

THE STRATEGY
OF CIVILIAN DEFENCE

Non-violent Resistance to Aggression,

EDITED BY
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The Ruhrkampf of 1923: Economic Problems of Civilian Defence

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Non-violent resistance, sponsored governmentally, against military occupation by a foreign power is not a common occurrence in history; among the few known cases the *Ruhrkampf* of 1923 is an outstanding example. Although the historical circumstances of the French occupation of the Ruhr were of a very unusual character, unlikely ever to recur, and although non-violent methods were used in a limited and imperfect way, and were sometimes mixed with violence, this case deserves close examination. Its history is extremely complex, and this brief survey, relying principally on German sources, cannot do full justice to it. However, in view of the lack of material analysing this campaign in relation to civilian defence, even a preliminary study seems worthwhile. A special feature of the case was that only a part of German territory was occupied by the French and Belgian forces, and that the occupation was not a simple act of aggression but a 'by-product' of economic sanctions. The *Ruhrkampf* was first and foremost an economic struggle; it had to be won or lost in terms of economic warfare.

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THE STORY OF THE RUHRKAMPF¹

Historical Background

In the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 the Allies made Germany pay reparations for all damage caused by the war, partly in cash, partly in kind, and a 'Reparations Commission' was set up to determine the type of reparations payments and to supervise their transfer. The treaty also empowered the Allies to occupy the territory on the left bank of the Rhine, and for administrative purposes they set up an 'Inter-allied Rhineland Commission'. In addition, a strip fifty kilometres wide on the right bank of the Rhine was set aside as a demilitarized zone, which German troops were not permitted to enter. The highly industrialized area of the Ruhr—the heart of the German economy—lay within the demilitarized zone. (The Ruhr river is a tributary of the Rhine, whose right bank it joins at Duisburg.)

On several occasions Germany defaulted on the payments imposed on it. Germany demanded that an investigation should be made into its ability to pay or, at least, that there should be a moratorium on payments. The Allies, particularly France and Belgium, were not convinced of Germany's inability to pay, and in March 1921 they occupied the cities of Düsseldorf and Duisburg, which are on the Rhine, as a form of territorial sanction, sequestrating customs and excise revenues there.

After Wilhelm Cuno became German Chancellor and formed a ministry on 22 November 1922 the situation deteriorated rapidly. France was anxious to occupy the Ruhr, and although Britain and the USA disagreed, they did not want an open conflict with France. On 26 December 1922 the Reparations Commission voted in favour of a resolution stating that Germany's failure to execute in their entirety orders for deliveries of timber and telegraph poles constituted a punishable default in its obligations under the Treaty of Versailles; on 9 January 1923 it found a further 'voluntary default' in coal

¹ For literature on the *Ruhrkampf* see Georg Reismüller and Josef Hofmann, *Zehn Jahre Rheinlandbesetzung*, Ferdinand Hirt, Breslau, 1929, pp. 164–210. In general I have referred in footnotes only to literature not listed by Reismüller and Hofmann.

Useful accounts in English of the *Ruhrkampf* include Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1924*, Oxford University Press, London, 1926, pp. 268–300; and Erich Eyck, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, trans. Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Oxford University Press, London, 2 vols., 1962–4, vol. I, chapter VIII.

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deliveries. In both cases the British delegate voted against the resolution.

Economic Forces in Germany

Already in January 1923, at the outset of the Ruhr struggle, Germany was in a state of exhaustion and faced bankruptcy. The German economy threatened to collapse under the double weight of reparations and inflation. The two were closely connected: exhausted by the war and the post-war crises, the economy was unable to bear the reparations, and Germany rapidly lost its international credit. A flight of capital set in: loans, support actions and a temporary lessening of the external pressure could only stop the decay temporarily.

In November 1918 the dollar had for the first time reached double its pre-war value in relation to the mark, which had been \$1 = 4.20M. By 8 November 1922 the exchange rate was 9,150M, and although there was a slight improvement after Cuno's accession on 21 November, by 9 January 1923 it was 10,000M, and by 31 January 49,000M. Yet the reparations were not the only cause of the inflation, which, while far more acute in Germany than in other countries, was a general European phenomenon with its origins in the second half of the world war.

In 1922 the German Government repeatedly applied for a respite, which the Allies granted only with respect to the payments in cash, and then only at times, while simultaneously increasing their demand for payments in kind. The German Government, because of the inflation in 1922, failed to secure the reparations payments and the costs of the Allied Rhineland occupation troops by taxes and loans. (The important but complex question of whether, as the French Prime Minister Poincaré insisted in the Chamber of Deputies on 7 November 1922, the Germans 'had intentionally devalued the mark and were going bankrupt on purpose' to evade reparations payments falls outside the scope of this chapter.) In December 1922 the Government had to find an extra 298,000 million marks for cash reparations payments, and 206,000 million marks for payments in kind. The whole requirement in the budget for the execution of the Versailles Treaty amounted, by 7 December 1922, to 613,500 million marks.

France and Belgium Occupy the Ruhr

After Germany had been found guilty of 'voluntary defaults' in reparations deliveries in December 1922 and January 1923, the

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French and Belgian governments, temporarily supported by the Italian Government, decided to send a control commission of engineers and officials into the Ruhr. That commission, later called MICUM (*Mission Interalliée de Contrôle des Usines et des Mines*) was to control the German authorities and the factories, plants, etc. In order to 'protect' the commission about 45,000 French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr between 11 and 16 January 1923. By the end of June there were some 90,000 troops as well as about 10,000 administrative personnel, etc. At the same time the USA withdrew its last troops from the Rhineland as part of its post-war disengagement policy; this only served to exacerbate the situation because their place was taken by French troops.

The invaders found their justification mainly in Articles 17 and 18, Annex II, Part VIII of the Treaty of Versailles:

'17. In the case of default by Germany in the performance of any obligation under this Part of the present Treaty, the Commission will forthwith give notice of such default to each of the interested Powers and may make such recommendations as to the action to be taken in consequence of such default as it may think necessary.

'18. The measures which the Allied and Associated Powers shall have the right to take, in case of voluntary default by Germany, and which Germany agrees not to regard as acts of war, may include economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals and in general such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances.'²

The legal arguments of the German Government against the French interpretation of the Versailles Treaty focused on three major points. First, according to the note of the Reparations Commission of 21 March 1922 the German offences only justified the Allies in demanding the payment of sums of money as a penalty; secondly, the Versailles Treaty did not permit the use of territorial sanctions; and thirdly, all measures resulting from the Versailles Treaty had to be executed by concerted action of the Allies.³

² *The Treaties of Peace 1919-1923*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, New York, 2 vols., 1924, vol. 1, pp. 135-6.

³ Dieter Bruno Gescher, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika und die Reparationen 1920-1924*, no. 7 in the *Bonner Historische Forschungen*, Ludwig Röhrscheid, Bonn, 1956, pp. 157-8. On legal aspects of the French occupation of the Ruhr see also Paul Wentzcke, *Ruhrkampf*, Reimar Hobbing, Berlin, 2 vols., 1930 and 1932, vol. 1, pp. 125-30; also Reismüller and Hofmann, *Zehn Jahre Rheinlandbesetzung*, pp. 184-5.

