts. It lies in your power ultimately to build a healthy, democratic life in Germany and to rejoin the family of nations. To achieve this, you must show you have forever abandoned militarism and aggression and have adopted a peaceful way of life.

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