Coal in Postwar Germany

Statement

By US ELEMENT, COAL CONTROL GROUP, ESSEN

THE GREATER PART of West Germany's coal resources lie in the area just north of the valley of the Ruhr river. This area produces 25 percent of the coal of Western Europe. Because of this fact, and because much of the coal is of quality suitable for making coke, Western Germany has always been a heavy exporter of coal and coke. This export, on the other hand, has served to bring Germany raw materials, agricultural products and finished goods that were not sufficiently available within her national boundaries.

The Ruhr coal area contains 140 mines, each operating from one to seven shafts, and now producing 370,000 metric tons of cleaned coal a day. The annual coal production of the Ruhr for 1938 was 127,284,000 metric tons; for 1946, 40,452,000 tons, and it is estimated it will be 114,000,000 tons for 1951. Other mines are in the Aachen area and in Lower Saxony, producing together an additional seven percent of West German coal. Not included in these figures is West German brown coal production of 80,000,000 tons per year.

The number of miners employed underground in the Ruhr was 228,813 in 1938 at which time they produced 1.97 metric tons per man-shift. In 1946, 183,186 Ruhr miners produced 0.987 tons each per man-shift, and it is estimated that the 283,000 Ruhr miners underground today will produce 1.47 tons per man-shift in 1951.

ALTHOUGH THE PER-MAN tonnage increase for 1951 over 1946 is considerable, it has not yet reached the 1938 peak. This lag has been explained in the following manner:

1. The incentive on the part of the miners for greater coal production is not as strong as it might be. They have, for example, been led to believe that greater coal production would merely mean greater export.

2. Since 1936, the Ruhr coal mines have been under pressure to produce coal faster than they could properly open up new coal seams. Normal development work was neglected or reduced to a minimum.

3. During the war many miners in the 21-35 year age group were lost and a large percentage of miners' housing was destroyed. The result is a very heavy turnover of personnel in the mines and a relative shortage of skilled miners.

4. Deteriorated mine equipment has not been fully replaced at the necessary rate.

5. Lack of final clarification as to ownership of the mines is an unsetting factor, from the viewpoint of management.

THE FOLLOWING MEMORANDUM considers the postwar coal industry in Germany historically and currently in these sections:

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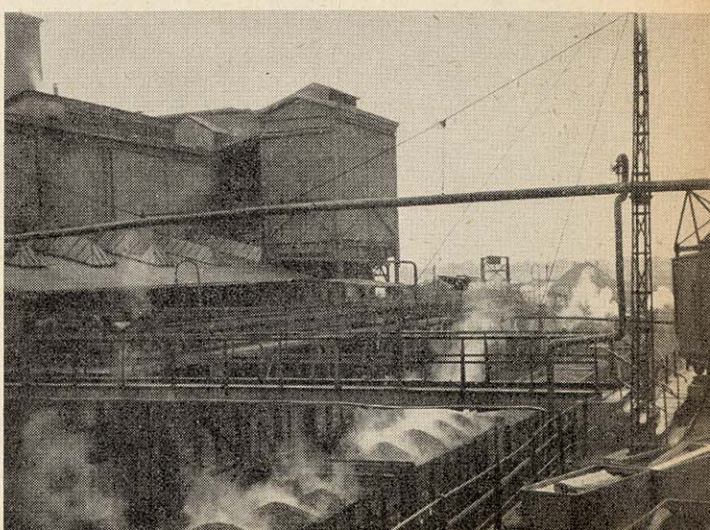
I. Coal Situation at the Beginning Of the Occupation

When the Ruhr was occupied in 1945, hard coal production which before and during the war had exceeded 400,000 tons a day had fallen to about 30 000 tons a day. During hostilities the Ruhr mining area was extensively damaged by air and ground warfare. Mines accounting for 10 percent of the prewar output were so severely damaged as to be out of service for years, while another 25 percent were so badly damaged as to present a serious problem of reconstruction and repair.