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France's Aims

To enforce payment of reparations from Germany was only one of the aims pursued by France and Belgium. Another, no less important, was to prevent Germany from re-establishing its economy and threatening a war of revenge. 'Security' was the leading consideration of French policies. In 1919 the other Allies had refused to safeguard France's security by guarantees, and France therefore felt it had to look after its own security. To this end Germany's economy had to be kept down, by reparations on the one hand and territorial sanctions (including the occupation of the Ruhr) on the other. The Ruhr area with its rich coal mines constituted a natural complement to the iron ore of Lorraine, and the combination of both industrial areas was bound to give France the leading position in Europe it wanted. France's long-term political aims went further, and included support for Rhenish separation and the creation of a 'Rhenish Republic' dependent on France; some influential groups in France wanted ultimately to destroy the unity of the German Reich by dissolving Germany into separate autonomous states.

The Beginning of Passive Resistance

From the start military resistance was impossible for Germany. The disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty considerably reduced Germany's defence potential, limited its army to 100,000 men, and left its frontiers unprotected. However, the population and the Government felt that Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr was an intolerable provocation, not to be accepted without resistance. They had to choose between submission, violent resistance by rioting, sabotage, terror, etc., and passive resistance.⁴ They opted for the latter. A fourth possible course of action, resistance by active as well as passive non-violent methods, was not widely advocated or employed at the time.

The occupation of the Ruhr found the German Government unprepared. The Allies, and especially France, had frequently threatened occupation, but no action had followed, and people had grown accustomed to such threats. Thus the Germans had no advance plans for passive resistance: indeed, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, German railwaymen actually transported French troops through the Rhineland to the border of the Ruhr area. There were, it is true, many demonstrations of solidarity and loyalty by trade

⁴ 'Passive resistance' is defined as 'a passive type of non-violent resistance in which the non-violence is motivated only by expediency.' Gene Sharp, Appendix Two, in Adam Roberts *et al.*, *Civilian Defence*, Peace News, London, 1964, p. 67.

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unions, employers' federations, parties and diets in December 1922 and early January 1923 in order to show their determination to resist attempts to separate the Rhineland or to occupy the Ruhr area, but neither the Government nor the population of the Ruhr had a clear conception of measures to be taken. That is why the decision to offer passive resistance was taken only a few days before the invasion of the Ruhr.

Some mine owners considered the possibility of flooding the mines, but the idea was finally rejected, together with the trade union suggestion of a general strike, because it was felt that both measures would hurt the German population more than the invaders. The German trade unions appealed for an international general strike but got no support from the French and Belgian workers' organizations, and had to be content with a thirty-minute strike in the Ruhr area and the occupied Rhineland on 15 January 1923 (four days after the occupation began) to demonstrate the population's will to resist. Austrian railwaymen, however, refused to transport Silesian coal, intended to replace coal from the Ruhr, to France.

The strongest pressures for the adoption of passive resistance came from the trade unions, according to whose doctrine 'an unarmed people would still have power and opportunity to demonstrate its will and to disarm every aggressor by striking and closing plants and factories.' Another representative of the unions said: 'The French and Belgian governments need the active support of civil servants, employers and workers for their measures to secure immediate and profitable results. If civil servants and workers stop work whenever the invaders appear, and the employers refuse to fulfil the demands of the Franco-Belgian commissions, it should be possible to deprive the commissions and military forces of the means of carrying out their tasks.'⁵

Thus at the beginning of the struggle in the Ruhr there were even some enthusiastic advocates of the new weapon of passive resistance. Its victory over the brutal force of French militarism and capitalism would mean 'a final break with the antiquated warfare of barbaric times.'⁶

On 8 January 1923, after consulting with the trade unions and employers' federations, the Government of the Reich agreed to preparations for passive resistance. In the last two days before the invasion the Rhenish-Westphalian Coal Syndicate transferred its headquarters from Essen to Hamburg; the German Ammonia

⁵ Wentzcke, *Ruhrkampf*, vol. 1, pp. 174 and 175.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 65.

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Association followed, and the Benzole Association transferred its headquarters to Berlin. The postal authorities succeeded in establishing a secret telephone system with connections to Berlin. On 10 January a big demonstration was held in Essen to express the determination of the Government and people to resist the imminent invasion.

On the same day the German Government issued a proclamation addressed to the inhabitants of the Ruhr: 'Remain steadfast in suffering and in faith, be firm, be calm, be sensible. Have trust in our just cause, and face the invaders with dignity until the day dawns when justice and freedom are restored.'⁷ This was followed on 11 January 1923 (the day on which the Ruhr was invaded) by a proclamation of the President and Government of the Reich addressed to the entire German people:

'You must meet the trials of this time honestly and sensibly: take no action which would harm our just cause. Anyone who lets himself be carried away and commits any rash and unconsidered action which in the end would only serve the enemy's ends would be deeply guilty. The public good depends on each and every person exercising the utmost self-control.'⁸

On 11 January the trade unions and organizations, shop stewards, employees and civil servants of Rhineland-Westphalia—in which the Ruhr area is situated—signed a proclamation which expressed their determination to resist. But foreign troops were already marching into the Ruhr area. They 'occupied the empty building of the coal syndicate, the railway administration, the post offices and other public buildings. The city [Essen] seemed deserted. Windows were curtained, most of the shops closed. The population received the foreign invaders with icy reserve.'⁹ The Supreme Commander of the French and Belgian forces, General Degoutte, proclaimed a state of siege.

Passive resistance began during the first weeks of occupation. 'It would be difficult to say exactly when it began, and precisely how it happened. It did not come into existence in a single day. It developed gradually out of the population.'¹⁰ The unions and the employers'

⁷ Friedrich Grimm, *Vom Ruhrkrieg zur Rheinlandräumung*, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, Hamburg [1930], p. 50.

⁸ The full text is in *Der Französisch-Belgische Einmarsch in das Ruhrgebiet*, Carl Heymans, Berlin, 1923, p. 26.

⁹ Grimm, *Vom Ruhrkrieg zur Rheinlandräumung*, p. 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

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federations suggested that wherever the representatives of MICUM (the inter-allied engineers' commission) or the occupation troops gave orders to German authorities, workshops, etc., they were to be met by passive resistance. It was hoped that apart from this work could be carried on as normally as possible.

Grimm wrote: 'The refusal to obey orders became *the* weapon of passive resistance. In addition protests, strikes, boycotts and demonstrations were organized. The military was furious, particularly about the protests, objections and complaints, which could not be dealt with by military means. The occupation forces tried to break the passive resistance by means of courts martial, banishment and generally repressive measures. The refusal to obey orders soon became *the* resistance offence dealt with by courts martial.'¹¹

The courts martial were designed solely to achieve political ends; their judgements were arbitrary, and dissimilar sentences were often pronounced for similar offences, depending on the state of the struggle and the directions received from above. The judges, mostly high-ranking officers, generally lacked legal training.

In the Ruhr there were from the beginning many acts of defiance against the occupation. The performance of *Wilhelm Tell* at the municipal theatre in Essen developed into a demonstration of the national will to resist, and finally occupation troops invaded the theatre and dispersed the audience. A visit by the Chancellor and some ministers to the occupied area on 4 February 1923 greatly strengthened the resistance movement.

