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CONTROVERSIAL PROBLEMS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR ECONOMY

Summary of the discussion

On the first day of the conference the discussion centered on the problems presented in the papers by Cz. Madajczyk, W. Schumann and L. Nestler, that is, on the policy practised by Nazi Germany and Japan in the occupied territories. The main point of the discussion was a classification of occupational systems suggested by Cz. Madajczyk. According to J. Freymond this interesting attempt at a comparative analysis of the economic policy adopted by Germany in the occupied territories has been made at a sufficiently advanced stage of research on the subject. Freymond admitted that as a student of politics he would undertake attempts at structuring of events and at classification but as a historian he fully realized all difficulties of presenting the reality in structural categories. After these general comments Freymond considered the question of the occurrence of the turning points in the occupational policy of Nazi Germany and whether they were the same for all Axis countries and the occupied countries. The last point was the extent to which the suggested typology reflected the actual purposeful attempts to put into practice National Socialist ideology or in which it resulted from interpretations of historians using the time perspective.

A controversial opinion of the suggested classification was expressed by W. Schumann who stated that he had not been able to find in any document a precise and clear division into six occupational systems. Neither had he been able to find a document clearly outlining a concrete occupational policy in particular countries. Nevertheless he admitted that a similar division could emerge in the case of economic policy or it could be formed in the later period as a result of the developing war situation. It may be difficult to place in this system such countries as, for example, France after 1943, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary.

According to W. Schumann historians have just started to investigate this field of research but even at this point it is not possible to accept the opinion that already before 1942 there existed some preconceptions as to the economic policy in the occupied and dependent countries. It should be also

remembered that there was a difference between theoretical discussions concerning the so-called new order in Europe and their practical realization in the course of the occupational policy. It is time to stop considering the policy of the termination and exploitation as a preconceived political system; terrorism and the termination were practised but they were stopped just because of economic reasons. The turning point in this process was the autumn of 1942 when the decisions to form the commonwealth including all occupied and dependent countries were definitely accepted. At the same time, however, Hitler was put on the defensive and in order to preserve economic predominance of the Third Reich in Europe he carried out several actions based on violence and repression. It was only at the end of the war during the meeting in Salzbrunn that Germany suggested the conception of "the common front against Bolshevism" as an attempt to preserve its own position and to leave some margin of freedom for the dependent and even some occupied countries.

The realization of the conception of the occupational system was considered by W. Długoborski. Answering J. Freymond he expressed the opinion that the occupational systems depended, especially in the second stage of the war, on two factors: political aims of the occupier and attitude of the population of the occupied territory. These matters were presented by L. Nestler in his paper. By means of their economic and social policy the Nazis tried to realize at the same time their far-reaching and immediate purposes especially since the middle of 1940 till the summer of 1942. In the last stage of the war the Germans realized almost exclusively their immediate purposes (production of military equipment, food) and they were willing to make some concessions to the occupied and dependent countries. An example of such attitude may be found in the activities of Neubacher who as a plenipotentiary for Balkan countries promoted anti-Communism and mobilized Balkan economy to satisfy the needs of the Third Reich, not without some political concessions for Greece or Albania. Comparing the occupational systems of the Axis countries it is possible to notice an analogy between Japanese and German occupational systems. Their common features were, among others, the creation of a new situation in Asia and "new order" in Europe, ruthless exploitation of the occupied territories and using ideology in order to win over the native population (anti-colonialism, anti-Europeism and anti-Americanism as Japanese slogans and anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism as German slogans). The leaders of the occupied countries who were very often respected and popular among the natives co-operated with the Japanese. Thus the notion of collaboration should not be applied to such cases.

H. E. Volkmann stated that in the occupational policy of Nazi Germany different roles were played by Western and Eastern countries and the territories of the Soviet Union had a special function to fulfil. It is also difficult to assess the so-called German European strategy (*Europastrategie*) because

it was characteristic not only for National Socialism. It can be traced already in the concept of *Mitteleuropa* and *PanEuropa* and in the period of the Third Reich it existed as the theory of *Grossraumwirtschaft*. In the victorious mood of the years 1940 - 1942 new perspectives for the realization of this strategy were perceived. In the following years, though, some doubts appeared as to the realization of the strategy in the view of a worsening military position of Germany. After the war the anti-Communist policy was used as an attempt to save the strategy. E. Volkmann pointed out that the conception of *Euro-pastrategie* should not be regarded only in terms of politics and its economic aspects should be taken into consideration.

According to E. Nestler the character of the occupational policy was determined by the role a particular occupied country was supposed to play in the hegemonial plans of the Third Reich, economic and political structure of this country and by the social and economic position of Germany. In September 1939 no occupational policy had been prepared for Poland. Its main lines were modified according to changing situations. It was similar in the cases of other occupied countries. Occupational systems were worked out in the course of occupation with only two exceptions: 1) the conception of the occupational economic policy for the Soviet Union which had been worked out already before the invasion, and 2) plans for African territories for which detailed conceptions of occupational as well as administrative systems were prepared in advance.

