



THE U.S. ARMY  
CAMPAIGNS OF WORLD WAR I



OCCUPATION AND  
DEMOBILIZATION  
1918-1923



THE U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS OF WORLD WAR I  
COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

Series Editor: Brian F. Neumann

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Cover: On the Wharves at Saint Nazaire, *Jules André Smith, 1918*  
(Army Art Collection)

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OCCUPATION AND  
DEMOBILIZATION  
1918–1923

*by*  
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*and*  
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Center of Military History  
United States Army  
Washington, D.C., 2019





# INTRODUCTION

A century ago, the great powers of Europe became engulfed in what was then called the Great War. It signaled a new age in armed conflict in which mass armies supported by industrial mass production brought an unprecedented level of killing power to the battlefield. By the time the United States entered the war in 1917, the combatants were waging war on a scale never before seen in history. The experience defined a generation and cast a long shadow across the twentieth century. In addition to a tremendous loss of life, the war shattered Europe, bringing revolution, the collapse of long-standing empires, and economic turmoil, as well as the birth of new nation-states and the rise of totalitarian movements.

The modern U.S. Army, capable of conducting industrialized warfare on a global scale, can trace its roots to the World War. Although the war's outbreak in August 1914 shocked most Americans, they preferred to keep the conflict at arm's length. The United States declared its neutrality and invested in coastal defenses and the Navy to guard its shores. The U.S. Army, meanwhile, remained small, with a regiment as its largest standing formation. Primarily a constabulary force, it focused on policing America's new territorial possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific as it continued to adapt to Secretary of War Elihu Root's reforms in the years following the War with Spain. It was not until June 1916 that Congress authorized an expansion of the Army, dual state-federal status for the National Guard, and the creation of a reserve officer training corps.

In early 1917, relations between the United States and Germany rapidly deteriorated. The kaiser's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare threatened American lives and commerce, and German meddling in Mexican affairs convinced most Americans that Berlin posed a danger to the nation. In April 1917, the president, out of diplomatic options, asked Congress to declare war on Germany. But the U.S. Army, numbering only 133,000 men, was far from ready. The president ordered nearly 400,000 National Guardsmen into federal service, and more than twenty-four million men eventually registered for the Selective Service, America's first

conscription since the Civil War. By the end of 1918, the Army had grown to four million men and had trained 200,000 new officers to lead them. As it expanded to address wartime needs, the Army developed a new combined-arms formation—the square division. Divisions fell under corps, and corps made up field armies. The Army also created supporting elements such as the Air Service, the Tank Corps, and the Chemical Warfare Service. The war signaled the potential of the United States as not only a global economic power, but also a military one.

In June 1917, the 1st Division deployed to France, arriving in time to parade through Paris on the Fourth of July. The first National Guard division, the 26th Division from New England, deployed in September. By war's end, the American Expeditionary Forces, as the nation's forces in Europe were called, had grown to two million soldiers and more than forty divisions. During 1918, these American “doughboys” learned to fight in battles of steadily increasing scale: Cantigny, the Marne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne, adding thirteen campaign streamers to the Army flag. Overall, in roughly six months of combat, the American Expeditionary Forces suffered more than 255,000 casualties, including 52,997 battle deaths (as well as more than 50,000 nonbattle deaths, most due to the influenza pandemic). The war that the United States entered to “make the world safe for democracy” ended with an armistice on 11 November 1918, followed by a controversial peace. American soldiers served in the Russian Expeditions until 1920 and in the Occupation of the Rhineland until 1923, before withdrawing from Europe altogether.

The United States will never forget the American soldiers who fought and died in the World War. America's first unknown soldier was laid to rest on 11 November 1921 in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, where soldiers still stand guard. The United States created permanent American military cemeteries in France, Belgium, and Britain to bury the fallen. To this day, memorials to their sacrifice can be found across America, and the date of the armistice has become a national holiday honoring all those who serve in defense of the nation. The last surviving U.S. Army veteran of the war died in 2011. It is to all the doughboys, those who returned and those who did not, that the U.S. Army Center of Military History dedicates these commemorative pamphlets.

JON T. HOFFMAN  
Chief Historian



# OCCUPATION AND DEMOBILIZATION 1918–1923

When the guns finally fell silent at the end of the First World War, just under 2 million American soldiers were serving on the Western Front. Over the next month, 250,000 doughboys marched into Germany as part of an Allied occupation of the Rhine Province, commonly known as the Rhineland. Tens of thousands more Americans remained in France and provided crucial logistical support. The American occupation would continue until 1923, when the last soldiers withdrew as Europeans continued the difficult process of restoring the continent to stability.

For the majority of American forces, however, “it was recognized after the . . . first month of Armistice that the World War had ended as far as active operations were concerned.” American political, military, and business leaders quickly turned their attention to dismantling the vast war machine built during 1917 and 1918. Returning soldiers to their civilian lives and shifting to a peacetime economy proved as difficult as mobilization had been, but without the unifying impulse the war had provided. Just as the war produced unique challenges for the nation, so too did the process of demobilization. The American armed forces underwent a massive reduction in force and returned to peace in a world fundamentally altered by war.

## STRATEGIC SETTING

For the first half of 1918, few, if any, of the senior Allied leaders expected the German collapse that year. Allied planning anticipated that the war would continue into 1919, when the Allies expected the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) to take a leading role in the final push to victory. Even as American units entered combat on a large scale in the late spring and early summer of 1918, leaders in the War Department and the AEF General Headquarters (GHQ) still focused on building up American forces for major operations the following year. The United States

made concessions to the Allied predicament in spring 1918 and increased the shipments of infantry and machine gun units in lieu of auxiliary and support troops beginning in May, though it planned to have sixty combat divisions on the Western Front within a year's time. In late summer, however, as the Allies launched a series of offensives following the Second Battle of the Marne, the Allied leaders began to realize the weakened state of the German military. The resulting Grand Allied Offensive, which included the American assault in the Meuse-Argonne, battered the Germans across the entire front. In October, with their forces approaching collapse in the face of relentless Allied pressure, the Germans requested peace negotiations. The two sides ultimately reached an agreement for an armistice on 11 November 1918.

