

# The american military government in germany during world

[Countries](#), [Germany](#)



The World War II was a significant chapter in the history of Germany. It was a global military conflict that took place between 1939 and 1945. It brought considerable changes in the geographical, social and economic aspects of the country. Germany's main allies in the war were Japan and Italy, while the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union were on the opposite side. The World War II had a devastating impact on Japan, one of Germany's main allies. The outcome of the war resulted in the division of Germany into four military occupation zones.

“ France was given the charge of southwest, while the British forces controlled the northeast. The Soviet forces assumed the control of the east and a US military government was established in the south” . The main objective of the allied forces was to end the Nazism in Germany and put the country on the way to democracy. Although four military occupation zones were created after the end of World War II, the US military government in Germany had begun its work in 1944. Background of the US Military Government in Germany The plan to establish a military government in Germany began much earlier.

“ Following the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the officials of the Department of State in the United States, began their assessment on the post-war initiatives. They believed that the United States would have a decisive influence on the peace settlement and post-war construction activities” . It was very clear from the beginning that the US Army had to face difficult tasks of governing war-ravaged Germany. The leaders and troops of the United States were called upon to deal with a series of

challenges in political, social, economical and financial affairs besides maintaining law and order in the country.

“ The State Department set up its first research unit for the preparation of post-war foreign policy. The unit was known as the Division of Special Research. Economist Leo Pasvolsky led the research unit” . When the United States entered the war in 1941, the unit began developing a comprehensive planning and policy development strategy. The strategy addressed the key problems to be experienced by the military government in Germany and Japan. Foundation of the Military Government

The military government established in Germany during World War II performed elementary functions such as relieving the tactical troops of concerns and carrying out customary and legal obligations of a military occupation. It formulated a national policy in order to serve a range of political, social and economic purposes. The primary objective of the military government was to ensure stability in the war-torn Germany. It also had the aim of undertaking necessary measures for the benefit of people.

“ The occupation of Germany by the US military forces began on September 15, 1944, when a small town called Roetgen on the German-Belgian border was detached by Detachment D8B1” . D8B1 was a civil affairs detachment. It was trained to work in liberated territories. “ The military detachments finally entered Germany on September 28, 1944 with Detachment I4G2 taking control of Monschau near Roetgen. Aachen, the western province in Germany was captured within a few weeks and Detachment F1G2 was

installed there” . F1G2 was designed to administer cities and territories around them.

The military government detachments were organized in England and in the United States. The “ E” detachments were the largest ones. “ Each “ E” detachment had twenty-six officers and thirty-five enlisted men. Those detachments were designed to take over the government of all German states. They were also assigned the supervision of other detachments “ F” and “ I” that were installed within them” . The smallest detachments were the “ H” and “ I” detachments. “ H detachments had five officers and ten enlisted men, while the “ I” detachments had four officers and six enlisted men” .

The small detachments had been assigned the control of rural districts and small municipalities. Although only a small part of Germany could be brought under control of the US military forces, the occupation laid the foundation of the military government in Germany. Officers of the US Military Government The US military government in Germany was a result of effective planning and training for years. “ The training of the military government officers and enlisted men began at the Military Government School, Charlottesville, Virginia in 1942.

The military government officers who were sent to Germany were the product of service schools and they were more efficient than other army personnel in the United States” . The average age of the officers, who joined the military government was forty years. They comprised of both in-service officers and civilians. Most officers had long experience in handling civilian

work. They had expertise in law, teaching, engineering, police or social work. They were trained and well-prepared to run the military government in Germany. Advancement of the US Military Government in Germany

When the first detachment moved into Germany in 1944, many people had doubt on the success of the mission. A lot of groundwork was done to convince people about the real objective of the mission. “ The Moscow Foreign Ministers conference held in October 1943 had decided that the entire German territory would be occupied and put under the control of the military government. The European Advisory Commission (EAC) was created for determining the boundaries of the zones and devising control machinery for the proper administration” . When the military detachments entered Germany, they did not have any approved guidance or policy.

After entering the German territory, they were given instructions from the US government. The military government detachments had many things to do in the field. “ The military government appointed mayors and administrators. Registration of people was done on a priority basis. To restore law and order in the cities, curfews had to be enforced” . After the occupation of the territory, the military government experienced another problem of providing food and ration to the affected people. Food supplies and rationing systems were organized. Weapons and other prohibited articles were seized by the military government.