The meeting of the provincial parliament of the Rhineland in exile in Barmen became a demonstration for national unity, with every party, including the Communists, condemning France's aggression and supporting the passive resistance. By the end of January the Rhineland, which had been occupied since the end of the war, and the cities of Düsseldorf and Duisburg, previous victims of territorial sanctions, had joined in the resistance against occupation.

The Mainz Court Martial

Having occupied the Ruhr, France and Belgium began the attempt to exploit it. The first attack was directed against the mining industry: the mine owners were to be forced to deliver coal and coke as reparations to the occupying powers. The representatives of the mining industry were invited for negotiations on 12 January, but the German Government had already decided two days previously to stop all reparations payments to France and Belgium. The negotia-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

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tions broke down on 15 January when the Reich Commissioner for Coal cabled the representatives of the mining industry prohibiting any delivery of fuel to the occupying powers, even in return for cash. The German negotiators were then arrested and tried at a court martial in Mainz.

The entire German people took the greatest interest in the trial, which took place on 24 January 1923. The court martial was bombarded with telegrams of protest, and delegations agitated on behalf of the accused. The open protest by the defence against the flagrant violation of the law had great effect. Friedrich Grimm, who conducted the defence, wrote: 'A sense of victory, a passionate jubilation at the first "No" to brute force, seemed to spread from the court to the whole city. People were moved by great enthusiasm and a tremendous idea: "We are resisting!" Thousands gathered at the building where the court was held . . . Arms were useless. In that hour we experienced what it meant to offer passive resistance. It was a fight for justice!'¹²

The six accused were given heavy fines. Their return to Essen developed into a triumphal procession, with crowds gathering along the railway line and at the stations. Barriers erected by the French were overrun.

The Resistance of the Civil Servants

The occupiers' attempt to exploit the mining industry with the co-operation of the management had thus been repelled. The next attack was directed with great violence against civil servants of the state and local administration. On 19 January the German Government had declared open resistance, and all state, provincial and local authorities were forbidden to obey any orders issued by the occupation authorities, and told to confine themselves strictly to directions given by the appropriate German authorities. Some civil servants were arrested, tried for insubordination, and given heavy fines and long terms of imprisonment. Some were detained for weeks or months without being charged, and were finally released without trial. But most of them were banished to the unoccupied part of Germany. 'In all, it was reckoned that 147,020 German citizens were expelled during the eleven months January to November (inclusive) from the Ruhr alone, of whom 46,292 were state employees and officials with their families . . .'¹³ It was hoped by imprisonment, detention, and deportation to deprive the people of their leaders and

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 40-2.

¹³ Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1924*, p. 280. The total population of the Ruhr area at the time was nearly five million.

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to cause a rift between the civil servants and the population, the assumption being that people would grudge the banished civil servants their life in free Germany on a full salary. But these hopes were disappointed, and others took the place of the banished and continued the resistance struggle. Unfortunately, however, only very few civil servants returned to the occupied zone to face renewed arrest and trial; such actions on a large scale would have strengthened the passive resistance movement considerably.

Policemen refused to salute foreign officers, and were banished, so that the whole Ruhr area was deprived of police protection. Towards the end of the struggle, gangs of anti-social elements, Communists, and separatists terrorized whole cities. The occupation authorities tolerated and, in many cases, secretly encouraged them, in the hope that they would break the morale of the population and force it to yield. The local authorities in the Ruhr organized citizens' defence corps to protect the population. Their members were mostly armed with sticks and cudgels, because under the occupation no German was permitted to possess any arms. In many cases the voluntary fire brigade took on the duties of a police force, but in the bigger cities a special force was established.

The Resistance of the Transport Workers

From the beginning of the occupation German railwaymen refused to take coal trains to France, and they were joined by the personnel of the shipping companies. The trade unions, who were familiar with the weapon of passive resistance in the wages struggle, exercised a decisive influence in this withdrawal of labour. As a result of this non-cooperation, the occupation authorities threatened to stop all rail and water traffic, stations were occupied, and tugs and barges impounded. For some time rail traffic was kept moving by circumventing occupied stations and making use of rail facilities at mines and factories, but in the end the occupiers succeeded in bringing it to a standstill.

In March the occupiers brought in a Franco-Belgian administration to run the railways in the occupied territories. By June only 400 Germans had consented to enter its service, as compared with the 170,000 who had worked on the Ruhr and Rhineland systems before the Ruhr invasion.¹⁴ As the German railwaymen left, they removed name plates, signal plans and installations, sabotaged tracks and rolling stock, or ran the trains into unoccupied territory. The French tried to requisition railway engines at the Rheinmetall works, but

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 285 and 286.

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the workers sabotaged the engines by removing vital parts. They blocked the tracks with heavy pieces of iron, so that it was impossible to get even a single engine out. The French arrested the directors of the plant, who received heavy sentences and fines at a court martial. The mayor of Oberhausen, an important railway junction, caused the station's electricity to be cut off. He was arrested, tried, and banished to unoccupied Germany, and two of his successors were in turn treated in the same way for the same offence. When the French company finally succeeded in running a few trains, they were boycotted by the population. Shipping on the Rhine came to a complete standstill.

The Resistance of the Shopkeepers

Towards the end of January shopkeepers, publicans and waiters joined the resistance movement. German guests promptly left when a member of the occupation forces entered a public house, and even trams came to a halt when foreign troops tried to board them. Shopkeepers refused to serve French or Belgian soldiers, who often took goods by force and without payment, or beat up the shopkeeper and brought him before a court martial. This boycott of the occupying troops was also a form of self-protection: the Ruhr area was cut off from the rest of Germany, and the supply of food and other necessities was restricted. Occupation troops, who were well provided with good money, bought everything they could get hold of. Therefore shops closed down when soldiers were off duty. Chambers of commerce, workers' and merchants' associations, guilds and trade unions were vitally concerned in the organization of this boycott.

The occupation authorities closed many shops, and in Bochum, as a punishment, they closed every shop and public house in the centre of the town for six weeks. In spite of this, the resistance in Bochum continued undiminished, and the occupation authorities took their revenge by the pointless destruction of the headquarters of the Bochum chamber of commerce.

Nevertheless, the boycott movement was the first to break down. The retail trade, its members dependent entirely on themselves, proved to be the weakest point in the front line. The resistance of large numbers could not be maintained for long at the same high pitch; economic necessity and in many cases pure selfishness broke through barriers which had been erected against the occupiers. An observer in Essen wrote:

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'The upper and lower economic strata in the Ruhr area were reliable—even the press, though not the Communists. The middle strata—the workshops, agents, retailers, contractors, architects and black-marketeers—were less sure; the declining mark spread defeatism, announcing the impotence of the Reich and letting loose economic strife all along the line.'¹⁵

The Resistance of the Trade Unions and the SPD

From the outset the invaders were particularly anxious to break the united front of employers and employees. In the proclamation of the state of siege which he issued on 11 January, General Degoutte stated: 'German laws, in particular social and industrial laws, remain in force. The eight-hour day is to be observed.' An attempt was made to set the workers against the employers by means of propaganda leaflets, etc. Usually, if they were arrested at all, workers were treated more leniently by courts martial than employers or civil servants. At the time of the great food shortage the authorities set up soup kitchens and shops; but the population recognized their ulterior motive and refused to make use of this aid.