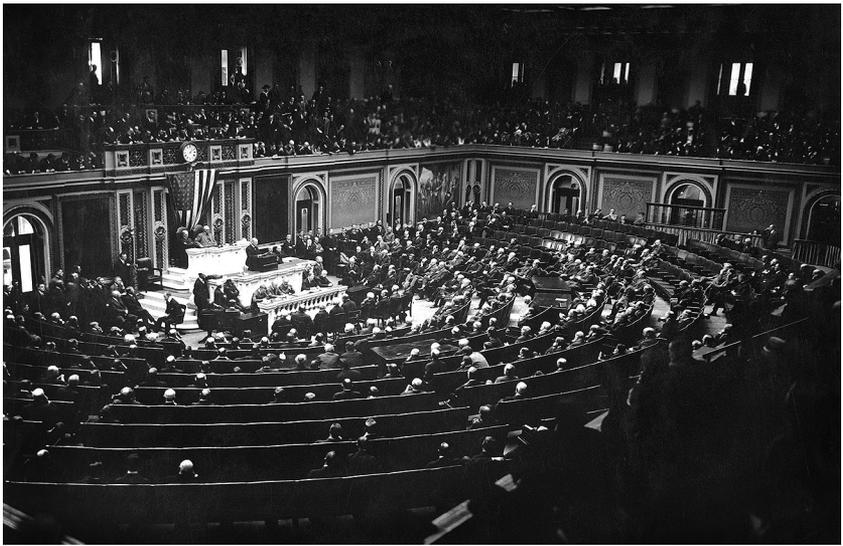
At the time of the Armistice, the U.S. Army consisted of 3,685,458 officers and men, seventeen times what it had been in April 1917. The vast majority of these recruits came through the Selective Service System, which inducted 2,801,373 men into the Army and an additional 8,923 men into the Navy and the Marine Corps. Transporting the soldiers to the Western Front and keeping them supplied had been one of the greatest accomplishments of the American war effort. The AEF's presence in Europe, to say nothing of its troops' prowess on the battlefield, helped sustain the Allies during the final year of the war. The AEF had fulfilled President Woodrow Wilson's objective of making a significant contribution to the Allied victory and earning the United States a place at the peace table. The Armistice had brought an end to the fighting, but also presented a new challenge of what to do in its aftermath.

The Allies began discussing an occupation of the Rhineland in October 1918 after the German appeal to President Wilson for an armistice. The Rhine Province was one of Germany's primary administrative divisions, as well as its wealthiest and most populous region, and formed much of the country's industrial base. The staunchest proponents of such an occupation were the French. After four years of bloody warfare, they both hated the Germans and feared Germany's military and economic potential. French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the general-in-chief of Allied forces on the Western Front, initially proposed occupying the Rhineland with bridgeheads on the east bank of the Rhine River to ensure that the Allies could exact reparations. He also sought to give Allied forces a "suitable military base of departure" in case fighting resumed.

The Americans had mixed feelings about the necessity of an occupation. Maj. Gen. Henry T. Allen, the future commander of the occupation, stated to AEF Commander General John J. Pershing his belief that “under no circumstances” should the AEF return to America without entering German territory. On 26 October, Pershing met with Foch, French Army commander General Henri Philippe Pétain, and British Expeditionary Force commander Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to discuss the question of occupation. Following the meeting, he reported to “Colonel” Edward M. House, Wilson’s envoy for armistice negotiations, that he could not guarantee Germany’s acceptance of “reasonable conditions of peace . . . without the occupation by the allied armies of the territory west of the Rhine.” Conversely, General Tasker H. Bliss, the American representative to the Allied Supreme War Council, thought that an occupation would lead to Allied militarism, which threatened to “keep the world in turmoil for many years to come.” After discussing the matter with Bliss in late October, Wilson wrote to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker that any occupation of territory east of the Rhine amounted to a virtual invasion of German soil under the proposed terms of the Armistice.

However, Wilson and House were focused on securing Allied acceptance of Wilson’s peace program, the Fourteen Points, rather than on the potential occupation. They accepted French premier Georges Clémenceau’s promise that France would withdraw all its soldiers from the Rhineland after the Germans fulfilled the terms of the peace treaty. Regrettably, House failed to impress upon the French government Wilson’s reluctance to participate in an occupation, and by 1 November, Foch had persuaded British and American officials that a joint occupation of the Rhineland was a military and political necessity. Four days later, Wilson sent a note to the German government explaining that the Allies had agreed to occupy the Rhineland while they negotiated a peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points.