The military government felt the need for adequate public health and safety for the people and Germany and made necessary arrangements on that regard. The war had devastated building and other public utilities. The

military government tried its best to restore those utilities and operate them. The public utilities included schools, medical units and public transport system. The military government realized that it had to maintain a balance between the Nazis and common German people. While it had to deal with the Nazis, militarists and racists with an iron hand, it also had to restore faith among people about its mission and objectives.

The World War II brought the German economy to a standstill. The Nazis disappeared with the retreating German troops. However, they left a series of problems to be handled by the military government. The US military government in Germany took tough measures against Nazis and Nazi sympathizers. At the same time, it focused on construction and rehabilitation measures. " Aachen was a strategic point for the US military forces. That served as the gateway to the occupation of whole German territory. When the Battle of the Bulge took place with German Ardennes offensive, the civilians became terror-stricken" .

The military government officials properly maintained the concentration camps and ensured that the civilians were least affected by the horror of the war. The US military government in Germany even recruited some prisoners of war as policemen. Their job was to restore law and order and ensure safety of people and their properties. Throughout the battle, the US troops and supplies passed through the occupied areas without any hindrance. The military government had organized the occupation. It also demonstrated tactical moves in critical situation.

“ By April 1945, the US Sixth and Twelfth Army groups held the entire assigned US zone in the German territory. They also captured additional areas in German territory. It was the peak time for the military government to spearhead its detachments. The “ H” and “ I” detachments advanced with the front line troops by removing Nazi officials. Nazi officials were replaced by non-Nazis. “ E”, “ F” and “ G” detachments established themselves in the occupied cities” . “ By the end of March 1945, at least 150 detachments were deployed in Germany. That was almost two-thirds of the military government strength” .

In April, the military government exhausted its allotments of trained detachments. It resorted to organizing provisional detachments using anti-aircraft artillery, field artillery and signal personnel. After crossing the Rhine River, the military government undertook another responsibility of rehabilitating the displaced persons. There were over five million liberated prisoners of war. They belonged to France, Belgium, Holland, Russia, Poland and Yugoslavia and were detained by the Nazi forces of Germany. “ The displaced people were to be taken care of by the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration).

The UNRRA did not have adequate manpower or the resources to carry out the responsibility efficiently. Hence, the military government took the charge of the displaced people” . Those people were victims of Nazi tyranny and German aggression. They were provided all the basic amenities such as food, clothes and houses by the military government. Their safety and security was the main concern of the military government. “ The displaced people

from Western Europe were sent home. However, the Russians and the Poles were not received by their respective governments.

Thus, they became long-term guests of the military government” . The Governance of the US Military Government The American military government in Germany was a result of the America foreign policy. The US government did not want an administration failure in Germany that would complicate its position on the global arena. The US government knew that its military government in Germany was sitting over hunger, chaos and confusion. It also did not want to manage an expensive overseas operation. However, it was well-aware of its responsibilities and the strategic importance of installing the military government in Germany.

The US government provided financial and material assistance to the military occupation forces. It also provided relief and rehabilitation supplies from Germany to countries that were devastated by Nazi aggression. The US military government in Germany was provided a free hand to undertake relief and rehabilitation measures. Germany was used by the US military government as a main center to pass relief materials to the war-affected countries. The Handbook Implementation The German Country Unit founded by the United States had the writing of a military government handbook for Germany.

It was believed that the handbook was the only document for the working military government officers. “ The handbook was comprehensive and incorporated all guidelines required for good governance. The German Country Unit worked on the handbook. The final draft was distributed within



SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) and to civil agencies in Washington and London” . The handbook was different from the standard policy and procedures. It dealt with all the military government problems anticipated before the German occupation.

The main objective of the handbook was to save the work-load of the military government officials and protect them from stressful procedures and policies in German conditions. “ The first section of the handbook provided descriptions of the probable conditions in Germany and working procedures of the military government. The second section was the heart of the handbook. It contained chapters on the twelve primary civil affairs and military government functions. The third section contained basic information on the Supreme Commander’s proclamation, ordinances and laws” .

“ The proclamation was addressed to the people of Germany in the name of General Eisenhower as Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces. It declared the Supreme Commander's authority on the legislative, judicial and executive power within the occupied German territory” . The proclamation also suspended German courts and educational institutions. It required all officials and public employees not to relinquish their posts until further notice. The first three ordinances made under the Handbook were very controversial. “ The first ordinance defined crimes against the Allied Forces punishable by death.