In the general devastation of the area, miners' housing was hard hit: out of a total of 250,000 miners' houses, 66,000 were completely destroyed and 130,000 damaged. Manufacture of mining supplies ceased, and stocks of machinery, pitprops and other essential stores were depleted. Coal-loading and distribution facilities were damaged, while transportation was completely dis-

Cars at Muelheim-Ruhr factory are loaded with egg-shaped briquettes fresh from the presses. (Photo by Byers)



organized. Actually, it was not coal production but transportation that was the bottleneck in that first winter. In fact, during the winter of 1945-46, stocks at the mines rose from approximately 3,000,000 tons at the time of the start of the occupation to 6,000,000 tons at the end of the winter.

War damage was one of the factors which kept coal output at a very low level in the three years following the end of hostilities, but the most important single factor limiting production was the short food supply. In spite of strenuous efforts to provide adequate rations, food supplies fluctuated very considerably, ranging from 2,800 calories per miner per day in early 1945 to 3,400 calories per day in the last half of 1945 and early 1946. In March 1946, the miner's ration fell to 2,900 calories per day, but in June 1946 it again reached 3,400 calories daily, and in October 1946 it was raised to 4,000 calories. A critical food shortage developed again in March 1947, which necessitated decreasing the miner's ration to an average of 3,600 calories per day.

These rations were distributed only to very heavy mine workers. Rations of the normal consumers were very much lower throughout these periods, and in practice the miners shared their extra rations with their families. Malnutrition of the miners was, therefore, rather widespread. Another result of the food scarcity was that miners left work in search of food, so that the rate of absenteeism was high.

At the end of the war, of the required 400,000 mine employees, less than 150,000 were on hand. A large proportion of this labor force was over age. During the war most of the able-bodied miners had entered the army and were replaced by prisoners of war or foreign forced labor. The foreign miners were released after the German capitulation and repatriated, while German labor between the ages of 18 and 40 had been seriously depleted during hostilities. The net result was that, in mid-1945, only about 13 percent of Ruhr miners were under 30 years of age, 22 percent were between 30 and 39, 40 percent between 40 and 49, and 25 percent were over 50. In 1935 by contrast, 36 percent were under 30 and only 27 percent were over 40.

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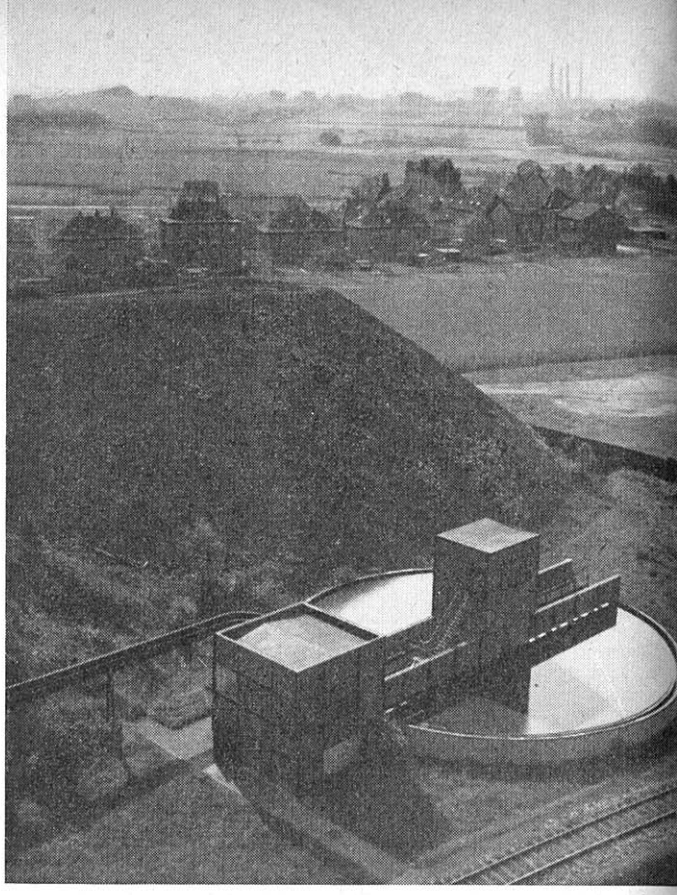
II. The Coal Industry Under Quadripartite Controls

The first Allied organizations to enter Germany with specific functions dealing primarily with coal distribution and production were already inter-Allied in character and authority before their arrival. They were the Solid Fuels Section of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF), as a policy and allocations body on the one hand and, on the other hand, the Rhine-Ruhr Control Section of the Advance Section, Communications Zone, of the advancing armies which was charged with the actual responsibility for protecting the mines, stimulating their production and directing the initial distribution from production and from stocks.