The workers protested against the occupation of the mines, and in countless demonstrations demanded the withdrawal of foreign troops.¹⁶ In many cases shop stewards, whom the occupation authorities were unwilling to arrest, voluntarily took the place of civil servants and ran important local offices. On 7 February the party committee of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) unanimously passed a resolution to support 'the resistance against the violent Franco-Belgian invasion.'

The Resistance of the Press

The press had to carry one of the heaviest burdens in the passive resistance. At first the invaders issued a mere 'warning' to editors and publishers; but then there were temporary closures, and in the whole Ruhr area, including Düsseldorf and Duisburg, 201 bans on newspapers were issued between January 1923 and July 1925. Out of less than seventy dailies in the occupied area, fifty-three were banned for a total of 4,661 days.¹⁷ The *Rheinisch-Westfälische*

¹⁵ Quoted in Wentzcke, *Ruhrkampf*, vol. 2, p. 139.

¹⁶ For the protests and proclamations of the trade unions and SPD, see Hans Spethmann, *Zwölf Jahre Ruhrbergbau*, Reimar Hobbing, Berlin, 5 vols. [1928-31], vol. 4, pp. 368-70.

¹⁷ Niederrheinisch-Westfälischer Zeitungsverleger-Verein, Bochum (ed.), *Die Presse im Ruhrkampf*, Wilhelm Stumpf, Bochum, 1925, pp. 46-7.

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Zeitung was banned no less than ten times. Editors, publishers and printers received heavy prison sentences and fines, or were banished to unoccupied territory. The printing works of the *Düsseldorfer Tageblatt* and the *Bochumer Anzeiger* were occupied by French troops for months. The occupying powers established a general pre-censorship system.

The press was in danger of succumbing to the violence of the attack, but fresh means of informing the population were constantly found. Some big works published news-sheets for their personnel; banned newspapers appeared under new names until they in turn were banned, or they adopted the title of another paper in the neighbourhood not yet banned. Newspapers published in the British-occupied zone or in unoccupied Germany were smuggled into the Ruhr and distributed there.

Volunteers took on the dangerous job of distributing newspapers, leaflets and news-sheets. Courageous resistance fighters tore off the proclamations and posters of the occupation powers and replaced them with their own. These more active forms of resistance were punished with heavy prison sentences.

The Battle for Coal

After the trial in Mainz on 24 January, the coal producers were left in peace for a period. It was hoped to win their co-operation by economic pressure. When this approach failed, the invaders resumed their attack on the industry towards the end of February.

After the Mainz trial, which had been designed to enforce the delivery of reparation coal, it was hoped to break industrial resistance by an ingenious tax system. On 30 January 1923 the French and Belgians prohibited the export of coal from the Ruhr to the unoccupied part of Germany, thus compelling the mines to accumulate stocks. This prevented the coal which the Ruhr industrialists refused to deliver from permanently escaping the occupiers' control. The occupiers also sequestered the coal tax (a tax on the production of coal) and other revenues normally due to the German Government, and defaulters were to be court-martialled. A war of attrition followed. Summonses were followed by requests, ultimatums, the threat of court martial, and finally the first arrests. The workers of the plants went on strike, but they were powerless to save the managers and producers from arrest and sentence.

Despite partial strikes and transport difficulties it was possible during the first months of the struggle to mine seventy to eighty per cent of the normal coal production of the Ruhr. Half of this was

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used in industry in the Ruhr, particularly the iron-producing industry, and the remainder was put on dumps.

In March the occupation authorities, with the help of their own and foreign (chiefly Polish and Czech) labour, succeeded in restoring a skeleton railway service. They then proceeded to occupy the mines one after the other. Where this happened, miners went on strike, and interrupted the electricity supply to the various installations or rendered them unusable; but despite these efforts the coal was taken away—shovelled on to lorries and railway trucks and taken to France. At first the amount of coal carried off in this way was insignificant, but it increased in the course of 1923. When the stores of coal and coke at a particular mine were exhausted, the occupation of that mine would be lifted and another one invaded. The personnel of the abandoned mine would then resume work.¹⁸

Stocks of benzole were saved from the enemy by being pumped through an underground sewer into unoccupied territory; ammonia was hidden underground; some stocks of coke were rendered unusable by covering them with mud.

Requisitions

The invaders held the occupied territory responsible not only for the reparations due from the whole of Germany, but also for the costs of the occupation. To cover these costs the occupation authorities requisitioned the property of the population, banks and workshops, and the funds of public services.

Private homes and schools were the first to suffer from billeting. Flats and classrooms were used as accommodation for troops, and the impoverished population was expected to provide furniture, vehicles, fuel and goods. Where these were refused, brute force was used to obtain them; citizens were beaten with whips and rifle butts and forced to do menial labour. The invader recognized no difference between private and public property. Tills were raided at post offices, railway booking offices, and state and local administration offices; spies and agents informed the occupation authorities of intended transports of money, so that the invaders got vast amounts of the almost worthless inflation currency.

Small units of soldiers frequently invaded factories to requisition motor cars, machines or other goods, but they always met with determined resistance from workers and management. Sirens sounded, and workers crowded into the yards and demonstrated

¹⁸ For further details see Spethmann, *Zwölf Jahre Ruhrbergbau*, vol. 4, p. 18 ff.

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against the invaders. In some cases they succeeded in making the foreign engineers and soldiers withdraw empty-handed. On 31 March 1923 (Easter Saturday), however, one of these demonstrations at the Krupp works led to a fatal incident, when a French lieutenant gave orders to shoot into the crowd; thirteen people were killed and many injured. The directors of the Krupp works and the chairman of the board, Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, having been ambushed and kidnapped, were held responsible for the incident by the occupiers and tried on 4-8 May; they were sentenced to terms of imprisonment of between ten and twenty years.

The Breakdown of the Resistance

The funeral of the victims of the incident at the Krupp works became a mighty demonstration of national mourning. Nevertheless, the inner strength of the resistance was broken. The turning point came with the trial of the Krupp directors, and that of Leo Schlageter, who had dynamited railway lines to stop the transport of coal.¹⁹ Both these trials took place in early May 1923.

From 11 January to 8 May the resistance had continued undiminished; now it was gradually replaced by a more flexible mood and a certain willingness to compromise which lasted until the end of passive resistance on 26 September 1923.

The opponent was aware of the relaxation and attacked all the more violently, provoked as he was by the population's hatred and by the German resisters' acts of violence and sabotage. The heavy sentences in the Krupp trial were an indication of his self-confidence, and from then on the most severe repressive measures were applied. On 8 May—at the time of the Krupp and Schlageter trials—General Degoutte issued an order which meant that no lorry could be taken on the road without a permit from the occupation authorities. In order to maintain the supply of vital goods the German Government was forced to agree. A little later a similar order brought motor car traffic to a standstill, and even doctors and midwives were hampered in the execution of their duties. As a punitive reprisal against acts of sabotage, the occupation authorities introduced a curfew, and people found in the streets after 6 p.m. were in danger of being arrested or shot.