Confronted with overwhelming Allied military strength as well as the threat of a Communist uprising on the home front, Germany had to accept Allied terms. On the morning of 8 November, German representative Matthias Erzberger met with Foch and other Allied leaders aboard a railway car in Compiègne, France, to conclude an armistice. Erzberger strenuously argued against the establishment of Allied bridgeheads on the Rhine. The Allies, fearful of Bolshevik uprisings, promised German administrative unity between the east and west banks of the river, but Foch



*President Wilson reading the Armistice terms to Congress*  
(National Archives)

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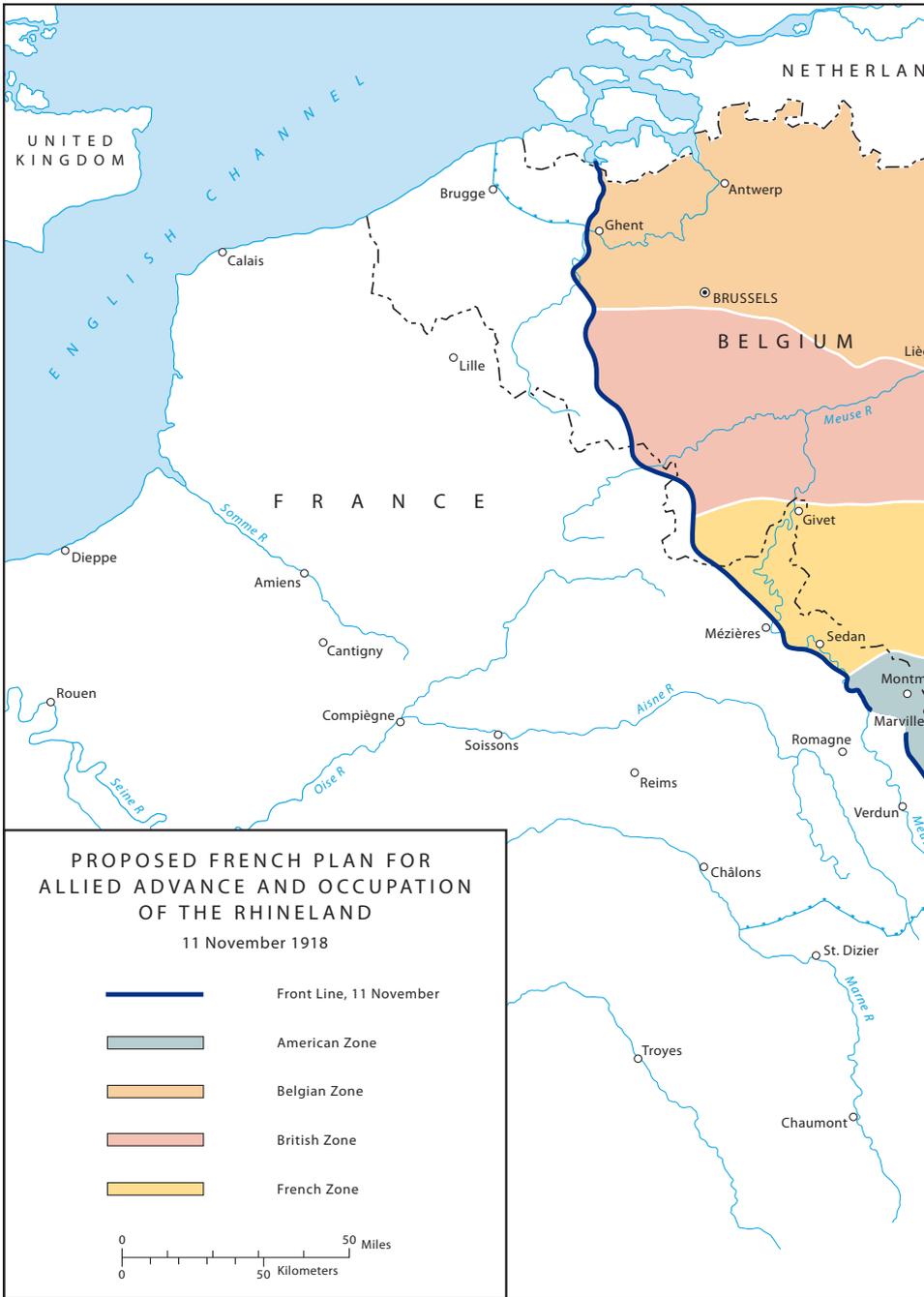
insisted on the bridgeheads and refused to accept limits on the size of the occupation force. Erzberger had little choice but to acquiesce. The two sides concluded the negotiations at 0500 on 11 November. Under the terms of the Armistice, the German Army surrendered 5,000 artillery pieces, 25,000 machine guns, 1,700 planes, and 5,000 locomotives. Article V of the agreement stipulated that the territory on the west bank of the Rhine River would be administered by local authorities “under the control of the troops of occupation of the Allies and the United States.” Moreover, Article IX charged the German government with paying all expenses related to the upkeep of the armies of occupation.

The Allied governments gave Foch responsibility for dividing the 31,000 square kilometers of occupied German territory along the Rhine into zones for Allied forces: the Belgian Army; the French Fifth, Eighth, and Tenth Armies; the British Second Army; and the American Third Army. (*See Map 1.*) At the time, the total population on the Rhine’s west bank and in the three Allied bridgeheads was approximately 7 million. Foch gave the British the bridgehead at Cologne (Köln), a major city in the Ruhr Basin and the Rhineland’s industrial heart. He assigned French forces