There were nineteen crimes that came under the list. The second ordinance established military government courts in Germany under the supervision of the US officials. The third ordinance made English the official language of

military government” . “ The laws were divided into two classes. One set of laws were necessary to establish and maintain military government control. Another set of law was to deal with National Socialism. The fundamental Nazi laws and their subsidiary decrees were abrogated” . Any interpretation of German law in accordance with Nazi doctrine was prohibited.

There were other laws that abolished the National Socialist Party and the use of its symbols. Functioning of the US Military Government According to the war veterans, the US military government in Germany was better than the British and French military administrations. When the military government was planned to be established in Germany, its main objective was to convert enemies into friends. However, at a later stage, the focus was shifted to obtain co-operation of people, minimize fear and suspicion among them and change the attitude of ordinary Germans towards the US and its allies.

“ In August 1944, the Civil Affairs Division proposed a post-surrender directive, which had the goal of maintaining a firm and humane administration. The directive provided specific guidelines to the government on key issues. Those key issues included destroying Nazism and Fascism, preserving law and order and restoring normalcy among people” . The economic policy of the military government focused on preventing the inflation rate from growing up further. The war had a negative impact on the country's economy and it was heading for a financial crisis.

The Nazis cared a little about the economic stability in the country. They always pursued their own agenda and prosecuted people who did not abide by the rules defined by them. Price control was another important task to be

handled by the military government in Germany. The military government focused on controlling prices, reducing unemployment and providing emergency relief and housing facilities to people. The war generated a large scale of unemployment in the country as many offices, administrative bodies, basic utilities, public and private properties and business establishments were either closed or destroyed.

Providing employment to people was one of the difficult tasks performed by the military government. It did its level best to include Germans in the construction, rehabilitation and other administration work. Key US Policies “ The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) 1067 was an approved US policy for the post-war Germany. It was a comprehensive document that focused on three important issues. Those were denazification, demilitarization and decentralization” . Some of the top officials in the US and in Germany had reservation on the implementation of JCS 1067.

According to them, the policy did not have a clear idea of the conditions in Germany asked for a few changes that would make it flexible. Germany had political hegemony in Europe because of its military and financial capabilities. However, the war completely reversed its position on the global forum. Throughout the war, people in Germany lived under fear and horror. The military government was assigned a nearly impossible task of organizing the people of Germany and motivating them to join the mainstream without fear and suspicion.

“ In 1942, President Roosevelt maintained that governing civilians was a civilian task and it was endorsed y his successor, President Harry S Truman.

In 1945, Truman declared that the military should not have governmental responsibilities” . He believed that the military must perform only military operations. Despite all the arguments and debates, the military government stayed in Germany for a long time. Detachments were distributed across all of the US zones and major parts of other zones of the Allied Force. “ The governments of the US, Britain and France negotiated for the establishment of quadripartite control.

However, the Russians did not agree to the proposal and made it clear that they would not enter into any agreement unless they had full possession of their assigned zone” . In the absence of a consensus, JCS 1067 remained an exclusive US policy. Problems Faced by the Military Government The establishment of the US military government in Germany was intended to serve the real purpose of people. However, the military government had to face several problems to implement its key policies. While expanding its base through the German territory, the military government had observed large stretches of unplowed and unplanted fields.

At the same time, it was estimated that there might not be enough food stocks in Germany to maintain the people for a long period. “ As the agriculture of the country had been destroyed to a large extent, the military government imported thousands of tons of seeds. It also released Wehrmacht horses for farm work. The military government also set up farm machinery to repair shops” . Priority was given to plantation, as food production was very essential for the war-ravaged nation. However, the

seeds could not be sown in time because of the continued warfare and the yield was likely to be reduced.

At least 60 to 70 percent of the SHAEF-occupied territory was not agriculturally self-sufficient. With the limited food production, it was not possible to sustain the German population for a long time. The military government was determined to prevent a serious problem like starvation. It provided small quantity of food materials to people so that enough food could be stored for their future use. " In June 1945, the SHAEF imported 650,000 tons of wheat for Germany. Besides food, the possibility of a firewood shortage also became a concern for the military government.

In July 1945, the military government urged the Germans to cut and store firewood for the coming winter" . There were several basic problems faced by German people in the wake of the World War II and foreign occupation. The US military government in Germany took effective measures to address all the problems. The Military Government laws excluded Nazi party members from both private and public employment. As a result, the military government offices were overwhelmed with loads of work. The military government asked the business establishments to purify themselves. That made the task of the military government much difficult.