Immediately after the invasion General Degoutte had introduced identity cards. In mid-May he declared all these cards invalid. Only a few offices were permitted to issue new cards, and they were only open for a few hours each day. Hundreds of people had to queue in

¹⁹ Sabotage and its effects are discussed below, pp. 123-6.

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front of these offices and women and children were in danger of being crushed to death. Many people brought chairs and sat through the night. The issuing of cards was done in a completely arbitrary manner. Sometimes numbered pieces of paper were thrown into the waiting crowd and people would fight for them; only the person who got hold of a number had any chance of obtaining a card. Any civil servants suspected of being involved in passive resistance were banned from receiving the cards.²⁰

Nor was that all. Germans were forced to salute the French guards when their papers were being examined. A permit, and payment of a high fee, was required for even the shortest trip; a questionnaire had to be filled in with information about the purpose of the journey, period of stay, route, names and addresses of acquaintances; and every questionnaire had to be accompanied by the applicant's identity card and two photographs. Even so, travellers were often molested at the frontier and sometimes beaten up. Licence, greed and violence reigned, and were tacitly tolerated by the officers.

Grimm gives a vivid picture of the steadily increasing control of all aspects of public life by the occupiers:

'Soon there was nothing which was not forbidden or punishable under some regulation issued by General Degoutte or one of his subordinates, who, particularly at first, also issued their own independent orders. There were economic regulations governing coal levies, customs duties, the requisitioning of timber and river craft, levies on wine, champagne, tobacco, brandy, the requisitioning of coke and its by-products, iron goods, industrial installations; orders about the terms of reference of MICUM, the French customs and excise, and other offices. In addition, there were more and more regulations, which eventually affected every sphere of public life, such as unions and associations, the press, traffic, motor cars, tram services, railways, the validity of German laws, common and criminal law, the prevention of treason, journeys into and out of the occupied zone, sabotage, theatres and cinemas, the price and sale of goods, canal locks, postal and telegraph services, hostages and administrative prosecutions, carrier pigeons, explosives, currency and money exchange, the French franc, propaganda by leaflets and posters, military training and recruiting, and finally a law for the suppression of passive resistance, which put an end to free speech and threatened with five years' imprisonment anyone evincing doubts about the justice and

²⁰ Wentzcke, *Ruhrkampf*, vol. 1, p. 369 *et seq.*

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validity of the orders and directions issued by the occupation authorities. General Degoutte's decrees reached the remarkable number of 174.²¹

In the later stages of the struggle the population became more and more demoralized. Many people denounced neighbours and competitors, and acted as informants and spies. The French soup-kitchens and 'co-operative' shops were frequently patronized. In earlier stages of the struggle girls who made friends with the troops were punished by having their hair cut off, but later social boycott ceased.

Financing the Passive Resistance

Between 2 and 12 February the occupation powers had erected customs cordons between the occupied and unoccupied parts of Germany; imports from the West were, however, generally duty-free, with the result that French luxury goods flooded the market and exports to the East diminished and finally stopped completely. Thus the Ruhr industry lost its most important market. The Ruhr, as a densely populated area, depended on exporting industrial goods in exchange for food, and unless the Reich was willing to let the Ruhr population starve it was bound to send food and money into the occupied zone at its own expense. Thus the richest industrial area became dependent on an already economically ruined Germany.

In order to give passive resistance as broad a basis as possible, the German Government guaranteed full compensation for any damage caused by the occupation. Mining and industry in general suffered most. Factories would have been forced to dismiss most of their workers only a few weeks after the beginning of the occupation if the Government had not bridged the gap and provided the necessary wages. In addition, it was planned to operate a generous credit scheme to enable factories to carry on throughout the crisis. In this way, it was hoped to prevent large-scale unemployment which might have constituted a serious source of unrest.

Despite great organizational efforts, some industrialists regarded the aid as insufficient. The bureaucracy proved too slow and cumbersome to provide the quick and effective assistance which was needed. When aid arrived it was generally already worthless because of the growing inflation. Between 9 January 1923 and the end of July 1923 the exchange rate with the dollar fell from 10,000 to one million marks.

²¹ Grimm, *Vom Ruhrkrieg zur Rheinlandräumung*, p. 105.

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Vast sums of money were also needed to support the administration, railways, and postal personnel who were on strike. The transport of money into the occupied zone and its distribution there met with almost insuperable difficulties because the occupation authorities were particularly anxious to get hold of it. They hoped to be able to stop the passive resistance by depriving it of financial resources, but the money reached its destination in luggage vans with false walls, in shopping bags, under insoles, in fire engines and wheelbarrows. However, hundreds of spies and agents who managed to infiltrate the resistance movement enabled the occupation authorities to lay their hands on vast sums. The German post suffered repeated armed raids staged in broad daylight.

The resources of the Government soon proved insufficient to meet the rising costs of the struggle. A 'German Emergency Union' was set up, its members promising to contribute one hour's wages per month or to do an hour's overtime. Valuable contributions in the form of money or food were received from unoccupied Germany, Sweden, Britain, Austria, the USA and many other countries. They were collected and distributed by the 'German People's Sacrifice'. Some of the gravely undernourished children from the Ruhr were sent to recuperate in unoccupied Germany. Employers' and employees' associations throughout Germany co-operated in setting up 'German Industry's Ruhr Relief', contributing a portion of their wages.

But in the course of the struggle readiness to make sacrifices greatly diminished. Personal difficulties made people forget the lot of those who were in an even more unfortunate position. Most of the relief organizations closed down or were replaced by Protestant and Catholic relief organizations or the Red Cross.

Sabotage and its Effects

Although the main type of action employed in the Ruhr was passive resistance, some more active methods, which nevertheless did not involve acts of violence, were employed. Grimm wrote:

'It is extremely difficult to draw a precise dividing line between passive and active resistance. In one sense, the passive resistance was an active struggle from the very start. For instance, when civil servants removed office furniture the French wished to use, when they cut light and telegraph wires, when industrialists and workers rendered railway engines, hoists, or stores of coke unusable, when railwaymen damaged signal boxes before surrendering

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them, when the workers of the Rhenish-Westphalian power plants cut off supplies to the headquarters of MICUM in Essen, which action resulted in a court martial and a fine for Director Bussmann . . . all these may be considered as rather active engagements.²²

The resistance of railway and postal employees, and the leaflet propaganda, contained a strong element of positive activity. However the active struggle, in the strictest sense, began with acts of violence against property and persons which endangered human lives. Young officers, other ranks, students and workers, most of them belonging to some national military association, blew up railway lines and canal locks or scuttled canal barges to block the Rhine-Herne Canal. Between 19 March and the end of August there were some 180 acts of sabotage against trains and installations of the French railway company in the occupied area.²³ The best-known of the saboteurs was probably Leo Schlageter, who was sentenced to death by the French, and executed on 26 May 1923. He was regarded as a martyr of nationalism.