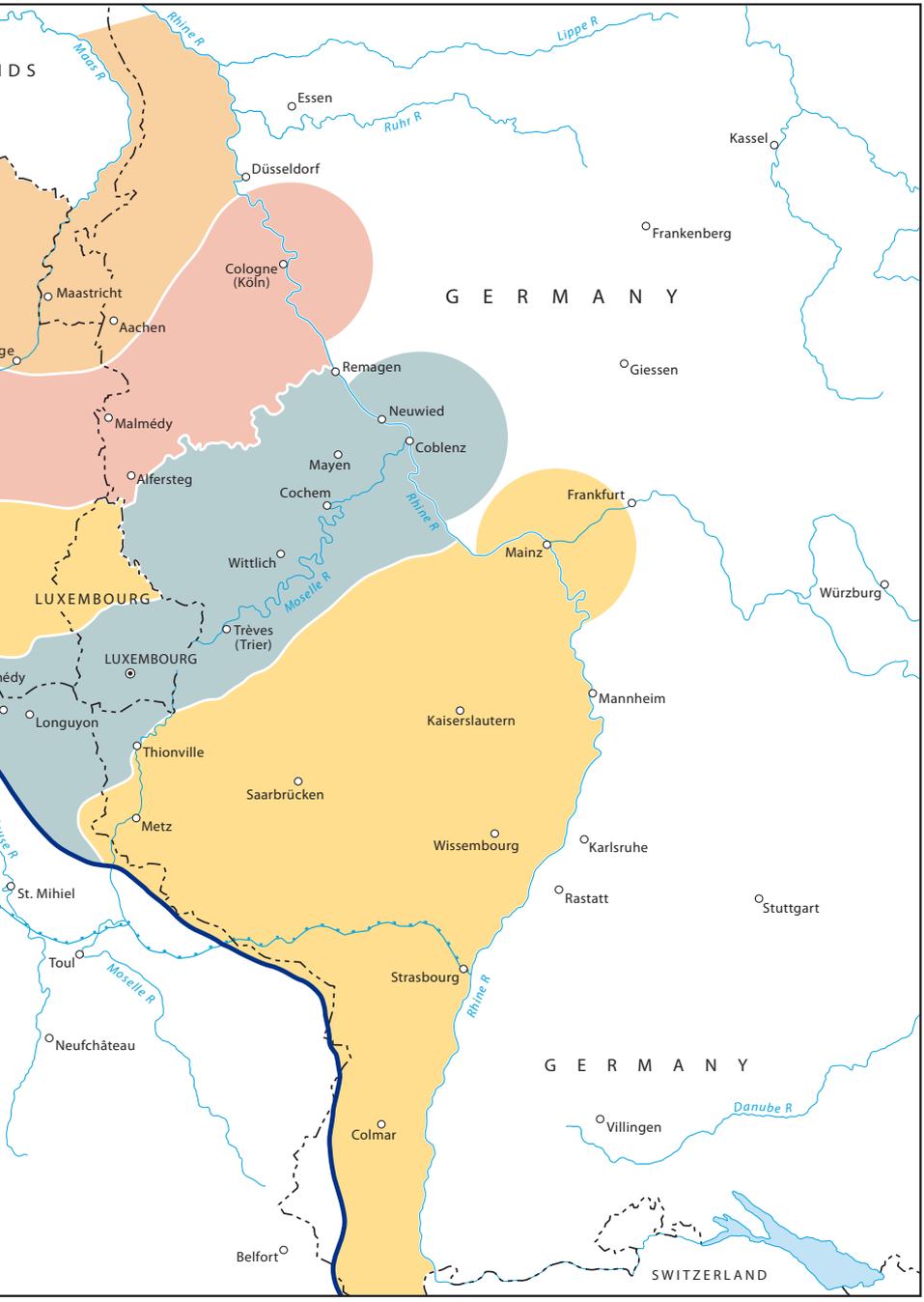
the Saar, Palatinate (Pfalz), and Mainz regions. The American zone fell between the British to the north and the French to the south. It covered 6,500 square kilometers, stretching from Luxembourg eastward along the Moselle (Mosel) River and extending across the Rhine to a bridgehead at Coblenz (spelled Coblence during the French occupation). In 1919, the area's population totaled 893,000. Its two largest cities were Trèves (Trier) and Coblenz, with the latter serving as the Rhineland's political center and with an urban population of 65,434. Although wartime demands had quadrupled production at the steel and chemical factories in the Neuwied Basin, much of the American zone consisted of small agricultural villages.

Although thousands of Americans would soon be dispatched to Germany to begin the occupation, most of the doughboys who rejoiced over the Armistice expected that they would be going home. However, the War Department had not expected such a swift end to the hostilities, and it had made no preparations for demobilization. As Secretary Baker explained to a senator, "The collapse of the Central Powers came more quickly than even the best informed military experts believed possible." U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Peyton C. March had been forced to suspend all American troop transports to Europe in early November because of the influenza epidemic, which reached its highest mortality rate in October, but otherwise he had no formal demobilization plan. Instead, he had spent the previous six months building the American war machine to its apex, with limited consideration for the war's aftermath. As one postwar study surmised, "Democracy shakes down to an effective fighting machine slowly and wastefully. It reaches its peak when hostilities cease, and the enemy, for which it was fully prepared to fight, is nonexistent. Thus, when peace comes, the country is unprepared." March instructed the War Plans Division of the General Staff to study demobilization on 14 October, but it did not deliver its initial plan until 22 November.

American tradition held that the nation would return to its prewar status as rapidly as possible once hostilities ceased. The public began to clamor for the men's return almost immediately after the Armistice. Morale among the soldiers, most of whom were conscripts, would decline steadily the longer they remained in uniform. From a political standpoint, the Democratic Party could ill afford to alienate the electorate after its poor showing in the November midterm elections, in which the Republican Party took control of both houses of Congress. Economically, the war cost



**MAP 1**



\$50 million per day, which could hardly be justified in the absence of combat operations. American industry, which had shifted to a war footing, could not sustain itself without government support based upon the war emergency. Summarizing the situation, Brig. Gen. Benedict Crowell, the assistant secretary of war, later wrote, “the armistice was a command to the Government to scrap the war machine and restore its parts to the peaceful order in which they had been found.”

