



Labour Redistribution in Germany

The Work of the Employment Service

An article by Dr. Beisiegel, published in the Reichsarbeitsblatt under the title "The Tasks and Achievements of the Employment Service", includes the following description of the work of the German Employment Service in redistributing the country's labour resources during the war.¹

The author first calls attention to two important steps which had been taken to facilitate the work of the Employment Service in labour redistribution before the actual outbreak of war: first, it had been given the power to requisition labour; and second, extensive controls had been placed over engagements and dismissals. He shows, however, that these steps alone would not have been sufficient to permit the Employment Service to meet the labour requirements of expanding war industries unless the Service had also had at its disposal, at any given moment, a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the occupational qualifications and technical skills of the active labour force of the country. This was made possible by the introduction of the work book by an Act of 26 February 1935.

By the autumn of 1936 the employment offices had already issued work books for some 22 million manual workers and salaried employees. The extension in April 1939 of the obligation to possess a work book to virtually all gainfully employed persons involved the preparation of some 14 million additional work books, of which some 8.5 million had been given out by 30 June 1941. In every month of the first half-year of 1941, for instance, some 200,000 fresh work books were drawn up, despite the war and despite the extremely heavy burden that the war involves for the staff of the employment offices.

There is an enormous quantity of detailed work to be performed in this connection. It must be borne in mind that, for every work book prepared, an index card—and for certain specific purposes duplicate cards, substitute cards, and supplementary cards—is also made out, reproducing the essential contents of the book and constituting the everyday tool employed by the placing official. In order that full value may be derived from the work books and the card index, both must be constantly kept up-to-date, and every important change in the nature of the occupation and activities of the individual worker must be entered up.

¹ Dr. BEISIEGEL: "Aufgaben und Leistungen der Arbeitseinsatzverwaltung", in *Reichsarbeitsblatt*, 5 Oct. 1941, Part V, pp. 488-492.

A description is then given of the use which the Employment Service has made of the powers and techniques at its disposal and of the way in which it has carried out the increasingly heavy responsibilities imposed upon it as a result of the expanding labour demands of war industry.

In order to ensure a smooth transition from a peace to a war economy, the employment offices ascertained the labour requirements of all undertakings of military importance. Wherever workers were liable to be called up for military service, the card index built up on the basis of the work book made sure that substitutes could be found; and similarly it ensured that the additional workers could be found for undertakings whose demand for labour would expand as soon as a state of war came into effect. Hundreds of thousands of workers were made available by this means. As a matter of fact, the Employment Service has tried not to resort to requisitioning and the application of the legal restrictions on change of employment except as a last resource. Although some 2.3 million labour requisitioning orders have been issued in individual cases from 1938 to the present day, the vast majority of these orders have lapsed. At mid-July 1941, for instance, only 437,000 men and 174,000 women were at work under such orders, that is, only 3 per cent. of male manual workers and salaried employees and 1.7 per cent. of females. At present some 214,000 requisitioned workers are receiving subsistence allowances or special maintenance allowances, whilst long-service allowances are being paid to some 52,000 manual workers and salaried employees. Payment of these allowances is made along with other special supplementary allowances (compensation for wages lost owing to air-raid alarms or in case of air-raid damage to the workplace, relief payments to short-time workers, bad-weather allowances, etc.) by the services of the employment office that are responsible for the administration of unemployment relief in general; for the number of assisted unemployed (the majority of whom are not fully employable or not fully transferable) amounts at the present day in Greater Germany to no more than 10,000, and the number of short-time workers in receipt of relief is no greater. During the last ten months alone the employment offices have given permission for the engagement of workers in some 900,000 cases. The extent of the movement of man-power that is even to-day taking place may be estimated from the fact that the number of placings and transfers carried out by the employment offices (including the transfers from district to district and over the whole territory of the Reich that have had to be operated for the purposes of ensuring an adequate labour supply for the performance of important war work) has in recent years always fluctuated round 9.6 million. In the first half of 1941 alone some 5,178 million placings were effected through the medium of the employment offices; this figure includes 3,908 million placings in ordinary employment, 273,000 requisitionings, 508,000 permits for the engagement of workers, and 509,000 allocations of prisoners of war.

Those figures conceal an enormous volume of work which

passes almost unperceived by the public. The strained character of the employment situation can be seen still more clearly than from the above figures if the number of applications for workers always to be found on the books of the employment offices is considered. Since the beginning of the present year (1941) more than 1.5 million vacancies have been reported at the end of each month. At the end of August the employment offices had before them applications for more than 1.7 million workers. As has already been mentioned, some 800,000 placings are effected every month by the employment offices.