In the early stages of the struggle the saboteurs were organized in groups loosely connected with one another. Various nationalist organizations and paramilitary formations such as the 'Wehrwolf' (established on 11 January 1923, the day the Ruhr was occupied), the 'Treubund', the 'Wiking', the 'Jungdeutscher Orden', the 'Freikorps Oberland', etc., took the main part in violent sabotage. In the later stages these groups had close connections with the 'Black Reichswehr', a secret military organization formed in 1923 to defend Germany's exposed frontiers in an emergency. In March 1923 the 'Wehrkreiskommando VI' in Münster took over command of the violent sabotage actions, providing saboteurs with dynamite, money and false identity papers. There were many spies and traitors among their ranks, and most of the resistance fighters caught by the opponent had been betrayed. To protect themselves the resisters murdered some people whom they suspected. Neither the existence of the Black Reichswehr, nor the central control of the violent acts, could be kept secret from the occupation authorities for long. They expected an armed uprising, and tried to nip it in the bud by severe repression.

The Prussian Minister of the Interior, Severing (SPD), the trade unions and the population of the occupied area (except for a few groups) strongly disapproved of the acts of violent sabotage which were committed by people coming in from outside. Arguments about

²² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

²³ Wentzcke, *Ruhrkampf*, vol. 2, p. 123.

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violent sabotage upset the unity of the occupied area, achieved in the moral struggle of passive resistance. Only when the Reichswehr and the Government in Berlin withdrew their support and the Chancellor and the provincial governments publicly denounced such acts at Whitsun 1923 did they diminish. They had been of little effect, and hardly interrupted the lines of communication of the occupying forces to France and Belgium at all.

As a result of the acts of sabotage the German population had to endure terrible reprisals and punitive measures. Innocent people were manhandled or shot by angry soldiers. The occupying authorities arrested mayors and high-ranking civil servants as hostages and forced them to travel on French trains. People were severely punished in places where sabotage had occurred; mayors and private persons were arrested and the boroughs heavily fined. The occupation powers made a habit of arresting innocent but influential persons as hostages and holding them to ransom. Wentzcke estimated that altogether 141 Germans lost their lives through beating, arbitrary executions and shots from patrols and guards.²⁴

One particular act of sabotage had especially serious consequences. On 30 June 1923 saboteurs blew up the Hochfeld railway bridge across the Rhine near Duisburg. Ten Belgian soldiers in a train were killed and forty wounded. Reprisals were taken against innumerable innocent citizens. Passers-by were shot, arrested, manhandled or beaten to death. For weeks communications between the whole occupied area and unoccupied Germany were cut. Wentzcke wrote: 'The murder on the Hochfeld bridge . . . had a particularly unhappy influence on the situation. The Supreme Commander did not bother to find out whether or not Germans had been involved; General Degoutte took the opportunity to introduce a widespread ban on road traffic which in the history of the Ruhr struggle heralded the end of passive resistance.'²⁵

Although Grimm recognized that sabotage harassed the occupation forces, he said: 'It must remain a moot question whether or not the acts of sabotage served any useful purpose. The passive resistance was a legal struggle and achieved a high degree of world sympathy. Increasingly France found itself in moral isolation. The acts of sabotage served largely to reverse this decisive development of world opinion in favour of Germany. On 6 July 1923 the Papal Nuncio Pacelli [later Pius XII] protested to the Chancellor about the acts of sabotage . . . There can be no doubt, for instance, that the enforced

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 490 ff.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 424-5.

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isolation for months of the occupied area following the explosion on the Hochfeld bridge contributed considerably to a decrease of the will to resist.²⁶

In addition to the organized violent ("heroic") resistance, there was the strong and much more effective active, but non-violent, resistance of the trade unionists. Well organized, they were in general free of traitors and spies; they transported money and news material across the border, distributed newspapers and leaflets, established a news and intelligence service, and carried out non-violent sabotage.

Economic and Political Effects in Other Countries

The strategy of Cuno's Government was designed to achieve two ends: first, to damage the French economy by withholding coal and thus compelling France to withdraw; and secondly, to isolate France and Belgium morally and cause a rift among the Allies.

Because of its enforced isolation and the passive resistance struggle, the Ruhr was no longer able to fulfil its role as trading partner of the rest of Europe. At the outset of the struggle the heavy industries of France and Belgium were particularly hard hit, and compared with 1913 the amount of coal and coke from the Ruhr exported by the Rhine during 1923 was only one quarter (to France), one third (to Belgium), and one fifth (to Holland).²⁷ It seemed as if the German Government had achieved its main aim. On the whole, however, these measures failed, because British and Upper Silesian coal soon replaced Ruhr coal. Germany itself, including even the occupied zone, was forced to import British coal. In general, European countries were not directly threatened by the stoppage of coal deliveries, etc., but they were indirectly threatened by the inflation and the imminent breakdown of the German economy, owing to interdependence in economic and financial affairs.

Cuno's attempts to isolate the invading powers morally were more successful. Appeals, reports and legal opinions addressed to the British and American governments had some effect, and invitations to reporters, trade unionists, leading personalities and politicians from abroad to visit the Ruhr and see conditions for themselves helped to engage public opinion on behalf of Germany.

The British Government was naturally not keen to see France

²⁶ Grimm, *Vom Ruhrkrieg zur Rheinlandräumung*, p. 191.

²⁷ Wentzcke, *Ruhrkampf*, vol. 2, p. 12. As Toynbee wrote, "What Germany lost had by no means been gained by her adversary. If the mark had become valueless between January 1923 and January 1924, the franc had lost nearly a quarter of its value during the same period". *Survey of International Affairs 1924*, p. 291.

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take a leading position in Europe, but it did not allow an open breach to develop between formerly close allies. While it did not agree with France's actions, it did nothing to stop them, and only after the cessation of the struggle did the two Anglo-Saxon powers insist on an investigation of the whole question of reparations. The USA, which after the war had withdrawn from European affairs, returned to them through the problem of reparations and international loans.

The End of Passive Resistance

On 12 August 1923 the Cuno Government resigned after being defeated in the Reichstag; it was replaced by a new government on a broad parliamentary basis with Gustav Stresemann as Chancellor, which had to take on the difficult task of putting an end to the passive resistance which daily consumed millions of marks. The German offer to negotiate, which Cuno had already made, had been refused. The occupation powers demanded the cessation of passive resistance and the resumption of reparations before they would negotiate about a withdrawal of their troops, while Germany stipulated the withdrawal of the troops as a prerequisite to negotiations.

The situation in the Ruhr meanwhile became untenable. Industry was in a state of near-collapse and had to dismiss all personnel. Unemployment increased by leaps and bounds and the dole, small as it was for the individual worker, consumed vast sums. The state revenue had long been insufficient to cover the costs. The Government printed banknotes to bridge the gap, but there were never enough. The cities of the Ruhr began to print masses of money not backed by reserves, and the value of the mark fell into a bottomless pit.

The united front against the occupiers, which had been firm and strong at the outset, now began to disintegrate. The country was racked by hunger riots and Communist and separatist risings, tolerated and secretly encouraged by the occupation authorities. The struggle increasingly developed into a war on four fronts: against the invaders, against inflation and hunger, against Communists, and against separatists.

Eventually on 26 September 1923 the German Government issued a proclamation ending the passive resistance in the Ruhr. The time of harshest suffering for the population of the Ruhr and the Rhineland set in. The occupation authorities now began their own passive resistance to finish off the prostrate enemy and enforce the creation of a 'Rhenish Republic' independent of Germany: the cessation of

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passive resistance was not to be recognized until Germany resumed her deliveries of coal to France and Belgium, although the industrialists of the Ruhr lacked the necessary funds to resume work in the mines.