The task of transitioning to peace, however, would prove Herculean. As one study concluded, “The gigantic industrial and military machine of the United States, only beginning to run in high gear, suddenly had to be thrown into reverse.” American military policy for the postwar era remained unclear, including the size and structure of the peacetime Army. Whatever the ultimate determination of future policy, millions of soldiers in France would need to return to the United States to be discharged. The millions who had remained stateside also would return to civilian life, but how many and in what order? Releasing millions of men into the American labor market, especially as it transitioned to peacetime, could cause rampant unemployment. Moreover, should government support for industry immediately cease during the transition from wartime production, it could undermine the national economy and prompt a recession or even a depression. Additionally, the American armed forces had ordered or acquired billions worth of war materiel over the past eighteen months, which the government now needed to dispose of with minimum waste. The federal government and the U.S. Army had to address these and myriad other issues. The more immediate concern, however, was ensuring that if the halt in the fighting proved temporary, the Allies were in position to strike quickly into Germany.

#### THE MARCH TO THE RHINE, NOVEMBER 1918–JANUARY 1919

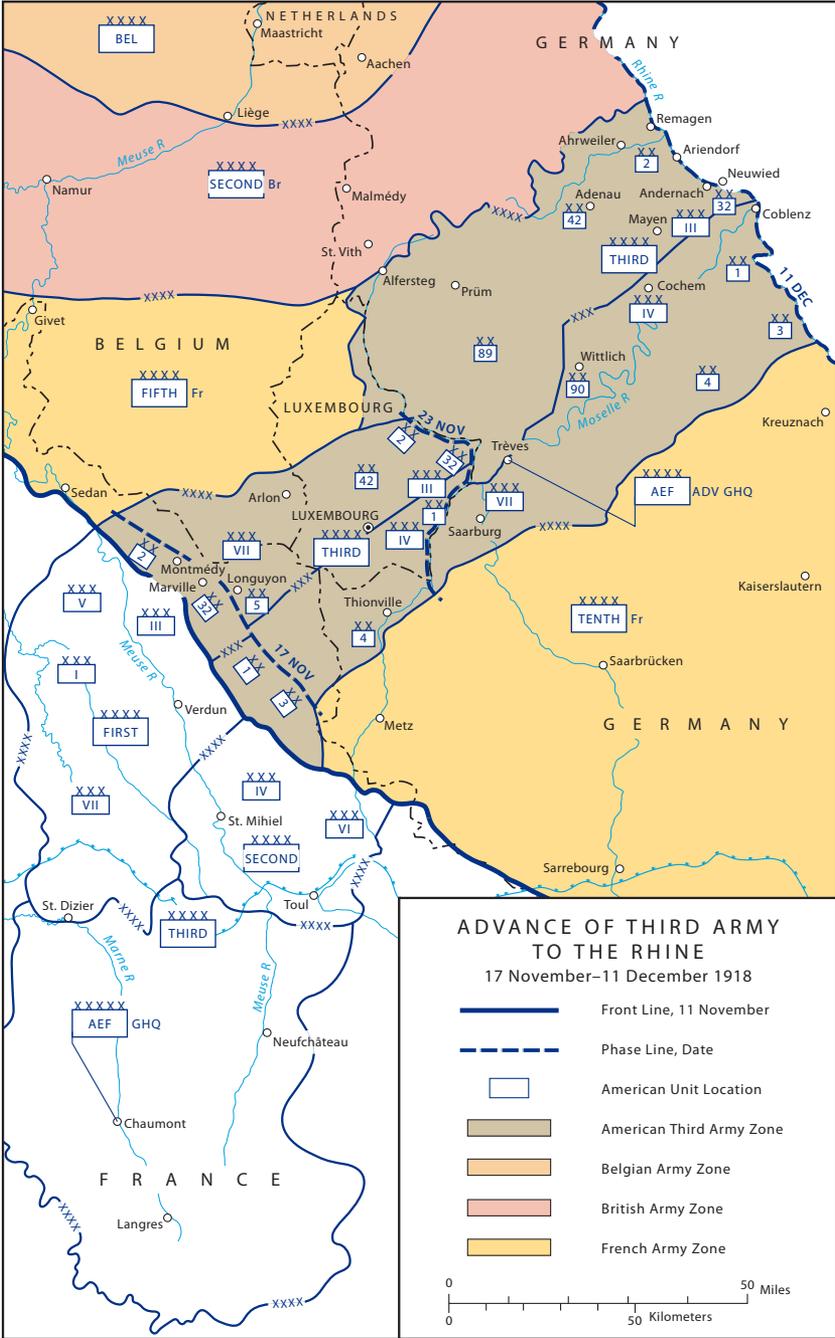
Four days before the signing of the Armistice, Pershing created the American Third Army. Composed of the III and IV Army Corps, each consisting of three divisions, it totaled nearly 200,000 men. Maj. Gen. Joseph T. Dickman, who led the I Army Corps during the last month of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, assumed command of the Third Army on 15 November 1918. Brig. Gen. Malin Craig, who had served as the I Corps chief of staff since January, held the same position in the Third Army. The III Corps consisted of the 2d, 32d, and 42d Divisions. The 2d Division was a Regular Army

division commanded by Marine Corps Maj. Gen. John A. Lejeune. It had earned fame at Belleau Wood in June 1918, took part in the Allied attack at Soissons in July and the first American offensive at St. Mihiel in September, captured Blanc Mont Ridge in October, and led the American breakout in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in early November. The other III Corps divisions were National Guard Divisions. The 32d (Red Arrow) Division, made up of units from Michigan and Wisconsin, had fought in the Aisne-Marne campaign in July and August and played a crucial role in seizing the town of Romagne in mid-October during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The 42d (Rainbow) Division, a mix of National Guard units from twenty-six states, had fought with distinction in the Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne campaigns.

