

Notes 117N, Copy 2

Brig. Gen. F. J. McSherry

Pentagon

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Interview with Brig Gen F J McSherry (ret) at Pentagon Bldg, 12 Feb 48 by F C Pogue.

1. Personal background. Regular Army in 1917. Became a member of G-4 in the War Dept in 1937. Held the transportation desk for CCC. In the fall of 1938 (October, he believes) talked to Gen Marshall, Louis Johnson, and NYA people on a program for setting up a program to train 100,000 mechanics. Later put on a job of finding army posts which could be turned over for air plane factories. 12 shadow factories were to be set up. Found 15 sites which were used later. This marked his start in civil affairs.

Helped go before Congress to get money for training mechanics. Collected pamphlets from various army units--Hollabird, Aberdeen, Chanute Field, etc. Studied vocational education programs; sold on what they were doing. Found his job was to get vocational education know how tied up with NYA money. Lots of trouble between Labor, Army, Navy, NYA, Eventually an interdepartmental committee was set up on CCC training. McSherry was executive director. In this job helped to make a survey of training schools in US which could be US to train mechanics.

In Sept 38 Fed Security Agency established (CCC, Office of ED, NYA all included). McSherry wanted to go back do G-4. Johnson said no. I became liaison between Army and FSA. Predicted need of 500,000 mechanics.

May 40 Hopkins called me. Interested in big tng program for mechanics. Wanted me to be the Will Hays of the organization. Talked of a million boys and girls to be trained that summer. I asked are we going to change the personnel which will handle. He said "I don't know". I said I don't want to be in on it. I never did prepare the plan. Later Hopkins asked me to sell Owen Young on accepting the job of heading up a training program. Talked to Young at Mayflower. He agreed to do it if it was for the army, but not if it was for the New Deal. We had a meeting to talk about money. Studebaker asked for 1 million dollars; I told him to ask for \$50 million. I told them we could train 750,000 mechanics. Aubrey Williams said no. They weren't clear that we were at war. We asked for \$15 million. Later got \$18 million more. I appeared before Congressional Committee. A N. C. congressman asked how about money for a little school in my district. I said no. Later, he said "That's all right for the Committee, but as practical men how do I get some money. I said you can re-appropriate the \$8 million not spent for our program last year, and you can spend it as you like." He stuck it in and provided that they should give some money for training the boys how to repair farm machinery.

Hillman next asked me to be on his staff. (Hillman a real American. Not an administrator, but a hard worker). He worked on a program for training lens grinders, and similar technicians in factories.

March 1941--McNutt told he would coordinate manpower. I was appointed director of defense training. Wrote my own draft. McNutt thought it a little strong, but agreed. Had a big conference at Chicago of various groups--voc ed, Off of Ed, NYA. All up in the air. Had to go to each gp separately. Mentions good work of Woods of Ky.

In Dec 41 became disturbed over labor supply. I thought we would need 10 million extra workers. We worked out charts of location of labor supply. They were putting plants where there

was no labor. Nelson finally agreed that he wouldn't let contracts where we had no place for labor. About this time I became deputy director of the war part of OPM on labor supply and tng.

When McNutt became head of War Manpower Commission, I told him he would ruin himself. Labor opposed mil man at first. Hillman supported me. Finally put Altmeyer in as exec director, but he was busy at Soc Sec and I was to run the show. McNutt never said a word to me until he relieved me in Dec 42.

Then said it as something bigger than either of us. OK with me. I had been promised command of 4th Brigade (I was a Coast Arty officer). Actually asked to be asst div cmdr in one of Patton's divisions, but they said they needed me elsewhere. These jobs threw me out of the line of promotion.

Manpower Board set up in War Dept. I said I was supposed to have another job, but they wired Marshall while he was on his way to Casablanca and he said for me to stay until it was set up and they would give me what I wanted.

When Devers went to UK, they asked if I wanted to work on civil affairs in UK. Was ultimately ordered to AFHQ via. London. Met Wade'; not impressed with set-up there. They were freezing in Selfridge's basement. I said Stearns might be able to do the job there.

(We passed over Sicily)

When I reached London Levers said watch out for Bendetsen. The latter greeted me by saying "We are not going to get into the trouble you had in the Medit. We are going to do it the right way". I should have asked for his relief then. I had tried to go to AFHQ in Sept, but Bedell refused. Once he knew he was going, he agreed for me to go along. Said he wanted me for his G-5, and wanted me to run the show as in the Medit. (Bedell had been a little sore at me over supply in Sicily. I had asked for 15,000 tons of wheat a month for six months. Rennell cut this to 40,000 tons. Holmes' staff cancelled. Hilldring right in saying trouble came because I didn't have direct line to SOS. I finally told Bedell send wheat or 2 divisions to keep order. I got the wheat. Bedell blamed me for not coming to him earlier. I was wrong in assuming that my job was to keep trouble away from him.

Lumley was the dumbest man you ever. Bendetsen was unscrupulous. Brilliant, but I didn't think he had organized very well. Barker--a weak sister-- backed him strongly. Morgan was partly sold.

