MORE THAN 1,100 YEARS AGO the forest land adjoining the present German-Netherlands boundary was a favorite hunting ground of Charlemagne and it continued to flourish as a game refuge under state and private ownership until the late days of World War II. It was there that Allied airborne troops met stiff enemy resistance, resulting in tremendous destruction.

The reconstruction period found many expellees from Silesia, the Sudetenland, Pomerania and other areas now in the Soviet Zone longing for land on which to continue their interrupted life-long job of farming.

Many trees in the Reichswald (national forest) were destroyed or were gradually dying because of imbedded shrapnel.

The state of North Rhine-Westphalia had the wealth of the Ruhr Valley to help fill its coffers.

These three conditions resulted in the initiation of a project to clear for colonization 3,600 acres of forest land near Kleve. The proposal was approved by the state parliament in the summer of 1948 and later completed with DM 500,000 ($119,000) in ECA funds.

RISING ANEW AS A PHOENIX from the ashes of destruction, today trim farmhouses are scattered amid the checkerboard grain fields and 2,000 persons are settled there: two-thirds of them expellees, the others native sons of North Rhine-Westphalia. The three communities (as yet unnamed) will eventually have all the facilities of small villages. The project is a classic example of pioneering in modern days.

The problems of planning and preparation were handled by a land-development company, "Rheinisches Heim," and in September 1948 American-type bulldozers and other heavy earth-moving equipment were set into action. Throughout the next six months five contractors worked at cutting the trees, pulling loose roots and leveling ground. The colonists — all picked for their farming ability and good character — didn’t wait for the land to be made arable before moving onto it. Many of them played a direct part in clearing the land and in doing other forms of necessary manual labor. Wooden sheds were their temporary homes.

By May of 1949 the first experimental buildings were finished and three months later foundations were laid for the farmhouses.

As the land was prepared for farming, seeds were planted and by the end of August approximately 1,600 acres of grass and 540 acres of rye were sown.

THE FORMER FOREST is divided into 51 farms of 37 acres each (see diagram, next page), an area deemed self-supporting for a family and only requiring outside seasonal help. On these grain is raised and some livestock kept. There are 25 one-horse farms with 20 acres and 53 vegetable farms with nine acres each. Carpenters, the shoemaker, clergymen, professional men and others whose principal work is something besides farming have part-time farms. There are 84 of these, each consisting of 3.7 acres. Finally there are 86 quarter-acre homesteads with two-family houses on them.

In all cases the acreage is entirely within one strip of land. There is little chance that the land will eventually be broken down into smaller plots with an individual.
farmer having a few acres beside his home and a few more acres two miles away. In case of death of the farm owner the entire holdings will be inherited by one person (usually the eldest son) instead of being divided among the survivors.

The first large-size farms were occupied in December 1949 and the part-time farms were taken over by their owners in November 1950.

Amid the predominantly dark brick houses in the region the cream stucco houses with their red tile roofs look particularly bright and clean. The houses on the larger acreages are built in a "T" shape: the family rooms are in the front, the back wing serves as a barn with straw and hay stored under the roof — a type of architecture characteristic of North Holland and the adjoining countryside. The house and barn are actually separated by a kitchen where the women — who generally care for the livestock — can prepare feed for the animals.

The entire project cost DM 10,000,000 ($2,380,000) and is paying for itself. Of the total, about one-third was in the form of grants-in-aid and the rest was credit to be paid off in small yearly payments and at two and one-half percent interest. The farms will be paid for in varying long-term periods which range up to a maximum of 66 years.
Due to the urgency of the problem of finding housing and jobs for the expellees, the project was started before ECA funds were available for this purpose. However, since July of 1949 DM 40,000,000 ($9,520,000) in Marshall Plan aid has been extended to approximately 50 projects in the Federal Republic to enlarge and speed up such programs of refugee settlements in agriculture and land reclamation. The counterpart funds were used as grants-in-aid and for long-term credit at low interest rates. This new land productivity also helps to decrease the social unrest among the refugees.

This attempt to turn war-destroyed forest wasteland into productive farmland has a promising future. The soil is of the loess type, which is composed of wind-carried sediment and is termed by agriculture men among some of the most fertile in the world. At the present time wild ferns are still sprouting between the rows of fodder beets and wild flowers pop up next to the spinach, but the second year after planting is usually "almost normal" and the third season is considered "normal."