On 20 November 1923 the German Government finally succeeded in stabilizing the currency at the rate of 1,000,000 million marks for one unit of the new currency, the 'rentenmark', but even this was in danger of being overcome by further inflation unless the budget could be balanced, which was only possible by stopping unemployment pay. This meant that millions of people were in danger of starvation.

The abandonment of passive resistance and the willingness to resume reparation payments sparked off nationalist hysteria in Germany, and the Communists joined the right-wing nationalists in denouncing the Republic. On 27 September, the day after passive resistance was called off, President Ebert issued a proclamation establishing a state of martial law, transferring executive power to the hands of the Reichswehr minister. In Küstrin the 'Black Reichswehr' staged a rising on 1 October 1923; Bavaria resisted the orders of the German Government; in Munich Hitler attempted a *putsch* on 8-9 November; and Saxony and Thuringia were ruled by coalitions of Socialists and Communists, who disobeyed orders from Berlin. Meanwhile in the occupied zone the dissolution continued.

Ruhr industrialists finally succeeded in initiating negotiations with the opponent which led to the conclusion of separate agreements, the 'MICUM Treaties' of 23 November 1923. Gradually things returned to normal in the Ruhr area. Grimm wrote:

'Considering carefully the events of that time it seems to me that the following events between them effected the change at last: the breakdown of separatism, which had sustained bloody defeats in Hanhofen on 10 November 1923 and in the Siebengebirge on 16 November 1923, the conclusion of the MICUM treaties on 23 November 1923, the adoption of the rentenmark on 15 November 1923, the intervention of England, Italy and the USA, and the change in public opinion in France itself.'²⁸

Failure and Success of the Struggle in the Ruhr

The failure of the struggle in the Ruhr is obvious. Germany had to yield, and surrendered unconditionally. Yet the battle in the Ruhr was no victory for the opponent. The invaders achieved neither

²⁸ Grimm, *Vom Ruhrkrieg zur Rheinlandräumung*, p. 225.

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their economic nor their political ends, and Poincaré himself had to admit that his policies had failed in an extraordinary session of the French parliament from 13 November to 28 December 1923. World opinion was against him, and Britain and the USA were forced to change their attitude in the interest of their own threatened economies. The Belgian people openly condemned their government's adventure in the Ruhr. Grimm wrote:

'But even in France itself opinions were changing. The economic consequences of the Ruhr occupation showed themselves everywhere. A nation like the French is unable to endure moral isolation for any length of time. The occupation had repercussions which no one had expected. Thousands of Frenchmen who went to the Ruhr as soldiers and civilians became "*avocats des boches*", intercessors on behalf of the Germans. For the first time they saw the Germans as they really are. They met an industrious people living in neat houses, people who were so very different from what war propaganda had led them to believe. There were even many high-ranking officers who had soon to be replaced as unsuitable because of their friendly attitude towards the Germans... In the elections of May 1924 the French themselves decided against the *Bloc National*.'²⁹

Before the Ruhr occupation, in December 1922, the American Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes had proposed that an international commission of experts be convened to examine German solvency.³⁰ In his speech before the French parliament on 22 December 1922 Poincaré definitely refused the American offer of mediation. Yet only one year later, in December 1923, two months after the passive resistance was broken off unilaterally, he agreed to Hughes' proposals. In the meantime, of course, the situation had changed greatly. France had become disillusioned by the failure of the Ruhr occupation, German solvency had been weakened by the occupation, and public opinion in the Allied countries, even in France and Belgium, had turned against Poincaré's policy of sanctions. This was a consequence, not so much of passive resistance or German diplomacy, as of Poincaré's implacable attitude after the passive resistance was broken off unconditionally by Germany—an attitude which reinforced British and American suspicions that

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7. The *Bloc National* was a grouping of parties of the Right; it had won the elections of November 1919 with a large majority.

³⁰ Gescher, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika und die Reparationen*, pp. 135-7.

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France might be aiming at the final prostration of Germany and French supremacy over the continent. The intervention of Britain and the USA led to the convocation of two expert commissions under the chairmanship of the American financial experts Charles G. Dawes and Arthur N. Young, which started work in December 1923.

On 9 April 1924 the first commission, under Dawes, published its report. Germany was to pay 1,000 million gold marks in the first year, rising by stages to 2,500 million in the fifth year. These sums were to include occupation costs, and to meet the first payments Germany was to receive an international loan of 800 million gold marks. The problem of settling Germany's total debt was avoided. The Dawes Plan was a great improvement on the London settlement of May 1921 as far as Germany was concerned, and the Allies acknowledged in principle that German solvency would have to be the basis of reparations payments.

'The Dawes Plan also had a very important political element. The execution of its provisions was made dependent on the restoration of the economic and political unity of the German Reich, and a basis was thereby provided for the end of the occupation of the Ruhr area. The turning point in the history of the reparations came on 25 April 1924 when Poincaré agreed in principle to the commission's judgement. At a new international conference held in London in July and August 1924, in which Germany (represented by the Chancellor, Marx, and the Foreign Minister, Stresemann) took part, the Dawes Plan was accepted and the withdrawal of occupying forces from the Ruhr area was arranged. It was completed in June 1925.'³¹

The German historian Karl Dietrich Erdmann assessed the situation as follows:

'Who won the war of the Ruhr? The question cannot be answered unequivocally. There is no doubt that Germany was forced to her knees and had to accede to the reparation demands. But when American representatives were included on the committees, the question of reparations, against Poincaré's original intention, was taken away from the jurisdiction of the Reparations Commission, an organ of the Versailles Treaty, and reconsidered by a wider international body on the basis of solely economic considerations. France's unilateral action resulted in a resurgence

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9.

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of world-wide sympathy for Germany. By the resistance of the population of the Rhine and the Ruhr Germany's moral isolation was pierced. Most important of all, France failed to achieve her political goal, the separation of the Rhineland from the rest of Germany. Instead, the Dawes Plan, which resulted from the war of the Ruhr, was to become the first step on the road which led Germany out of political isolation and to Locarno and the League of Nations.'³²

LESSONS OF THE RUHRKAMPF

Reasons for the Failure of the Struggle

Germany employed the weapon of passive resistance not because her people were convinced of the moral or practical superiority of non-violent as against violent action, but from a sense of impotence and the realization that any form of military defence was out of the question. The *Ruhrkampf* turned into a continuation of the First World War with different weapons. From the outset it was governed by the thought of that barbaric war to which, indeed, it owed its existence. Hatred, and the spirit of violence caused by the war, repeatedly broke through on both sides and destroyed any small beginnings of reconciliation.

It was due partly to this hatred, partly to the lack of a non-violent spirit, and, not least, to a failure in German propaganda, that the Germans were unable to win over members of the occupying forces and split the occupiers' front. Apart from a very few isolated and unimportant cases of refusal to obey orders, the foreign command maintained complete discipline. The Germans were unable to find the right mixture (which can make non-violent resistance so dangerous) of friendliness towards the soldiers as fellow human beings on the one hand, and resistance against them as the instruments of foreign and unjust domination on the other.