I asked them about handling supplies. They said had requisitioned an MP Bn with its transportation. Impossible. I called up Dan Noce and asked for good man to set up a T/O, and then a T/BA. Put an officer and 2 sgts on it. Told them to set up a T/BA three times to size of our set-up in Sicily (there we had 800 offs and 2000 Ems).

Left for Wash 19 Dec; returned 6 Jan 44). Took over as Senior U.S. Civil Affs Officer--opposite Lumley. Not sure that this was announced at the time. -----***

While I was in Washington attended a mtg with Marshall, Ike, McCloy, and Hildring. Ike said he wanted a Britisher as Chief Civ Affs Officer so they wouldn't be on his neck all the time. That took the wind out of me.

Barker asked for G-5 job. Thought I was doing him out of it. Later gave me trouble on G-5 personnel when he was G-1. Barker thought RANKIN going to happen.

They had had country houses; Bendetsen took them out. Bedell gave the order for them to go back, and I was given charge of training.

Bedell asked me if Barker could handle G-5 job. I said no. I recommended Spofford. Later Bedell said "How about Lumley". I said perhaps with Holmes. So he made Lumley G-5 and Julius deputy. I was deputy Civ Affs Officer. I had the bulk of the set-up. Lumley had suggested a set-up with Bendetsen as his deputy. Bedell said no and sent him to me for instructions on organization. Lumley told me to take over tng.

The boys began to gang up on me. Jack Bennett (who later ran for governorship of NY) told me that he had never seen a Tammany gang work any harder to ruin a man, than they tried to ruin me. SP and P approved while McSherry was in Washington. Bedell accepted. Parts of it were terrible. Changes made. I still didn't like it. Morgan says will it help you; I said no. Will it prevent you from working--I said no. Finally accepted to stop further wide open conflict. Didn't use it. We got our handbooks. Followed practices in part of AMG instrs. Spofford had written the first Mil Govt instr (Julius claimed credit for them).

Trouble over handbook came because Col Lewis failed to write draft over a plan which had been worked out. Morgenthau saw it and went to President. We were ordered to burn our copies. I was sorry because I hadn't protected Smith and Ike. Morgenthau had been a good friend of mine. Saw him in North Africa; took him around for several days. Had lunch with him in Washington. He agreed I could have anyone I liked from his staff for Finance.

Bovenschen wanted to take over completely. I said London or Washington, but not both. Got along with Bovenschen all right. Winant wanted to run Civil Affairs. EAC fought and fought amongst themselves. I told them to fool with the book questions like boundaries of sectors; leave details to us. Phil Reed and his Supply Comm didn't help a lot. In Jan 44 several plans put into supply comm. Bendetsen said needed 240,000 tons; another was 705,000; another larger. I backed the 705,000 tons figure. We put in for that on basis of Sicilian experience. Reed got British to earmark that much.

Belgium mix-up on supply came because shipping had been taken for troops needs as result of Ardennes. We had the stuff in the UK.

Personnel-Barker failed to get personnel in December. Was afraid of his job. I came back; got Handy to agree in part to deal. Barker mixed that up. (Handy and I got pretty loud in dining room. Lovett pulled his arm up into his sleeve, and showed Patterson, saying look what happened to me just sitting near them). I asked for offs in Dec 44; got them in Mar 45.

Grasset had been on Ln job. Don't know how he was picked. Imagine Bedell had seen him there. He told me he was coming up and said he wanted me. Bedell didn't like him. Man was all right. (Bedell didn't like the fact I was could write directly to Hilldring).

Ryan had a big job; was over his head. Held inspections to see if the pencils were in order. I didn't have time for that. Close friend of Hilldring's, so I didn't fuss too much. Didn't have his fingers on his people. I was offered Ryan's job in Sept. Would have taken it, but with two A Gps felt someone needed at SHAEF. Ryan would have taken Gunn's place Army. Gunn and Br at odds. Ryan thought I wanted his job. Always trying to get my officers. Complained on training at Civ Affs Trng Center. Sent it officially. I returned it to Lev Alleen and asked if he wanted me to answer it officially. Ryan never knew what was happening on his front. I had picked (Kraege ?) at Simpson's request for 9th Army. He worked well, when we had to comb out 300 officers; they handled the situation well. Gave them 3 weeks special tng. Gunn didn't. Patton's man OK. 15th Army tried to go by the old SP and P. Subordinate cmdrs were made mil governors. Awful mess when we turned over that area to the British. I was embarrassed. Ryan should have checked this. I thought he was responsible. I was wrong in not taking it to Bradley, but I thought he had enough to do with the battles.

Robbins, like Monty, felt that there was no need of Gen E's set-up. Robbins wouldn't take orders from SHAEF. I refused to go over there.

Parkman very good. Had been with ---* in Algiers. The 7th Army man had been with me in Sicily.

We had 4500 US offs at end of war. Br called for 2400 but had less. Probably had 14,000 at maximum. We had people in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Br and Fr zones, It Tyrol. Began to withdraw very rapidly after war ended.

Below army it is incorrect to have cmdr as mil governor. One officer at Cherbourg had nine different chiefs in 15 days.