

Notes 118N, Copy 2

Brig. Gen. F. J. McSherry

Pentagon

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Interview with Brig Gen F. J. McSherry at the Pentagon Mon Feb 16 1948 by F C Pogue.

1. Gen McSherry had closed the interview on Friday with a mention of the excellent work done in civil affairs health activities by Dr. Scheele. Today he opened the discussion by mentioning that his man had been made Surgeon General.

Gen McSherry emphasized the fact that the medical work of civil affairs was one of the great feats of the war in Europe—calling especial attention to the effective fight against typhus. For example Dachau had 15,000 cases of typhus among its 40,000 prisoners. This problem was solved in London not by the troops. Draper and others, he said, have not had proper credit. The result is that we have more publicity about 100 cases of typhus in Naples than on all we stopped in Europe. Because I had seen 25 cases spread to a 100 in Naples, I insisted before we arrived on the Continent that we prepare for the problem. I asked Gen Fox to work out a plan with my people for DDT powder, power pumps, etc. I put in requisitions and got the stuff. We used our own and German doctors all the way except at Dachau where we did use two evacuation hospitals. We had one case of typhus out of 7 million DP's. Had to set up a barrier at the Rhine. We turned back all the eastern Europeans; put the others in two weeks quarantine before letting them proceed. Had 12 cases or more in Cologne; straightened that up. We set up camps at the bridges. Got some criticism because the camps weren't very nice. Helen Kirkpatrick gave us a going over. Mikelsen partly to blame because he was an office man didn't go up to see what was happening. However, these people were inclined to be dirty; their treatment by Germans didn't make them any better. Had no sense of sanitation. Nearly ruined the building at Frankfurt. Was an awful mess there. We moved them into apartment's buildings. I fired the man there, and tried to get the affair cleaned up. Little help from the DP's and criticism from the Jews. Polish Jews engaged in black market with stuff they stole from Germans.

Down in Naples Col Hume, who was supposed to be a doctor, told me there was no typhus. Then there were 25 cases and then 100. He blamed his doctor. McSherry told me a long story about getting Hume to take him towards Naples. Hume very reluctant. Came to edge of city; found armored cars waiting around. McSherry and Kraege and driver in one car started in. followed -- \*\* Hume. Hume later tried to get DSC for leading the first party into Naples. McSherry was able to save a reservoir, which helped a lot. Said had a headquarters in the telephone building which later blew up.

2. Nothing in AMG line prepared for Sicily when McSherry took over. Had about 3 clerks, a few jeeps and two or three small trucks. No service records, no monthly reports, no admin. Fault lay in fact that most civil affs people were civilians in uniform who didn't know about army forms, etc. Managed to get a Capt MacDougal for files; a former first sgt now a captain to work out administration. Got a T/BA worked out. Sykes worked on requisitioning. Found out one of Patton's men had 200 Jeeps they were holding for the French. Agreed to give me 50 if I could get are requisition. Transportation a big problem. You can see what I mean when I say we had 750 jeeps for NW Europe.

No stockpiles set up for a country notoriously short of food. We asked for 12,500 tons in early June; increased to 30,000 tons later. When one of our men went about looking for supplies in the countryside, we were told this was none of our business, that supplies would be provided. There

was no arrangement for transport of our personnel, except for a few men with Patton's divisions.

Patton called for me shortly after he landed in Sicily. Hoebner-top US man with Alexander-- said it was all right for me to go. I rode on a cargo of dynamite by plane to Gela. They were losing 14% of their cargo planes at that time. We landed in a Wheatfield which had just been cleared. I carried my helmet, gas mask, musette bag, and bed roll. Began to hitchhike. Finally two captains in a command car said "Jump in, Buddy". When they saw my star they jumped about three feet.

We had hundreds of problems. I set up shop and tried to give an answer. Fortunately I guessed right. Finally put the answers into our book. Shall we pay r.r. employees when the trains aren't running; straightened out post offices, etc.

I tried to get my people over from North Africa. When I found we had Palermo I sent Bill Chanler back to stay until he could get transport for personnel and bring them over. I told him to contact a Commander at Bizerte who had been a friend of mine. He promised an LST that night. We had our whole outfit over by the end of July.