J. Gillingham emphasized the need for a distinction between economic planning for the post-war period, independent of political results of the war and planning for propaganda purposes. The latter often determined German occupational policy including its economic element. Such policy was sufficiently attractive for both the German businessmen and some businessmen of the occupied countries and thus it worked as an effective propaganda means. It may suggest that the occupation experience was not as tragic as it has been generally assumed. It may refer in particular to Belgium and France.

J. Gillingham agreed with W. Dlugoborski that since 1943 the operational value of this planning was insignificant.

Matters of typology were mentioned by A. Jezierski who distinguished three stages in the economic history of the Third Reich. The first covered the years 1933 - 1938 and it is possible to find in it some elements of the Keynes theory in the economic policy of Germany. The second stage lasted till the death of Minister Todt and the third coincided with the period of A. Speer's holding the post of Minister of Armaments. Referring to Schumann's paper Jezierski noticed that the origin of Speer's political conceptions may be found in the experience of Germany in the years 1916 and 1917.

K. Gawlikowski returned to the comparison between the Japanese and Nazi occupations by suggesting that the Second World War could be descri-

bed as the last colonial war. The main conceptions of occupation were a product of the colonial epoch and their aim was a seizure of foreign territories providing raw materials. The Axis countries, especially Nazi Germany and Japan, used the methods of conquest and administration similar to those already worked out by the colonial powers in Africa and Asia. Drawing a comparison between the Japanese and Nazi occupations Gawlikowski noticed several differences and pointed out, like Długoborski, that the governments of some countries occupied by Japan were connected with the occupier but at the same time they were supported by their own nations. The Japanese wanted to use colonial methods and with the help of administrative means seize raw materials of Asian countries while spreading the slogan about "bringing freedom" to them. They were defeated not only as a result of the military confrontation with the United States of America but also because they were not able to resolve the opposition between their colonial economic aims and anti-colonial political propaganda. Gawlikowski called in question the notion of occupation in reference to the Japanese system used in Asia and he wondered whether this notion was wide enough to describe such diversified systems of invasion and exploitation as those used by the Axis countries in Europe.

The matter of classification of the occupational systems was critically examined by H. Schröder. Too much attention has been given to the conceptions and plans, overlooking at the same time strong conflicts between the economy of Nazi Germany and its foreign policy.

In his answer to the remarks concerning the occupational systems Cz. Madajczyk mentioned that his two studies submitted for publication contain an exhaustive explanation of the development of the occupational systems, an illustration of concrete policy of the occupiers and an analysis of the occupational cadre and methods of administration in particular European occupied countries. Considering the influence of particular elements of administration and the concrete situation in the occupied countries on changes in the occupational systems Madajczyk concluded that both elements were equally important. It is necessary to analyze, on the one hand, the aims of Nazi administration and, on the other hand, differences in their interpretation and increasing conflicts with the occupied nations. Answering W. Schumman he emphasized that a distinction should be made between the notion of "occupational policy" (*Besatzungspolitik*) and that of "occupational system" (*Besatzungssystem*) and added that an occupational system depended on the development of occupational policy. For the so-called Germanic countries conceptions of occupation had been prepared in advance but no such plans had been made for Poland. Madajczyk accepted the idea of a relation between the military successes of Nazi Germany and its far-reaching political plans, presented by Długoborski but he also recalled that many far-reaching aims

were formulated after 1942 in the period of military defeats, for example at Zamość. In his answer to K. Gawlikowski he stated that the term "occupation" was proper from the legal point of view and he could not find any other to replace it.

The next point of the discussion was the Nazi German policy in the occupied European countries. The discussion centered on the papers presented by Cz. Luczak and M. Fritz:

Madajczyk remarked that in Poland and the Soviet Union the classical methods of exploitation such as penetration through banks or repurchase of shares were not used. In the occupied territories of the Soviet Union it was not possible because there were no elements of capitalistic economy there. The reason for using only the methods of colonial exploitation in Poland remains an open question. In some periods as, for example, in the years 1941 - 1942 the occupiers continued in these countries the policy contradictory to their own capitalistic purposes, manifested in the extermination of cheap labour, especially the Soviet and Jewish prisoners of war. The above contradiction may be confirmed by the employment policy applied to the Poles, absence of welfare rights, low wages and a tendency to turn people into slaves.

L. Nestler included the appropriations of Polish industrial works by German syndicates as a method of colonial economic exploitation. Appropriations of these works resulted in a change of the power structure and of the position of capitalists in the Third Reich. As an example Nestler quoted the activities of Leipzig commodity Company Flugel und Polter KG directed by its shareholder dr Fritz Ries. In 1941 this company took over the rubber works in Trzebinia and a joint stock company of rubber products "Gentleman" in Łódź, becoming in this way a medium-sized syndicate employing about seven thousand workers, mostly as forced labour.