However, with the establishment of the zones in economic semi-isolation as a result in practice under the



Mountain of coal is piled up beside water purification plant at Zollverein mine, Essen. (PRD HICOG photo by Jacoby)

Potsdam Agreement, these purely military sections were replaced not by an over-all Allied Coal Board as originally planned in 1944 but by coordination committees in Berlin and by control organizations that were basically zonal, not interzonal, in their scope and interest.

The Potsdam Agreement stated that during the period of occupation, Germany should be treated as a single economic unit. To this end common policy would be established in regard to coal mining, production and allocation. It also said that measures should be taken promptly to enlarge coal production. While the concept of Germany being treated as a single economic unit has not been fulfilled, the balance of the agreement with respect to coal has been followed.

After the Potsdam Agreement, the next major quadripartite decision touching upon coal was in connection with the first studies on the Level of Industry Plan which were designed to determine the size and nature of a reparations program. Here again no restrictions were placed on coal production. The plan stated that "until the Control Council otherwise decides, coal production will be maximized as far as mining supplies and transportation will allow. The minimum production is estimated at 155,000,000 tons *Steinkohle* (hard coal) equivalent, including at least 45,000,000 tons for export." These figures referred to targets to be attained in 1949. History shows that neither target was reached and that the export target was unrealistic. Within this plan, no limitations on inland

coal consumption were considered, and the coal industry was not expected to provide reparations, only certain minor restitutions.

When growing political and economic difficulties within the Allied Control Authority (ACA) led to the establishment of the Bizone, one of the first steps taken by the US and UK military governors was to revise the Level of Industry Plan, removing any reference to coal production and coal exports, because the earlier unrealistic figures had applied to the whole of Germany and because in their view, coal was not concerned in the reparations question.

The policy coordinating committees established by the quadripartite Allied Control Authority were within its Economic Directorate and consisted of a Fuel Committee, a Coal Subcommittee, and a Technical Staff of Experts to service these committees. One of the most important functions undertaken by the Fuel Commitee was the monthly allocation of coal availabilities to the four zones and to export. This allocation was at first based on stated requirements collected by each zone commander from the competent local German organizations within his zone.

As the winter of 1945-46 passed, these deliberations became more difficult as confidence in the accuracy of zonal statements of availabilities and requirements lessened. For several months the allocations meetings became in practice barter meetings, with the result that in the fall of 1946 the procedure was abandoned as between the east and west zones. In its place, East-West coal trade was handled along the lines of a trade agreement. In the western zones, the allocation system continued but on a quarterly basis and with a careful examination of statements of availabilities and requirements.

The determination of the tonnage for export from Western Germany became a tripartite military governors' decision at the same time, while the sub-allocation and distribution of coal within the western zones was turned over to German authorities.

With the exception of the tonnage for Austria, Military Government made no attempt itself to divide the export tonnage among various importing countries. From the beginning of the occupation until January 1948, this was a function of the European Coal Organization in London, the same as it has more recently been a function of the Coal Committees of the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation in Paris.

At first the decisions of the ACA Fuel Committee and then of the tripartite military governors as to the tonnage available for export were arbitrary, based on their own estimate of relative internal and external need. However, in order to stabilize and standardize this division to export, the three Western military governors proposed and their foreign ministers accepted a scale which became known as the Moscow Sliding Scale simply because the foreign ministers were meeting in Moscow at the time.

This scale provided for an export of 21 percent of Ruhr and Saar coal net merchantable availability calculated on a hard coal equivalent basis with an adjustment for the size of the coking program when daily production for the Ruhr and Saar would average 280,000 tons. It increased stepwise to 25 percent corresponding to a daily production of 370,000 tons. This scale was used quarterly by the Western military governors until the separation of the Saar, after which it was revised merely to take that separation into account.

With the functioning of the International Authority for the Ruhr, the Moscow Scale and the allocation authority of the military governors were abandoned at the end of 1949.