Poletti told me the day of my arrival that Patton had kicked him out of his Hq. I talked to Geoffrey Keyes the deputy cmdr. He said that Poletti had tried to tell Patton what to do. I talked to Patton, who said "I don't like this Military Government". After awhile, he said "if the snipers shoot at my men, can I have them killed." I said yes, and showed him a little booklet on the rules of war. He liked that. Later said if I would come along, he would let us work. I knew Homer Jones, the JA of Patton's army. Poletti was put under him. Patton never interfered with MG.

Tells of one of Patton's divisions in which the doctor had taken over a charity hospital and filled it with girls who were consorting with the soldiers. Were used as prostitutes. A girl asked to be allowed to get her clothes; she told her brother, and he reported the matter to civil affairs. McSherry stopped it. Doesn't know whether the division commander knew about it. (This NOT for the record he said).

We thought the British knew the answer on military government, but they were dumber than we were when it came to this type of situation. They knew how to handle a colonial set-up. Their practice was to play up to the few whites, and worry very little about the negroes. Here we had a group of whites and they couldn't be treated like that. No preparation had been made for economics, education, labor, and the like. We never had a decent supply officer.

We found that the wheat crop was not very good; much of it burned; collection bad. I sent my agricultural man over to see what they could get. I asked for 15,000 tons per month for six months. Wasn't provided. AFHQ 45,000 enough. No trucks available for transportation.

Great trouble in taking care of our personnel. Very little transport for them. Went weeks without mail and pay. No way to get food. All right if troops were there, but when they moved out not so good.

In setting up a court for MG we had to have a uniform set of rules. In one case the court in one town would give a man a month; in the next town the court would give ten years. We tried to

work out reasonable sentences and have uniform justice meted out in the AMG courts. We opened the local courts for everything except AMG cases. In order to get the courts working we had a man for a number of weeks investigating judges and lawyers; he came up finally with a judiciary for Sicily.

Question of Fascists---I took the same view as they take in Germany today. Clear them all except the active Fascists. However, it paid in the early days to throw them all out. We got some back lash from the press, so when we went into Aachen I said get the Nazis out. We had them reduced in a short time from 375 to 50 (we kept engineers, stenographers, etc), but in the latter part of Jan 1945 a British correspondent said we were keeping Nazis in the Aachen government. It was broadcast by BBC and hit all the papers here. When we got to Frankfurt I said get them all out, because they will be watching us here. I replaced the MG man there who wasn't moving the Nazis fast enough. Bedell said I exceeded my authority. Fired some telephone engineers and had trouble replacing them. It paid off. When Sidney Hillman and his group came over they complimented us on moving the Nazis out. We didn't hit the Nazis as hard in other cities.

Lord Rennell of Rodd wanted to be with Alexander. He went to Bari and set up his headquarters. I went down regularly to confer with him. As early as Oct 12 1943 he wanted to split out headquarters. I said I didn't think it would work. He wrote up what he wanted and Alexander approved it. I was put in charge of AMG everywhere except Naples province and Sicily. Rennell had Naples and the army. Set-up didn't last long after I left.

I wanted a regional director of Sicily, another for Calabria, and a third for Potenza, Matera, and Foggia. I thought one headquarters should handle these as well as the army. The split between our headquarters helped to give AMG a black eye in Italy. Had contradictory orders.

Bendetsen in U.K. wanted all MG responsibility placed on military commanders. His control set-up was indefinite. His view was that we should sit at SHAEF and tell the commanding officers how to do the work. Would have led to confusion. Came from fact that his only MG experience was with relocation of the Japanese. He didn't even have to find them housing. That was done by Milton Eisenhower. Bendetsen had a going concern; no war area. It was possible to use civil control. The folly of the Bendetsen set-up was shown in 15th Army where Gerow tended to let every military commander handle affairs as he saw fit.

Eastbourne was under me until I left U.K. One-third of the men there were U. S. officers. British were supposed to send 800 to Shrivenham. Didn't do it. After the first two groups sent to Eastbourne, I said no more were to go since it was clear that Monty was opposed to mixed detachments. Ike had always favored allied detachments. He followed the practice initially, but in July and August began to pull them apart. Germany was strictly run on a national basis. There was no allied military government as such below the SHAEF level. Bradley handled 9th Army military government when that army was under Monty. SHAEF kept combined admin until the end.

We were delayed in training somewhat because of the failure to agree on zones of occupation for Germany. I felt that we would end by going to the southern zone, so had most of my people trained for that area, although we did have some for the north. This turned out to be all right

because we held part of the British zone for a time. We trained detachments for the larger cities and for the Landerat. These teams would know the principal Germans in their area, what supplies should be there and the like. They had not been given this training at Charlottesville and Ft. Custer. We even got people trained for Japan. So we had to interview them; assign them; and then give the proper training.