In wartime the problem of labour supply in the armaments industry and other branches of military importance (the chemical industry, building, mining, transport, agriculture) naturally assumes primary importance.

In the iron and metal working industry, in particular, the Employment Service was faced on the outbreak of war with the task of operating a transfer of man-power on an enormous scale from less essential work in the consumers' goods industries to undertakings engaged in essential work. Thanks to the preparatory work that had been carried out it was possible within a few weeks, on the basis of the card index built up from the work books, to transfer by a stroke of the pen hundreds of thousands of workers to the armaments industry.

Since then the labour supply in the various undertakings and branches of economic activity has continued to be closely watched, and every opportunity has been seized of mobilising reserves for work of military importance. The constantly increasing concern of the Employment Service with the practical details of business and economic life was expressed in terms of administrative organisation back in 1939, when review boards of the Employment Service were set up to deal with questions of labour supply in the iron and metal working industries. Their duties included, among other things, considering applications for labour, making recommendations with a view to economising man-power, setting free labour engaged in non-essential work, substituting semi-skilled workers for skilled workers, encouraging special training for that purpose, and substituting women for men. Their work was based on the idea of securing the most rational possible allocation of labour, having reference to the requirements of the war, in all undertakings. The experience of the boards was placed at the disposal of the employment offices, and ideas and methods whose value had been proved were adopted for the purposes of the offices' daily work.

The constantly growing shortage of skilled workers due to the expansion of the armaments industry was effectively counteracted by the promotion of special measures for vocational training. As a result, more than 300,000 workers have been trained since March 1940 to perform skilled work. This extensive campaign will considerably facilitate the process, already initiated, of transferring skilled workers from one undertaking to another (involving the reduction of the numbers of skilled workers employed in factories having more than their fair share of such workers) which is to make it possible to carry out further supplementary armament work.

Making workers brought back from military service available for armament purposes for short periods also assumed special importance. The action taken in numerous individual cases in this respect resulted in supplying valuable assistance for armament work of the greatest importance.

Moreover, at the beginning of the war tasks arising out of the supply of labour for armaments work were still very unevenly distributed among the various district employment offices; and during the whole of the period under review the efforts to secure an even distribution of such tasks were continued with a view to concentration throughout the country on the more urgent work. The manning of undertakings which otherwise could not have secured workers was thus furthered in the face of many obstacles.

However, alongside all these measures for mobilising labour and bringing about the most efficient distribution of the whole labour supply for war purposes, certain other factors were assuming increasing importance which belonged to the sphere of the planning of armament work and economic activities in general. In the questions of priorities, of the rationing of raw materials, of the planning of production, of the control, the concentration and dispersal, and the even spreading (clearing system) of contracts, of the placing of contracts abroad, and of the location of new undertakings, the Employment Service frequently had to intervene with a view to relieving the situation in the interest of the armaments industry also in this indirect manner.

The work of the Employment Service in mobilising women, foreigners, and prisoners of war is briefly reviewed and the writer then turns to the special position of building and public works.

The local offices of the Employment Service have intervened with decisive effect in respect of one important aspect of the utilisation of building materials. Building contractors are under an obligation to report all plans for building or constructional operations of a private or public character to the locally competent employment office before operations are begun. At the same time as this obligation, a procedure was introduced by which the building control authorities may not issue building permits until the competent employment office has stated that there is no objection to the plans from the point of view of the available man-power and raw materials. By these means the carrying out of all non-essential building operations was prevented and the man-power and productive capacity of the building industry were kept available for the execution of work of real military importance. The importance of the control so entrusted to the employment offices became particularly evident when, shortly before the outbreak of war, the General Commissioner for the Control of the Building Industry prohibited all new building operations for buildings not of military importance, in order to provide for undertakings essential to defence. The immediate execution of this order was guaranteed by the intervention of the employment offices. But even in respect of plans for building operations of military importance, the significance should be appreciated of the fact that, where a considerable number of such plans are drawn up for execution in a single district

in such a way that the man-power for the execution of all of them, or at any rate of all of them at once, cannot be guaranteed, the employment office can and must play a part in timing their initiation, seeing that it does not declare that there is no objection to the execution of a building plan until the responsible officer for the district has agreed to the plan and it is possible to supply the necessary workers. But by this means the employment offices do not merely prevent any excessive expansion of building activities—they also prevent a faulty distribution and an unsatisfactory or excessive utilisation of raw materials in short supply, and encourage the adoption of building processes that help to economise such materials. Acting as a rationing authority for the rationing of building materials, they make controlled materials (iron and steel, deal planks, cement, materials for driving building machinery and transporting building materials) available for the construction of dwelling houses and the execution of land settlement schemes, the construction of plant for manufacturing and industrial undertakings and for building and civil engineering operations undertaken by the public authorities, in so far as some other rationing authority is not competent under the existing regulations. In addition to their own quotas, the employment offices have also some special quotas at their disposal, and have been designated as information offices for all rationing questions in the building industry.