The Allied Control Authority through its Fuel Committee in Berlin managed to do a few additional things for the coal industry before it became ineffective. For example, it authorized a 20 percent wage increase in November 1946. During the summer of 1946, it created a quadripartite committee of coal experts and assigned it the task of inspecting coal production units in all four zones and recommending measures leading to an increase in coal production. The results of this inspection were reported to the Council of Foreign Ministers in Moscow in 1947 along the lines of the following statement to the press of that date:

"At the time of the occupation, German industry was at a standstill. Since then progress has been made but nevertheless production is still at a low level. Until coal, the keystone of the German economy, is produced in sufficient quantity to satisfy the requirements of industry, the attainment of target levels for industry presents considerable difficulty . . . Therefore, coal production must be considerably increased."

Mine tower (center) is adjacent to Rheinisch-Westfaelische power plant (foreground) in Essen. (PRD HICOG photo by Jacoby)

Each zone commander was instructed to take all possible measures to increase coal output.

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III. Control Measures in the British Zone And the Bizonal Area

When the British zonal commander took over responsibility from SHAEF, he had the authority to set up whatever type of control mechanism he considered essential. Basically the UK military governor established a single control agency, the North German Coal Control, with British Military Government officers drawn in part from the British coal industry to give the top policy direction and with German operating personnel. In effect, the NGCC took over the *Bergbau-Verein,* the *Bergbau-Verband* (mining supplies) and the *Rheinisch-Westfaelisches Kohlen-Syndikat* (RWKS).

The North German Coal Control at first concentrated available labor in mines not too damaged, and in reconstruction of those surface plants most easily and quickly repaired. Later it balanced the growing working force over all of the mines to be operated. It encouraged mechanization and the efficient employment of labor, and it advocated and obtained special miners' rations, a point scheme, a recruitment campaign and the repair of miners' housing. It supervised centralized mine supply procurement during the difficult period prior to the currency reform (June 1948) and it also programed and supported certain imports of food, equipment and supplies for the mining industry.

The North German Coal Distribution Office took over not only the RWKS but also the various brown coal syndicates in the British Zone. It had the function of breaking down the internal and export allocations into the proper sizes and qualities and supervising loadings according to these allocations.

After the Bizonal Area was established at the beginning of 1947, a Coal Production Committee to form bipartite policy for the NGCC to follow was first established. At the same time, discussions in Germany and later in Washington led to an agreement between the US and UK Governments whereby the responsibility for management control of the coal industry would be turned over to a German agency to be created by the two military governors and known as the *Deutsche Kohlenbergbau-Leitung* (DKBL). The DKBL was to be responsible to the military governors and receive its policy guidance from the UK-US Coal Control Group, which acted like a board of directors.

This arrangement went into effect in November 1947, while at the same time the North German Coal Control was abolished. The authority of the DKBL has been defined in British Military Government Ordinance No. 112 which was the same as US Military Government Ordinance No. 19. The Coal Control Group became tripartite in March 1949 with the fusion of the French Zone.

The British military governor issued an order under his Military Government Property Control Law No. 52, which was to be of far reaching importance with respect to the coal mining properties of the British Zone. This order, known as General Order No. 5 of Dec. 22, 1945, declared specified colliery properties to be subject to seizure of possession, direction, management, supervision or otherwise being taken into control by Military Government. A controller was appointed to act as custodian on behalf of British Military Government. In connection with this order, the owners were informed that the collieries would not be returned to them and that foreign interests would be protected.

With the bizonal fusion, a plan for the coal industry called "Plan Segregation" was studied but was not put into effect. This was because the UK-US Control Group and the DKBL were being formed and it became desirable to develop a more permanent solution for the coal industry rather than at that stage to form temporary leasing companies to operate the coal industry as had taken place in the steel industry. Accordingly for about one year after the formation of the Coal Group and the DKBL the military governors studied and finally issued Law 75, now AHC Law 27, for the decartelization and deconcentration of the combine that had controlled the German coal and steel industries.