Another cause of failure was the active struggle, since by the form it assumed it attacked non-violent resistance from the rear. It was generally recognized in the course of the struggle that passive resistance alone was not enough to prevent the exploitation of the mines, and resistance had to become more active. At this point its basically non-violent or violent nature had to become manifest. Instead of choosing the more active forms of non-violent action, people

³² Karl Dietrich Erdmann, 'Die Zeit der Weltkriege', in Bruno Gebhardt (ed.), *Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte*, 8th edition, Union Verlag, Stuttgart, 1959, vol. 4, pp. 135-6.

resorted to sabotage and violence, which did more harm than good to the cause of resistance by providing the occupation authorities with a justification for severe reprisals.

Lack of preparation and organization was a third, and equally important, reason for the failure of the struggle. The German defence did not make use of the chances it had—as was indicated by a remark made by General Degoutte in a private conversation with Grimm: 'In two or three weeks' time,' he said, 'passive resistance will be finished. It was different at first. You have no idea of the difficulties I had, nor of the opportunities you had of exploiting them. But now it is all over. My information is that people are fed up with passive resistance.'³³ A trained army of volunteers, conversant with the technique and methods of non-violent action, would have had untold opportunities for supporting and leading the population by constructive work, relief measures and non-violent direct action.

The economic causes of the failure, particularly Germany's economic weakness at the outset of the struggle, have already been stressed. The invaders won the battle at the moment when they succeeded in depriving the resistance of its economic resources. 'In the long run no army without material backing can wage a war.'³⁴ Although the German defence failed to prevent economic exploitation of the Ruhr, it was chiefly the inflation which weakened the resistance.

The Authorities and the Struggle

On the whole the authorities, particularly the authorities in Berlin, failed to support the resistance effectively. This was not the fault of the civil servants in the Ruhr, who bore the brunt of the enemy attack and maintained an exemplary attitude in carrying forward the resistance; it was more the fault of the bureaucratic structure and hierarchical organization—the way they were tied to rules and regulations. As in military war, so in the non-violent defence of a country everything depends on rapid and correct decisions. The authorities, who have to issue directions, are usually too far removed from the scene of battle to have any immediate conception or experience of the situation, which can be gained only where the action is taking place. The slow and complicated economic relief measures, for example, designed to exclude any possibility of misuse, were a constant cause of complaints from the industrialists.

The attempts made by bureaucracy to make every decree cover

³³ Grimm, *Vom Ruhrkrieg zur Rheinlandräumung*, p. 149.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

every possible contingency are most ill-advised for this sort of action. Some of the decrees issued by ministries in Berlin, for example, caused a great deal of damage. One such decree instructed all civil servants not to have any dealings with the occupation authorities; as a result, employees in German prisons refused to serve under the occupiers—a move which chiefly affected the resistance fighters who inhabited these prisons by the hundred. Conditions in the overcrowded prisons were terrifying, and a special decree was issued only after urgent appeals from the prisoners themselves.

At first local government employees strictly refused co-operation with the opponent. In consequence the population suffered so severely from requisitioning and billeting that the resistance threatened to collapse. This led to the creation of occupation offices for the purpose of regulating contact with occupation troops. As a rule, therefore, some degree of co-operation with the opponent is certainly advisable, particularly in matters of life and death, prison conditions, and relief for the population. Co-operation should go as far as possible so long as it does not violate the principles of non-violent resistance. It is useful also as a means of creating points of contact with the opponent which are likely to remove his prejudices.

Another government decree prohibited the delivery of coal, even ordinary household fuel, to the occupation authorities. As a result the foreign troops took their fuel by force, stoked their fires with tables and chairs, and beat up passers-by and forced them to haul barrow-loads of requisitioned coal to their quarters. The occupation authorities finally issued a decree under which any transport of fuel necessitated a special permit. This seems to indicate that it is advisable not to deprive occupation forces of the necessities of life but, on the contrary, to provide them readily and voluntarily. Only if the opponent feels that his existence is secure may he possibly be prepared to admit that he is wrong.

While, on the one hand, the state authorities were unsuited to non-violent resistance because of over-organization, the middle classes, shop and innkeepers, commercial travellers and the professions were, on the other hand, unsuited because of under-organization. Non-violent resistance demands a sense of unity which is generally absent where people depend entirely on themselves.

As against these groups, local government officials, chambers of commerce, trade unions, employers' federations, voluntary and professional associations, railways and post functioned extremely well.

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Economic Problems of Civilian Defence

The defence of an industrialized country by non-violent methods has to face two problems: first, how to prevent the economic exploitation of the occupied area; and second, how to safeguard the food supply of the population.

That passive resistance alone cannot prevent the economic exploitation of a country (though it may sharply reduce the value of exploitation) is *the* lesson of the Ruhr struggle. Non-violent direct action, such as sit-downs on the railway tracks and in front of lorries, could perhaps have prevented the removal of coal and industrial goods. The foreign officers would probably have ordered their troops to 'clean up' the railway tracks and streets, but by so doing they would have put themselves even more in the wrong, and they would not have been able to endure this for long. To resist the seizure of money in requisitions and robberies, and to recover the money, would have been far more difficult, and effective measures to counteract these actions have not yet been devised.

Providing food for the population is not a simple problem in a densely populated industrial area which imports foodstuffs and pays for these with exports. To provide sufficient food, it is important to do two things: to maintain the work process during the struggle as normally as possible (so that imports can be paid for); and to prevent a blockade of the occupied territory.

Strikes and partial strikes are effective only if the opponent is directly dependent on the strikers. The Ruhr miners went on strike in order to compel the occupation authorities to release the directors of mines or plants from prison, but this had no effect on the French. As a general rule strikes, even partial strikes, should be avoided as far as possible since they deprive the resistance of its material foundations. However, it might perhaps be useful to work towards a general strike in the aggressor's own country so as to force him to withdraw. The German Government certainly failed to do enough in 1923 to arouse public opinion in the occupiers' countries (and internationally), and could have made far more use of propaganda, demonstrations, protests and complaints.

Should the aggressor succeed in closing down particular branches of industry completely, the unemployed should be absorbed by agriculture or employed in emergency work, relief action, and the building of houses, roads, canals, etc. A detailed emergency programme should be worked out in advance to prepare for such an

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eventuality. If necessary, the costs should be met by loans raised at home and abroad.

The economy of the modern industrial state is a complicated network of mutual dependence, and the entire economy could be paralysed by the occupation of certain key areas or industries. This creates problems which must be solved if civilian defence is to be effective. The problems will be far more serious if the occupier can maintain an economic blockade, and one of the most important tasks of civilian defence must be to prevent this. The aim of a blockade is usually to starve out the population and thus break resistance. Non-violent direct action, such as a march across the border, is advisable, and if the worst came to the worst an 'air bridge', such as was used during the 1948 blockade of Berlin, might bring effective relief.

Although the economic circumstances in which it took place, and which indeed gave rise to it, were exceptional, the history of the *Ruhrkampf* is a reminder that economic factors may be decisive in determining the outcome of a civilian defence struggle. Hitherto, too little attention has been paid to these factors.