Speech by General Lucius D. Clay at the First Meeting of the Minister Presidents in Stuttgart (October 17, 1945)

Abstract

In October 1945, General Lucius D. Clay (then deputy American military governor) explained the principles behind U.S. policy on Germany to the newly appointed minister presidents of the *Länder* [federal states] in the American zone. The U.S. wished to maintain economic unity within Germany, and to that end it supported the formation of umbrella agencies under German oversight. The future economic structure of the country, though, was to be oriented toward agriculture and small-scale industry. Heavy industry and the concentration of economic power that it entailed were to be eliminated to prevent a renewed militarization of Germany.

Source

I am very glad to have the opportunity to meet with the *Länder* minister presidents. This is the first time such a meeting has been possible as we have only recently completed the formation of the *Länder* governmental machinery. Your task as a *Länder* minister president is a difficult task. You have been asked to accept the responsibility because of your known opposition to Nazism and your liberal views. In undertaking this task you will be rendering a real service to your people and, if successful, to the world.

I think that at our first meeting a brief summary of United States policy in Germany would be appropriate as you must operate under this policy.

United States policy in Germany is a firm policy. It may seem hard but it has been made so to destroy the war potential of Germany. It does not have as its theme the destruction of the German people.

It includes as a primary objective complete denazification which requires not only the removal of Nazis from places of prominence in all parts of German life but will also provide for the separation from the Nazis of any wealth accumulated as result of party activity. We have made many mandatory arrests. For security reasons, the arrestees have been prevented from communication with their families. This is not the American way and shortly we will permit arrestees to notify their families of their whereabouts. We also realize that a mandatory system of arrests may make some mistakes and we are arranging for the review of the records of arrestees by your tribunal so that you may recommend to us those instances which appear to you to be unjust.

Our policy includes complete demilitarization. This means not only a breaking up of military forces but also a deindustrialization directed principally at heavy industries.

All arms, ammunition, war implements and special facilities for their production must be destroyed. Metals, machinery, and chemicals will be left only to meet the internal post-war needs of Germany itself.

These post-war needs are to provide a standard of living which will not exceed the average of the surrounding countries excepting the United Kingdom and Russia. You will be permitted to develop an import and export program to sustain such a standard of living.

Its success will depend on your success in increasing agricultural production and in developing light industry.

Concentration of industrial power will be dispersed and will not be permitted to reform.

We know that the immediate problems of transport and coal will make it many months before even this standard of living can be reached. The transport situation is improving slowly. The coal situation is improving even more slowly, and it will be many months before coal can be made available for Germany to permit any widespread economic rehabilitation.

On the positive side of the picture we propose to return to you as quickly as possible the responsibility for self-government.

Our policy calls for the decentralization of governmental authority in the *Länder* units. We expect within the next two and a half months to remove our personnel from lower governmental units except as required for inspection and security. We propose to work with these units through the *Länder* government.

We propose to start the election of representative assemblies at the *Gemeinde* levels in January of next year. We understand that a number of you feel that this is too soon. However, we know of no other way in which the working of democratic processes can be placed under way in Germany.

We propose to return to you a free press and a free radio at the earliest possible date. You now have a complete freedom of religious worship. We also propose to remove any blocks which we may have placed in the way of liberal educational opportunities.

In increasing the governmental authority at the *Land* level we still believe in the operation of Germany as an economic unit. We are supporting the establishment of central administrative machinery for finance, industry, transport, communications, and foreign trade. We also believe that such administrative agencies are desirable for food and agriculture and labor.

However, these administrative machines do not exist now. *Länder* units have been formed in our zones. It is essential that there be complete coordination of governmental matters between these *Länder* units. This is especially true of the special Administrative Services such as post offices, transport, etc., which must serve all *Länder*.

The securing of this coordination is your job and not ours.

We do not wish to establish a zonal German capital in the United States Zone as we believe that central administrative machinery is essential to the operation of Germany as an economic unit.

Therefore, we propose as an interim measure to establish here in Stuttgart for our zone a council of minister presidents. You will meet periodically to confer on mutual problems.

You may establish a small secretariat and staff to which you may delegate such of your authority as you deem desirable.

A small American staff will be assigned at Stuttgart to supervise the work of the council and to see that it keeps within the scope of approved United States policy.

Since you will in fact develop the measures necessary for full coordination between your units it may be assumed that each of you individually will carry out what you have agreed to collectively.

Today we want you to draw your charter for our approval and to set a date for another meeting as soon as possible at which you will select your secretariat, develop the methods of financing your organization, and establish your secretariat in office.

In turning over this meeting for the preparation of this charter I wish to emphasize that within expressed U.S. policy “yours is the responsibility.” We will not dictate to you except as you violate expressed policy. We expect you to accept and to carry out your responsibility within that policy.

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