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IV. Production Incentives and Price Measures Before Currency Reform

With the spring of 1946, transportation ceased to be the bottleneck, partly because of good strides in the repair of railroad and barge equipment and reconstruction or clearance of railroad lines and canals, and partly because coal production declined as a result of a reduction in the zonal food ration at the beginning of February, including food for miners. Toward the end of the year the zonal authority

Coke oven at a plant in Essen emits red-hot coke as men stand

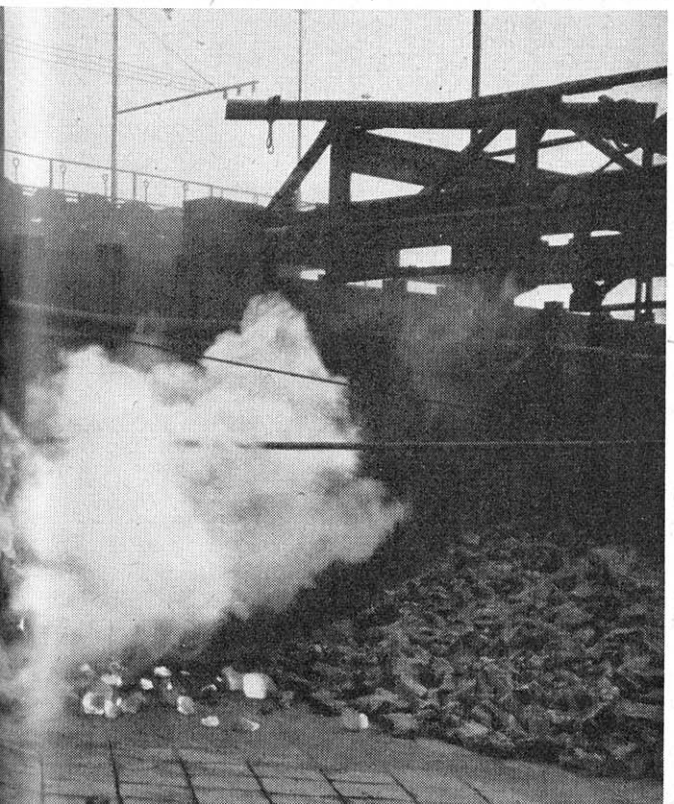
with the assistance and cooperation of other Allied bodies created a special miners' food ration of 4,000 calories, restored social insurance for miners, put into effect the 20 percent wage increase authorized by the ACA, and stepped up recruiting.

As of Feb. 1, 1947, this same interzonal cooperation made possible the introduction of the so-called "point scheme" which provided additional food and consumer goods, especially bacon, coffee, UNNRA clothing, items from German army stocks, etc. During the second half of 1947 and the first quarter of 1948, the point scheme was supplemented by three special incentive programs tied to production where the reward to the miners was CARE packages or the equivalent, mostly from US Army stocks. These special incentives provided short-lived but noteworthy increases in production.

A fourth special issue of meats and fats as a production incentive was in force during the month of June 1948, which was also the month of currency reform. Thereafter with a solid wage and solid currency, it was not necessary or advisable to resort to incentive programs in terms of food and clothing tied to production. Some advantages in terms of consumers goods or tax exemptions on *Schnapps* (liquors) and tobacco were retained until quite recently as a miners' recruitment and stabilization aid.

As a hedge against inflation of basic food and raw materials prices prior to currency reform, the inland price scale for coal was at first held at the 1941 level. Just before currency reform, Military Government permitted a substantial increase, and an additional small increase was authorized two months after currency reform. Then the responsibility for the inland coal price level was turned over to the German authorities who permitted a minor upward adjustment on Jan. 1, 1950 and still a further increase of inland prices in December 1950.

ith water hose to solidify the molten stream. (Photo by Byers)



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V. Financial Condition and Investment Needs Of the Coal Industry

While the price of coal was frozen during most of the period prior to currency reform, wages rose 20 percent in 1946, and the cost of materials of equipment for the supply of the mines as well as for their reconstruction quickly exhausted the resources of the mining companies. Of necessity the British zonal budget lent the mining industry a total of about RM 2,200,000,000 prior to currency reform. Recently the German authorities decided that only DM 6,000,000 ($1,428,000) of this RM 2,200,000,000 need be repaid by the industry.