" Many business owners and managers changed their job titles and made deals to hide their real identity from the military government. When the law took effect, military government property offices became trustees for thousands of establishments" . " During the process of denazification, the Germans were given a crash course in democracy. Orders were given to the

German state governments to write election codes. The military district commands were asked to prepare for election to be held in future. Investigations were carried out to identify the potential candidates in future elections and their antecedents” .

The voters had to be registered after proper examination as the elimination of Nazis and other ineligible people was very crucial from the military government's point of view. Military Government Courts “ Military government courts were established in Germany in September 1944. They had a significant impact on the democratization of the German people. The military government courts addressed key issues such as civil rights, privileges and immunities” . An independent judiciary was available to dispense impartial justice according to law. The US military occupation courts had a long experience in dealing with major occupations.

Hence, they did not face major hurdles in Germany. Their main objective was to maintain law and order and protect the interests of the occupying force. Major changes were implemented during the World War II planning for Germany. The German judiciary was reduced to an institution of corrupt practice because of the policies of the Nazi regime and disturbances during the five years of war. It was no longer a trusted institution for the people in Germany. The US military government acknowledged the need for the reconstruction of a denazified German judicial system based on democratic principles.

A more elaborate system of military courts was established. Those courts had the goal of bringing substantial changes in the judicial functioning besides

performing the traditional functions. “ The judicial procedures followed in the military government courts were a combination of the US Army court martial, the German legal system and the Anglo-American system” . The entire judicial process witnessed complete innovative ideas. In the beginning, the courts did not have enough lawyers and had to be manned by officers who were not legally trained. Later it was made mandatory for all the intermediate and general courts to have at least one lawyer.

“ The ordinance promulgated by the US military government provided certain fundamental rights to all persons appearing before these courts. Details of those rights were printed on the reverse side of every court summon” . All the accused were given a fair chance to be present at their trial to examine or cross-examine the witnesses. “ Between 1944 and 1945, 343 military government courts had tried more than 15 thousand cases in the US zone” . The US military government courts helped the military government to win the trust of the German people. The promulgation of ordinances failed to delight the average German.

However, the court procedures provided them the opportunity to test their fundamental rights and judge themselves whether those rights provided them real protection or not. Roadmap for the Future The military government considered denazification and democratization of Germany as its ultimate goal. It prepared its officers and enlisted men to stay longer in Germany even after the end of war. It feared an uprising against the occupation. The military government asked its detachments to warn all

German officials that they and their people would be responsible for any revolt against the United States forces.

The military government knew that it would be difficult to suppress any future rebellion launched by hungry and displaced people. It made adequate arrangements to prevent starvation and provide necessary help to people in the bitter winter cold. " The State Department made specific policies in Germany and the military government administered that policy. The American military government moved quickly to establish the agencies as per the Potsdam agreement. The American military government created German central administrations headed by German state secretaries.

The proposal was first made in the Allied Control Council (ACC) and was implemented later. The secretaries performed functions under the general directives of the ACC" . The US Military government began recruited German personnel for the central agencies. There were several functioning areas for the Agencies. They included finance, transport, communications, international trade and agriculture. Identifying efficient German personnel was not an easy task as the military government was determined to remove Nazis from the system. " A ministerial collection center in Kassel was established.

At the collection center, personnel, records and documents related to the central agencies were assembled" . The military government desired to reduce its day-by-day supervision of German affairs by establishing central German administrations. It prepared for the transition from military to civilian control. " Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lucius D. Clay planned



to transform the military government to a civilian organization by July 1, 1946. The United States Forces European Theater (USFET) document outlined a plan for administrative reorganization and prepare for the ultimate transfer of military government to the US civilian agencies” .

Conclusion There is no doubt that the World War II brought significant changes in the social and political structure of Germany. There was a desperate attempt made by the Allied Forces to completely eliminate Nazism from Germany. The autocratic Nazi regime forced the world into a deadly and expensive war. Military governments by occupation forces usually fail to win the trust of the common people. However, situation in Germany was completely different. The US military government in Germany did an excellent job in maintaining law and order and providing food, relief materials and shelter to the affected and displaced people.

While they severely punished the Nazis and their sympathizers, they provided every possible help to the civilians who wanted to see their country on the right track. Germany's democratic development was greatly influenced by the American military government during the World War II.

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