The divisions initially assigned to the IV Corps were all from the Regular Army. The 1st Division (Big Red One) had served in France since June 1917. As the first American division in France, it had fought in nearly every AEF campaign, gaining distinction at Cantigny in May, at Soissons in July, and in the offensives at St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne. The 3d Division had earned its reputation for toughness on the Marne River during the Champagne-Marne campaign in July and in the Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne campaigns. Likewise, the battle-tested 4th Division had fought in the Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne. In selecting these divisions for the Third Army, Pershing intended to use his most experienced units for the challenging task of occupation.

On 22 November, two divisions of the VII Army Corps passed to the command of the Third Army. The 89th and 90th Divisions were National Army divisions composed of draftees who had engaged in combat operations up to the Armistice. These two divisions temporarily raised the strength of the Third Army to 9,842 officers and 229,760 enlisted men.

Pershing directed the Third Army to enforce the terms of the Armistice, which required the Germans to evacuate France, Luxembourg, and the Alsace-Lorraine region within fifteen days. The Third Army began its advance to the Rhine at 0530 on 17 November (*Map 2*). The III Corps comprised the Third Army's left (northern) flank, with the 2d and 32d Divisions in the advance and the 42d Division in support. To the south, the IV Corps held the right flank, with the 1st and 3d Divisions out front and the 4th Division in reserve. The French Fifth Army initially advanced on



MAP 2

the Third Army's left flank and the French Tenth Army was on its right.

German commanders issued strict orders for their men to retreat with the utmost discipline so as to maintain firm control of the roads and railroads leading into Germany. Their soldiers generally complied. American intelligence reports indicated that the Germans left behind a substantial amount of military equipment while retreating at a steady pace and refraining from pillaging. Within the American zone, the Germans withdrew northeast through the towns of Montmédy, Longuyon, and Marville, and the Third Army followed without incident at a distance of ten kilometers. On 20 November, American forces crossed into Luxembourg, where the people lined the street to shower the soldiers with flowers and music. The next day, Pershing reviewed the Third Army from Luxembourg's royal palace as it marched through the capital city. A group of workmen's unions, Boy Scouts, and women's societies escorted the Americans. They carried a banner that read "To the Saviours of Our Country." Pershing issued a proclamation to the people of Luxembourg, stressing that American soldiers came as "friends" who would conduct themselves "strictly in accordance with international law" and would in no way interfere with local government. By 23 November, the III and IV Corps, with the VII Corps following close behind, reached the border with Germany. There the Third Army halted with its entire front along the border to the northwest of the Moselle River.

Following a weeklong pause for training, inspection, and reorganization for the Third Army, the VII Corps closed up on the III and IV Corps in preparation for a general advance into Germany on 1 December. When the 42d Division crossed the border, Chaplain Francis P. Duffy of the 165th Infantry described how regimental bands played "Over There" as the soldiers "marched triumphantly onto German soil." As the German Army continued to withdraw, the Third Army moved toward the Rhine. The IV Corps maintained contact with the French Tenth Army on its right, whereas the left flank of the III Corps had become linked with the British Second Army to the north after the French Fifth Army halted at the Luxembourg-Germany border. By the end of the day, the Third Army's front ran along a line from Alfersteg to Trèves on the west bank of the Moselle.

German citizens, who only days before had witnessed the retreat of their own *First, Third, Seventh, and Seventeenth*

*Armies*, displayed little animosity toward the soldiers and gazed on them with what American officers termed “indifferent curiosity.” Duffy thought that the “greatest surprise” upon entering Germany was the attitude of the people; a farmer actually invited him and Capt. John Mangan into his home for dinner and schnapps. Likewise, Brig. Gen. Johnson Hagood, the commander of the 66th Field Artillery Brigade, claimed that the Third Army was “greeted as long lost friends” by Rhinelanders and they attempted to “ingratiate themselves with the Americans.” Even the discharged German soldiers—many still in uniform—who milled about the towns were “curious, almost friendly.”

Although bad weather turned the roads to mud and slowed the pace of the advance, the III and IV Corps continued their movement toward Coblenz, located at the junction of the Rhine and Moselle Rivers. The VII Corps crossed the German frontier on 6 December; its 90th Division followed the IV Corps on the right, whereas the 89th Division supported the left flank of the III Corps. On 7 December, the German Army completed its evacuation of Coblenz and retreated to the east bank of the Rhine. Dickman ordered the Third Army to reach the river by 11 December and halt for further orders. American cavalry patrols reached the Rhine at Remagen on 8 December, found the railroad bridge in working order, and immediately placed a guard on it. The main elements of the III and IV Corps, as well as the French Tenth Army, subsequently moved into position on the west bank and spent the next few days resting and cleaning their equipment.

At the beginning of the general advance in mid-November, Marshal Foch had ordered that each bridgehead on the Rhine be occupied by inter-Allied forces. Foch wanted one French division stationed at the Cologne bridgehead and two French divisions at Coblenz, ostensibly enabling the French to exert administrative control over the entire occupied zone. The British, however, refused to allow French soldiers to move into Cologne. Pershing likewise resisted Foch’s efforts, contending that dividing the bridgehead at Coblenz would complicate logistics and confuse administration in the American zone. Privately, he confided that it was time that American forces “for once act independently of the French.” Ultimately, Pershing declined to execute Foch’s order, and the marshal conceded the point. However, Foch responded by removing the southern third of the Coblenz bridgehead from the Third Army’s control and assigning it to the French. Although Pershing considered this a slight, he had been instructed by the

War Department to return American soldiers to the United States as rapidly as possible. Although he did not press the matter, the controversies with Foch added to Pershing's wariness regarding the French.