Continuing the discussion of the appropriations of Polish and Jewish property by the Germans Luczak recalled that already in 1938 a special office was established in order to register the more important industrial works which were later taken over by "treuhanders". Some of the works taken over by HTO were passed over to German monopolies by 1, February 1940. The Gestapo and SS seized such works as brick-fields and building firms. The German monopolies played an important part in the economy since they controlled 88 per cent of the industrial potential. Göring's role in the appropriation of Polish works was significant since he worked out detailed suggestions concerning the works which were to be taken over by, among others, "Reichswerke Hermann Göring". Referring to the German employment policy in the occupied territories of Poland Luczak stated that ideological and racial considerations were of great importance.

W. Długoborski referred to the report of P. Matusak and stressed signifi-

cant methodological difficulties facing any historian dealing with matters of sabotage. It should be established to what extent the lowering of production was caused by sabotage or by other factors. A distinction should be made between purposeful acts of sabotage organized by the resistance movement or individual workers and the effects of inefficient work of underpaid and undernourished workers, resulting in the lowering of production. German occupational documents as well as the data provided by the underground organizations which are the main source of information about the number and results of sabotage actions should be interpreted with caution. In both cases there is a tendency to exaggerate. The occupying forces for various reasons tended to emphasize the imminent danger and the resistance movement underlined its merits in its struggle with the occupier, especially to the London government and the allies.

Madajczyk expressed the opinion that the Germans did not purposefully exaggerate the numbers of acts of sabotage. It is possible that they believed them to be so numerous. Referring to P. Kačavenda's statement Madajczyk stressed the fact that the chauvinistic attitude of German colonists in Yugoslavia could seriously endanger the German minority and their collaboration with Nazi Germany frustrated their achievements in this area. The role and aims of volksdeutsches from the Balkan countries in the German war economy were mentioned by Długoborski. Numerous sources suggest that besides functioning as informers they performed economic tasks required by the Third Reich. They also made way for an extension and consolidation of German property in this area by, among others, the seizure of Jewish businesses.

On the third day of the conference the discussion dealt with the German economic policy in Western Europe, Scandinavia and the occupied Bohemia, presented in the papers by J. Gillingham, H. E. Volkmann, A. Grobelný and E. Voraček. The participants showed great interest in the problem of economic motivation of aggression and in the conception and realization of the so-called Grossraumwirtschaft. Referring to this matter H. E. Volkmann argued with Schumann's position and stated that up to 1930 the National Socialists had no concrete economic suggestions. They discussed the idea of economic programmes based on such outdated notions as that of "Paneuropa" and tried to justify them in political terms. Motivated by racial and political considerations in the years 1931 - 1932 they considered the annexation of the territories inhabited by the so-called Germanic nations. Already before 1933 concrete economic motivations for future actions had been formulated, especially the conception of a closer examination and exploitation of the Western agrarian territories from France to Holland. The invasion of the Benelux and Scandinavian countries was determined not only by the previously emphasized strategic and military but also economic considerations. Cz. Madajczyk referred to J. Gillingham's paper by drawing attention to his accurate

formulation of the problem of collaboration of Belgian capitalists and the exact picture of the administrative system employed by the occupying power in this area. However, not enough attention has been given to the differences of opinion among the authorities of the Third Reich as to the question of the organization and controlling of the Belgian economy. The exploitative economic policy used by the occupiers in Belgium should be regarded in a wider European context which would help to demonstrate that, in comparison with Eastern and Middle European countries, the economic position of Belgium was relatively good. Gillingham accepted, on the whole, the above suggestions.

In the course of the discussion the problem of the deportation of forced labour (K. Piesowicz: for example—from Poland) was also raised. A. Grobelný noted that as far as Bohemia was concerned in the years 1939 - 1940 because of unemployment the effects of deportations were not felt but after 1941 they increased considerably, especially affecting professionals and next college and older secondary school pupils. Answering Długoborski's question Grobelný noticed that there was no co-operation between Bohemian Nazis recruited from the lowest social ranks and the occupying regime. Already before the war the Nazis formed a minority group in the Protectorate and they were distrusted by all social groups in Bohemia. That is why they eventually found themselves in double isolation.

At the end of the discussion E. Voraček considered the influence of the changing political situation on the Bohemian bourgeois connected with the military industrial complex. In the twenties the Bohemian bourgeois produced a lot of military equipment for Romania and Yugoslavia. In the early thirties a lot of capital was transferred to Yugoslavia where in some factories fifty per cent of shares were owned by such firms as "Skoda" and a factory of military equipment in Brno. Orders of the Bohemian government for tanks and guns were rejected by representatives of military syndicates because of controversies over prices and an opening of new perspectives for exporting arms to China. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia seventy per cent of the arms production were sent to Germany. In a short time the German monopolies seized the control of armaments industry and thus eliminated the influence of the Bohemian bourgeois on the country's economy.

Voraček accepted the view of other speakers (W. Długoborski, H. E. Volkmann) and the Czechoslovakian historians (R. Olsevski, Z. Slarek) who emphasized the transitional role played by Czechoslovakia, and especially by the Protectorate, in the German plans for an increasing infiltration and final overtaking of the Balkan countries.