The yearly gross is about DM 1,000 per hectare ($238 an acre), compared to the usual earnings throughout Germany of DM 750 ($178.50 an acre) for the same acreage. Out of this figure approximately DM 120 ($28.56 an acre) will be needed for taxes and for payment of farm costs. The remainder goes for the living costs and small savings of the farmer's family. Average rainfall is abundant, and the chance of a drought is considered very slim.

Each settlement has an advisory director to aid the farmer in choice of crops to be planted, the amount of land to be devoted to each and the most efficient techniques of good farm management. The director provides the know-how regarding proven techniques — many of them not yet commonly used in this country — just as an agricultural extension agent does in the United States. There is also a demonstration farm in the settlement and test patches of corn and other crops can be seen on individual farms.

To prevent soil erosion and excessive loss of moisture, small trees have been planted as wind-breaks.

As the farms are small and must be intensively cultivated, there has been a great interest in raising fruit. In the first year 50,000 fruit trees were planted. As a longer period of time is required before any income can be realized from the fruit trees, a cash crop of vegetables is always planted underneath. Farmers with smaller tracts have extensive hothouses for greater and off-season yields of vegetables.

In an effort to compete with Holland produce, a cooperative cold storage plant, including marketing and sorting halls, is being constructed on the edge of the project to permit the off-season release of quality fruit and vegetables. The cooperative marketing outlet will be finished in two months and a railroad spur will join a main line to German cities.

Great emphasis is placed on cooperative enterprises, particularly in the efficient use of modern machinery instead of the usual heavy draft horses.

Some of the cows in the settlement area were among the 2,000 and their offspring which American farmers sent to Germany during the last two years through the Heifer Project Committee program of the Brethren Service Committee, an organization of US church societies.

On a recent tour 15 Allied and German correspondents and photographers, accompanied by Eugene Epstein of the Food and Agriculture Division, HICOG, and the ECA Special Mission to Western Germany; Harry Grossman of the Displaced Populations Division, HICOG; Werner Middlemann and Dr. Heinz Fiedler of the federal Ministry for Refugee Affairs and other federal and state officials visited two typical farms.

The first stop was at the 37-acre farm of Wilhelm Hebben and his sister, Helena Hebben. They live in a large worker feeds roots and tree limbs into big metal container where intense heat creates charcoal. Expellees and others at Reichswald benefit from the sale of products from plant.
the settlers saved the funds and used the money to build a Protestant chapel in the woods and a Catholic remembrance for the Twelve Apostles. An area has been cleared and set aside for a graveyard.

There are large piles of stumps and roots alongside the roads joining the farms and communities. These are gradually being hauled to a cooperative plant on the outskirts where the wood is made into charcoal and resinous by-products. Some of the cheaper charcoal is shipped to industries.

In any and every conceivable way the settlers in this pioneering area are trying to improve their welfare and thereby enable additional help to be given others in similar situations.

**DP Program Decisions Reached**

Problems connected with ending the Displaced Persons Act by Dec. 31 were ironed out during a meeting in Frankfurt of 60 representatives of US private and government agencies with the US Displaced Persons Commission.

Mutual agreement was reached on such subjects as questions of security, consular service, immigration and naturalization service and transportation requirements for the remaining 32,000 of the 311,000 DPs authorized entry.

Robert J. Corkery, European coordinator for the commission, stressed that voluntary agency representatives in the field should emphasize to DPs the importance of meeting their scheduled appointments for processing. Persons should not expect to emigrate during the last 60 days of the program.

Regarding the expellee program, Mr. Corkery said, “I am confident we have begun a cohesive program, but we must double and triple our present visa issuance to meet the quota established under the DP act as amended.”


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**Cover Photograph**

“Exercise Combine” was the largest field training exercise conducted by US Armed Forces in Germany since the end of World War II. Taking part in the eight-day maneuver in the northern part of the US Zone in early October were 160,000 men, including American, French and British troops. In the US Army photograph are members of a 4th Infantry Division tank crew preparing to cross a main bridge near Frankfurt under cover of darkness to take up position for the exercise. A pictorial feature on the maneuver will appear in the November issue of the Information Bulletin.