We sent over a regiment of teams for France. The Army would call the commanding officer and ask for detachments for special cities. This worked all right when we were moving slowly. In France we turned over as soon as possible to the local authorities. As the boundary of the army moved forward, they turned over to Johnny Lee's people. The Base sections G-5s supervised at this point. SHAEF checked on training and supplies.

We set up three regiments altogether and trained them at Shrivenham. Had more than enough for France; let some of the men help the regular teams. Tried to keep them in training. Original gps got three months training. Towards the end in Germany we gave them 2 weeks. In the beginning picked civil affairs trained people; towards the last took combat fatigue men.

Each army had a pool allotted from array group.

Back to Bendetsen--thinks he was anxious to show people we knew nothing and that he should be made a major general. He wanted a G-5 who told all the lower units what to do, but wanted to leave the work to them. My view was that Civil Affairs job was to aid the lower units; to take responsibility off the fighting people as soon as possible. Theoretically we sent our directives through channels. From army down tended to go through civil affairs channels.

[I asked for the theoretical working of a civil affairs detachment in a town like Le Mans.] The first man in would be a civil affairs officer attached to a division; he would contact the mayor and serve as liaison between the division and the town governors. He would go on when the division pulled out. If the division stayed long enough, we would send up someone from Ryan's (12th A Gp) pool. Sometimes there was a gap between civil affairs people. When the Communications zone was established, they would send their people in.

We kept a Rear Headquarters in London until SHAEF dissolved. Dwindled away. Could have dropped it. Thinks was kept largely so the men could get back to London. Made a lot of them angry by turning down requests to go over.

After invasion training carried on at Manchester. This closed out in Oct 44. Moved to a chateau near Versailles. Not very suitable. Lived in pup tents.

Worked to an extent with the Psychological Warfare people. Knew Bob McClure well. Couldn't work well with Crossman. He tried to double-cross us. Thinks he deliberately hoped to make trouble. Had trouble with PWD over the voice of SHAEF broadcasts. They were making promises to Germans Civil Affairs couldn't keep. I told Bob. HE is a redhead, so he asked "Who are you?" and I said I was trying to protect Ike. Finally changes made.

Coulet deal- he was ready to announce he wouldn't accept the invasion money. I had helped him get over there, so I talked to him. He agreed to accept the money and hold it until some agreement made. De Gaulle agreed when he saw FDR in July.

Jack Lewis' outfit handled rearmament of liberated peoples. We handled the labor detachments.

G-4 handled railways in military zone. Rest run by the French. Actually army had most of the railways. Lee's people ran them. Never had enough cars to carry civilian supplies. Had enough food in Brittany Peninsula to give 3000 tons a day for Paris, but not enough cars. Germans had collected food, grain. Our agricultural people would locate food and tell French where stuff was, and try to get transportation. Our engineers worked on canals to get coal to Paris; cleared rivers. Electrical set-up remarkable. Sisler of Detroit-Edison had told me before invasion to requisition two 50,000 kilowatt floating generators (and some smaller ones). Pacific wanted these two. We got them; saved us at Antwerp.

At Antwerp the big strike was in the US sector. Handled by our officers.

Mentioned Gordon Browning in passing. Said he wanted to make him a Lt Col to begin with. McKeller opposed it. Browning came in as captain of FA and was then transferred. Barker wouldn't let him be promoted for a long time.

Kennedy--printed squib on good situation in Paris. Said would be a scandal if FDR came up. I called him up about it. He said he meant there would be a scandal as to the way the French handled it (which was true). Offered to retract. I said let it go, but clear with us in the future. He did with us. Was kicked out over the premature release of the surrender story.

Didn't quite keep our word on supplies for France. We gave them more wheat than we promised, but not fats and meat. Lee slowed down by Ardennes needs.

Tried to work out a ration to fit the areas. Normandy needed some wheat, but no cheese and meat. Brittany and area around Lemans needed very little. Large cities in tough spot. Nothing for Bordeaux. Ration not always scientific. But we tried to get a balanced ration.