Beginning on 13 December, the Third Army moved into the Coblenz bridgehead—an area defined by a fifty-kilometer arc that stretched from Malmeneich in the south to Ariendorf in the north. The III Corps (now composed of the 1st, 2d, and 32d Divisions) crossed to the east bank of the Rhine, using a pontoon bridge at Coblenz and railroad bridges at Engers and Remagen. The IV Corps (3d, 4th, and 42d Divisions) stayed on the west bank to occupy Mayen, Ahrweiler, Adenau, and Cochem, whereas the 89th and 90th Divisions of the VII Corps concentrated around Trèves and Wittlich. Dickman ordered his units to set up five defensive positions: an outpost position, a main position of resistance with half of the Third Army's troops, two reserve positions to the west of the Rhine, and a "switch position," which was to be held until the American line connected with the British to the north. Together, these positions formed a series of mutually supporting strong points. Dickman placed the bulk of the Third Army's artillery in support of the main position, and instructed his soldiers to erect firing trenches and wire obstacles. He also told his corps and division commanders to remain "prepared for aggressive offensive action" at all times. On 17 December, Dickman announced that the Third Army was in place around Coblenz, with its rear stretching back to the German-Luxembourgish border.

A commercially robust city, Coblenz became the focal point of the American occupation. After witnessing the war's devastation in France, Hagood noted that Coblenz "showed no sign of war. . . . The shops were open and displayed everything in the way of food, clothing, toys, furniture, [and] hardware that would be seen in any American city." A pontoon bridge stretched 400 meters across the Rhine, and the "enormous traffic in both directions" impressed Dickman. This bridge led to the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, located on a "precipitous cliff" on the river's east bank. Dickman thought that the fortress, which towered over Coblenz, was "among the most picturesque attractions" he had ever witnessed. In a symbolic move to demonstrate American control over the region, Dickman ordered the "largest American flag that could be found" to fly from Ehrenbreitstein's tallest flagstaff. When the flag caught the wind, Dickman proudly claimed that to the men of the Third Army it was "the finest sight in the world."



*Soldiers looking over the Rhine at Ehrenbreitstein fortress*  
(National Archives)

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During the Third Army's advance to the Rhine, Pershing issued several orders that laid the groundwork for the conduct of American forces in German territory. On 1 December, the day the Third Army crossed the German border, Foch and Pershing made simultaneous proclamations to the people of the Rhineland. Foch notified the population that their laws would remain in force insofar as they did not affect the safety of the Allied armies, but he warned against any act of hostility, either direct or indirect, toward Allied forces. Pershing's proclamation mirrored the one he had issued in Luxembourg ten days earlier. He reassured the Rhinelanders that the Americans had no ill intentions toward the civilian population and he promised to protect the lives, homes, and property of all who peacefully abided by the military regulations. Finally, he made clear that it was "the duty of the population to regain their normal mode of life" by reestablishing their schools, churches, and hospitals.

Pershing's orders to his troops struck a similar tone and stressed the Third Army's responsibility to protect the civilian population. Just before the advance into the Rhineland, Pershing reminded his men that the Americans "have not come as despoilers or oppressors, but simply as instruments of a strong, free

government whose purposes towards the people of Germany are beneficent.” American soldiers were to maintain a “dignified and reserved attitude” at all times. Should any commit acts of pillage or violence, the commanding general would consider it a dishonor to the entire Army and punish the offender “with the severest penalties known to our military law.” Before entering a German town, commanding officers had to send for the local burgomaster (in German, *Bürgermeister*; the equivalent of a mayor) and inform him that the soldiers would respect private property, personal rights, and local government if the inhabitants remained peaceful. Additionally, the Armistice laid out the right of Allied armies to billet and requisition supplies, but all such requests had to be made to the burgomaster. As the Rhineland was suffering from a scarcity of provisions with winter rapidly approaching, the Third Army initially declined to requisition foodstuffs.

At least some men in the Third Army grasped the fundamental nature of their new role even before Pershing’s proclamation. An article in *Stars and Stripes* admitted that the Americans came to Germany as victors but advised the doughboys to remain humble and contrite. “For although we enter as conquerors,” it proclaimed, “we enter also as peace-makers.” Although a number of soldiers harbored feelings of bitterness and distrust against the Germans, close contact with Rhinelanders, particularly women and children, softened these sentiments. “Hospitality was offered in each village,” explained Pvt. Albert Ettinger of the 42d Division. “It was difficult to be formal and correct conquerors when confronted by smiling children and frauleins.” Indeed, civil affairs officers found that by the time the troops reached their permanent stations, “their mental attitude towards the inhabitants had entirely changed.” From the outset of the occupation, many of the soldiers who billeted in private homes quickly struck up “strong friendships” with the children of their hosts.

At the same time, the close proximity of American soldiers to German civilians made it virtually impossible for officers to enforce Pershing’s antifraternalization orders. Because a state of war technically existed until the Allied and German governments signed a peace treaty, Pershing banned all “intimate personal associations” between soldiers and civilians. Certain German officials, including the burgomaster of Trèves, also spoke out against German women consorting with American soldiers and threatened to shun any women seen with one. Nevertheless, many men in the Third Army willfully ignored the order. Duffy, billeted



*A doughboy playing music for German children*  
(National Archives)

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in the home of the burgomaster of Remagen, kept his relationship with the adults in the home “as official as possible” but admitted that if officers expected him to avoid fraternizing with the friendly children, they would “have to lock me up or shoot me.” Despite the fact that the antifraternization policy proved impossible for military police to enforce, it remained in existence throughout the life of the Third Army.