Immediately after currency reform the coal industry faced a temporary crisis for lack of operating funds. The military governors studied the situation and directed that the coal industry receive the export rather than the inland price for exported coal, directed the inland price increases mentioned above, directed temporary subsidies of marginal mines and undertook to help find capital for the industry.

DM 135,000,000 ($32,130,000) of counterpart funds from the US GARIOA aid to Germany was allocated as a loan to the industry, and several million dollars worth of American mining machinery was imported against Marshall Plan dollar allotments. Since then, Marshall Plan Deutsche-mark counterpart funds have been the principal outside investment capital available to the industry. Altogether from April 1949 through June 1951 the hard coal industry has received DM 424,838,000 counterpart fund loans for investment.

The Marshall Plan has actually supplied roughly 62 percent of the capital invested in approved hard coal technical projects, not including DM 34,000,000 ($8,092,000) of counterpart funds presently being programed. Other ECA funds have been granted to the brown coal industry, and for miners' housing as described hereafter.

Today, the ECA Mission is pleased to observe that all of the present coal companies are capable of meeting their day-to-day operating costs, with the exception that a few companies are not capable of carrying such fixed charges as depreciation.

The average company in the first six months of 1951 showed gross total mining costs of DM 36.56 ($8.60) per metric ton of clean coal produced, including DM 0.89 (21 cents) of allowable depreciation. Its gross receipts of DM 37.94 ($9.03) per ton left a book profit of DM 1.38 (33 cents) for mining operations. The book profit on ancillary operations such as coking and by-products, briquetting and public power plants was sufficient to raise the average book profit for all operations to DM 2.64 (63 cents) per ton before income taxes.

This profit has averaged as high as DM 3.77 (90 cents) per ton in the first half of 1951. The figure for gross total

mining cost includes among other cost funds set aside for a reserve to cover depletion of coal reserves, damage due to subsidence, deferred maintenance charges and depreciation partially based on present replacement costs, but it does not include any fixed return on total investment capital.

The average company today is, therefore, able to finance for itself moderate capital investment projects and requires outside capital only for larger programs or major projects. The strongest of the present companies are in very favorable financial position today. The major capital needs of the industry for the future are, therefore, for the development of new mines, for the improvement of operations presently marginal but technically promising and for extraordinary housing requirements.

The German mining industry has, under Allied control, come to a position where the great bulk of its rehabilitation from war-time damages and malpractice has been accomplished. The industry is now waiting for clarification of ownership which should make for a steady increase in production, accompanied by increased efficiencies. In the meantime, there is general agreement that miners' housing is the No. 1 requirement for stabilizing the workers and increasing efficiency since there is presently a very high labor turnover.

Early in 1951, the ECA Mission made available DM 45,000,000 ($10,710,000) for the construction of about 11,000 dwelling units in the Ruhr and Aachen areas. Recently, the mission has offered to approve an additional DM 100,000,000 ($23,800,000) for miners' housing. Together with the impending levy of DM 2 (48 cents) per ton on hard coal and DM 1 (24 cents) per ton on brown coal for miners' housing plus matching industry funds, a large housing program of more than 92,000 dwelling units for miners is being planned over the next two years. Fulfillment of this housing program will help return the Ruhr to its rightful position as a well rounded industry community vital to the economic welfare of Germany and Western Europe.

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VI. The Coal Situation in 1950

After currency reform, hard coal output improved substantially in 1949 and in 1950. The unusual development of coal stock piling in Western Germany and elsewhere in Europe in 1950 had an especially marked effect on the trend of coal production during the year. This phenomenon was responsible for the loss of perhaps 2,000,000 tons of production in Germany. The winter of 1949-50 was the first one in postwar Germany in which demand for both domestic consumption and export was on the whole more than met by production.

Reacting to an unusual plentiful consumer stock situation plus a holding-off by buyers in anticipation of price reductions, mine stocks available for sale began to rise sharply — from about 153,000 tons in January 1950 to more than 1,000,000 tons in May and close to 2,000,000 tons in July 1950. These large stocks at mines had an adverse psychological effect on miners, many of whom began to leave the industry, attracted by growing employment opportunities in other industries, particularly iron and steel.