In UK I had nothing to do with newspapers; was told not to. Had Harry Cain (now senator from Washington) as my public relations man. Used to talk to the correspondents; not for publication. Had a press conference in May--Grasett, Holmes, and I. Got favorable publicity. After criticism at Aachen I talked to Harold Callendar and Ed Kennedy and asked how to handle the situation. They said have weekly conferences. Hilldring wrote me once that he had 400 clippings on us and not a single criticism. Had some trouble over DP's. Partly Mikelsen's fault.

I had learned something about the newspaper angle in Sicily. People there attacked us. I took the correspondents to our school and showed them around. Poletti gave trouble at Palermo by saying that he was to be military governor. Lord Rennell of Rodd furious. Stopped all further press conferences. So the correspondents picked up what they could. Ralph Henry wrote that he had seen a man carrying the body of his child which had starved to death. I gave him figures to show that since we had been there the infant mortality rate was 50 per cent less than the year before.

Sent John Hersey to see Tuscanti who is the Major Joppolo of Bell for Adano. Doesn't believe that Patton gave the order to stop carts. Possible that some MP officer did. Were supposed to stay off main roads.

Problems in Sicily which aided in preparing us for NW Europe:

1. Organization and administration the initial problem. Overcame that completely in NW Europe because of Sicilian experience.

2. Stockpile. Because of lack of supplies in -Sicily I asked for 705,000 tons in UK; and got it.

3. Must have uniformity in the way you administer civil affairs. In Sicily we put out our instructions piecemeal.

4. You have to have mil govt officers at all major units--divisions and larger--at all times. Essential that additional personnel be sent up to take up specific duties in specific towns. In Sicily we kept dropping off personnel to handle towns soon didn't have any experienced people with a unit.

5. Must have mil govt officers over with the invasion troops so they can take over as soon as the first towns are taken and relieve the army of that responsibility.

6. Should turn over control as soon as possible. In France we soon turned over control of supplies at Le Havre and Marseilles. In Normandy turned over supplies to Coulet. Monty and Clark had favored this in Italy. Bradley strongly in favor of it for Normandy.

Germany different. Ike wanted a true allied control there. He was a true allied commander. Leaned over backwards in dealings with the British.

7. Public relations--unfortunate in Sicily at first. Learned better how to deal with people in ETO.

8. Typhus--nearly let it get out of hand in Naples. Solved it in Europe.

9. Black market--big problem. Only one solution (a cardinal said "If I weren't a godly man I could tell you how to cure the black market." His remedy was to shoot some of the people engaged in it.) We didn't take it. Had 165 operators arrested in a week in the Palermo district alone. Worse in France than in Germany. Soldiers furnished the stuff. Black boys very active in France. Found several who had set up establishments with five or six French girls.

10. Detecting of Fascists not well worked out in Sicily. Improved in Europe.

11. Labor--combination of problems. Very low wages; high prices. We froze prices; raised price we would give for wheat to get it brought out. Tried to adjust wages, prices, etc. Control of labor unions better in Germany than in Sicily. Remember in Sicily we had 4 million people dumped on us. Had to maintain law and order, health (there was no typhus in Sicily), clean up prisons (the

worst political prisons I saw was in Sicily). We learned a lot which made the European show work.

11. Should have a regional set-up. Needed people trained to handle a definite section. Favored country sections for that reason. Ryan had them. Bendetsen abolished. I restored them.

If I had to do it over, I would:

1. Have a Civil Affairs organization such as we had.
2. Would have Allied mission such as we had.
3. No more 15th Army mess like we had. Must follow uniform practice.
4. wouldn't have a system which permitted a civil affairs officer, such as the one at Cherbourg, to be under 15 different commanding officers in a few days. Once a detachment is established it should come under the army until the base sections are established. Fortunately we went rapidly for the most part.

Says that the special staff set up which first obtained when he served with Lumley was set up because Bedell wanted to hold general staff to 35. Special staff wouldn't speak to general staff. General staff members thought they were tin gods. Bad set-up.

Always a question in mind if Lee handled civil affairs as well as we did. Lee had friction with our mission in France. Seemed to me that we were duplicating efforts. Mission staff should have been used for liaison, or Lee's staff reduced.

Day after Labor Day I sent two plane loads of personnel to Paris. They were G-5 section of SHAEF mission to France, but for a time they were the mission. The main job of maintaining contact between French government and SHAEF was the G-5 mission of the mission. Later sent a plane load of men to Belgium for Belg unit, and another for the Dutch unit. British had their people all ready. Gave them high ranks.