In past years the promotion of emergency relief works played a considerable part among the activities of what was then the Federal Institution for Employment Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance. In view of the economic and employment situation, the importance of such work to-day is small; yet even now the Minister of Labour is allocating special funds to this purpose within the framework of the constructive unemployment relief policy. In the vast majority of cases, however, the object is to assist economic reconstruction in the new eastern areas and particularly in Danzig-West Prussia, the Warthe District, and Upper Silesia. The allocation of such funds in particular cases is of course dependent upon the extent to which man-power and materials are available at the present time for carrying out any reconstruction works that, though deserving of encouragement, are not of decisive importance for the prosecution of the war.

Preoccupation with the efficient allocation of man-power in the present circumstances does not obliterate the obligation, even during the war, to bear in mind work which to some extent can only bear fruit in the future. On the one hand, the decline in the birth rate, which by 1947 will be responsible for a total decline of some 1.5 million in the number of pupils leaving school, and, on the other, the constantly increasing demand of industry for young workers as the potential man-power of the future, caused the Employment Service in 1938 to establish guiding principles with a view to directing the flow of young workers to particular occupations. In the autumn of 1940 a first youth-power plan was drawn up with the object of ensuring that the distribution of available young male workers would be as just as possible and in harmony with the necessities of national policy and the probable

developments of the future. Generally speaking, this 1940 plan has proved practicable. At the time of writing a plan for the allocation of young workers is being drawn up for 1942, and operation in the coming year will be based upon it.

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It is of course impossible within the limits of a single article to discuss in detail the tasks and achievements of the Employment Service. The author has been obliged to limit his efforts to drawing attention to points of essential importance. The existence of a rationally constituted service, with full power to act and with an undivided leadership, was an essential condition for the carrying out of gigantic tasks, of primordial importance from the point of view of national policy. The development of the organisation of the Employment Service from the jointly operated employment offices of the local authorities and their associations, through the stage of State offices and the Federal Institution, operating as a public corporation, to the present special service for the Reich, with its own national authorities at the intermediate and subordinate levels, has not been an accidental process. In proportion as the sphere of activities grew in extent and importance, transcending local requirements, a realisation also grew of the necessity of building up the Service in accordance with a scheme that would cover the whole country, that would ensure independence of local interests, and that would be rationally constructed from the point of view of man-power and economic requirements.

When the Federal Institution for Employment Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance was founded in 1928, the previously existing 22 State employment offices and 885 local employment exchanges (varying greatly in size and importance) were regrouped into 13 areas, each with a State employment office, and 361 areas, each with a local employment office. By a process of amalgamation the number of local employment offices in the former German Reich has been further reduced since that date to 331, while the number of State employment offices has been increased by 3. Further modifications have taken place since 1938 as a result of the incorporation of new territories in the Reich. Taking into account the offices in the Districts of the Ostmark (former Austria), the Sudeten Province, the former Polish territories and the territory of the former Free State of Danzig, the Government-General of Poland, the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia, the Districts of Eupen and Malmédy, South Carinthia, Carniola and Southern Styria, and, lastly, in the territories of Luxemburg, Alsace and Lorraine, which are still governed by civil administrative commissioners, there are at the present day a total of 23 State employment offices and 468 local employment offices, with some 1300 branches.

Moreover, local offices of the Employment Service have already been set up or are being set up also in the recently occupied former Russian territories in the east, and especially in the District of the Federal Commissioner for the Eastern territories (former Baltic countries), the District of Bialystok, Galicia, and the Ukraine.

The administrative organisation in these territories has not yet been completed.

The staff of the Employment Service has grown on a scale corresponding to the development of the organisation as a whole. The former Federal Institution began its existence with a total staff of some 16,000 persons. This figure first of all increased, as a result of the extraordinary spread of unemployment down to the Revolution, to about 24,000. After a temporary slight decline, the total number of the staff went on increasing in subsequent years. This was due partly to the considerable extension and intensification of the Service's general activities in connection with the carrying-out of the Four-Year Plan and the requirements of the rearmament and military economy, and partly to the setting-up of new branches in the territories incorporated in the Reich. At the present time, the Employment Service employs some 52,000 persons (not including manual workers and apprentices). About one quarter of the total number (approximately 13,000) are employed in the areas which have been incorporated in the Reich since 1938. Nearly 7,000 individuals are now on military service, so that at the present moment only 45,000 persons are in fact at the disposal of the various offices and branches.