Due to seasonal demand and rising industrial output after the outbreak of the Korean war, coal demands for consumption and export quickly absorbed the available production and eliminated stock piling in the third quarter of 1950, then quickly drew down stock piles in the fourth quarter at the same time that employment and production were rising sharply. German public and governmental awakening to the full significance of the situation was not widespread, however, until about the beginning of October.

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VII. Measures to Increase Production in 1950

To meet the threat of a coal shortage, steps were taken in the fields of coal production, productivity, recruitment, wages and prices. Miners' wages in the hard coal industry had been increased nine percent as of Jan. 1, 1950, after negotiations between the miners' trade union and the DKBL representing the industry. By November the new situation, including the rising cost of living, created an atmosphere wherein DKBL and union negotiators agreed to a further 10 percent increase in wages effective Nov. 1, and to a three percent bonus for underground workers for full shift attendance in any month (except for absences on a doctor's certificate). The miners through their union furthermore agreed to work two extra shifts per month during the five months November 1950 through March 1951, in view of the coal shortage, although they already were working a full six-day week.

These measures were generally successful as hard coal output rose from about 352,000 tons per day in the third quarter of 1950 to more than 390,000 tons per day in March and April of 1951. However, production then began to fall due to seasonal loss of workers, increased absenteeism and ending of the agreements providing for extra shift performance and overtime work.

In June, the miners were given a 12 percent wage increase retroactive to May 1. To cover this wage increase and provide additional investment capital to the industry, the Federal Government introduced in July a domestic split-price system whereby certain industrial consumers would pay a surcharge of DM 35 ($8.33) per ton for all hard coal mined in excess of 373,000 tons per day. In addition, the Federal Government announced in July that export prices retroactive to May 1 would be increased by an average of about DM 14.50 ($3.45) per ton. (This action is still under consideration by the Council of the IAR.)

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VIII. Development of Coal Production Programs In 1951 and ECA Participation

These wage and price measures had no stimulating effect on production during the third quarter, with daily output lagging at 375,000 tons. In order to get production back up to the first quarter of 1951 level, the DKBL in August announced a short-range production incentive program in the form of bonuses and prizes. However, this program was not effective as the mining trade union

instructed the works councils not to cooperate with these plans, believing that the miners were not given sufficient participation.

However, the trade unions immediately set out to develop a program of their own to increase coal production on a short term basis which in general corresponds technically with the measures proposed in the DKBL plan. It envisages a union-management cooperation program to provide for participation of all employees in the gains of increased production or, in other words, a profit-sharing system.

The mining companies, according to German technical opinion shared by the US technical staff, can at this stage increase production by a return to higher efficiencies through rationalization of mining practices underground and through more extensive mechanization. These procedures, for the most part, do not require extremely large increases in investment nor increases in labor forces.

The central idea is to reduce the number of operating underground working faces and to increase the output per face. This would be made possible by increasing the rate of advance of working faces and concomitantly the rate of coal haulage away from the faces and the rate of delivery of materials and supplies to the faces.

It requires changes in the daily working cycle, in face work procedures, in the haulage pattern underground, and can only be carried out by management with the collaboration of labor. Enthusiasm to increase output, initiative and incentive are prerequisites.

This concentration of fewer faces, as pointed out by General Director Heinrich Kost of the *Deutsche Kohlenbergbau-Leitung* in July 1951, can lead not only to a better utilization of all machinery and equipment but also to a better ratio of productive to unproductive shifts. As several German mining engineers have pointed out, it will permit greater utilization of existing equipment and take advantage of practices newly developed. It has been demonstrated that economics as well as increased production will result from this rationalization and emphasis on mechanization so that both are achieved without increasing the burden on the individual worker. In the long run the improved competitive position of the industry provides greater security for the worker.

The ECA Mission, seriously concerned with the critical coal shortage in Western Europe and the resulting effect upon industrial production, employment and the needs of the mutual defense program, has been meeting with representatives of the Federal Government, the DKBL and the trade unions to develop a broad program along the lines outlined above to increase output immediately and to study the industry's long range problems and their solution.

An Interministerial Coal Production Committee has been established with three working groups to examine: (1) the problems of premium plans for extra production and other measures leading to an immediate increase of output; (2) mechanization investment and other technical and organizational measures and (3) miners' housing. +END

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