Another challenge the Third Army faced on its march to the Rhine was that of securing German war materiel. Article VI of the Armistice stated that all property abandoned by the German Army—in addition to that surrendered under Article IV—became the property of the Allied armies. The Germans, however, attempted to circumvent this provision by selling off military equipment cheaply to local civilians and then claiming that the materiel had become private property immune from seizure. American officers discovered that retreating German soldiers had sold horses and rifles for as little as twenty-five and five marks, respectively. Pershing and Dickman dismissed the scheme and insisted that the Third Army held the right to seize all military equipment, even if it was in the possession of German citizens.

In an effort to locate the German materiel, Dickman ordered his corps and division commanders to inspect their areas for military equipment. American officers classified any such property they found into one of three categories: materiel abandoned by the German Army; materiel transferred by the German Army to a third party before the Armistice; and materiel transferred to a third party following 11 November. Troops immediately seized all property in the first category. Civilians were entitled to keep anything they had purchased before their government signed the Armistice. However, the German government had forfeited all rights to such property upon signing the Armistice and therefore could not legally sell it, making any claims of the purchaser immaterial.

The policy provoked considerable resentment from German civilians, but Dickman was unmoved. On 10 January 1919 he officially declared all post-Armistice sales by the German Army “null and void.” Dickman required both individuals and corporations that had purchased such property to turn it over to the nearest military commander or their local burgomaster within ten days, or face a trial. Ultimately, the Third Army refrained from confiscating a good deal of property—particularly horses—as it was of little military value but proved essential to the local farmers. The sale of all seized property fell to the newly created Enemy War Material Board. All funds the Army realized from these transactions went back to the Third Army’s chief quartermaster, who used it to pay the soldiers. By August 1919, the board had sold or disposed of all the materiel for approximately 10 million marks (\$2.5 million).

## DEBATING NATIONAL MILITARY POLICY

The U.S. Army at the time of the Armistice was fundamentally different than it had been eighteen months earlier. In addition to its vast expansion, the war prompted the Army to create new bureaus and directorates, necessitated a complete reorganization of the Army General Staff and bureau system, and saw the implementation of a new form of conscription tied directly to federal service. The most recent peacetime statute on national military policy, the National Defense Act of 1916, did not cover these changes and did not reflect the adaptations wrought by the war. Although politicians and the military leadership agreed that most soldiers would return to civilian life, it remained unclear what form the Army would take once demobilization ended.

Secretary Baker and General March approached demobilization as an opportunity to reform the Army and readjust its place in peacetime American society. They had to “reckon with the possibility of a future war of a similar nature, and to try to ensure that the United States would be better prepared for a recurrence of such a war, despite a military tradition of looking mainly to defense of the continental homeland.” Building upon structural changes over the past eighteen months and the implementation of Selective Service, they developed a plan to shift American military policy from utilizing citizen-soldiers in wartime to relying on a large standing army made up of professional forces. Their proposed Army Reorganization Act (hereafter referred to as the March-Baker Bill) represented a fundamental change in the nature of a standing army in American society.

As early as the summer of 1918, March had begun thinking about the Army’s postwar reorganization. He had two main objectives: to make the wartime changes within the War Department permanent, most notably the strengthening of the General Staff and the Office of the Chief of Staff, and to create a military establishment that could fulfill the nation’s security needs and respond to emergencies while avoiding the turbulent mobilization it experienced during the war. By October, he had settled on a basic structure for a postwar Army of twenty combat and four depot divisions. At these reduced levels, the force would total between 400,000 and 500,000. March used the upper figure as a starting point and presented the idea to Baker and President Wilson. Both agreed on the target of a 500,000-man standing army. Their acceptance was not surprising as Baker generally deferred

to military experts on questions of policy and Wilson's main focus was the upcoming Paris Peace Conference. This left March as the primary driver of the reform program.

On the day of the Armistice, March turned over his rough plan to the General Staff's War Plans Division to work out the details of the reorganization bill. They solicited the views of the heads of each administrative bureau, technical service, and operating agency within the Army. The members of the General Staff then set about determining which suggestions they would incorporate into the new plan. Before they could finish, March asked for a basic outline, which he received on the last day of the year. Dissatisfied with the direction they were taking, the chief of staff stepped in and essentially dictated the design for a postwar Army. The final plan called for "a minimum force of one field army of five corps, skeletonized to about 50 per cent of its strength in such a way as to include a nucleus for all organizations which require extended training and instruction in time of peace, and be capable of ready expansion in time of war to full strength without impairing its efficiency for service."

March believed the bill represented a simple, workable reorganization plan that had been developed as "a result of free and complete discussion" among senior War Department officials with the support of both Wilson and Baker. It reflected his view that given the unstable nature of the postwar world, along with the United States' increased international presence, the nation needed a large, professional Army that could protect its interests in peacetime and times of emergency. With all seemingly in agreement, the House of Representatives introduced the bill on 16 January 1919.

Despite March's enthusiasm, elements within the Army opposed the bill. The bureau chiefs were among its most vocal opponents. Ever since Secretary of War Elihu Root had established the General Staff in 1903, an ongoing debate had raged over its and the chief of staff's role within the Army. The argument came down to those who thought that the General Staff should be a planning and advisory agency with little influence over the Army's day-to-day operation, and those who advocated for a more centralized system of command based around the General Staff and the chief of staff. The debate most famously flared up in 1914–1915 in a feud between the chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, and Adjutant General Frederick C. Ainsworth. The dispute became so contentious that Ainsworth was forced to resign for insubordination; his political allies in Congress then took their revenge on Wood by gutting the General Staff in the National Defense Act of 1916.

Since taking over as acting chief of staff in March 1918, March had spent much of his time wresting power from the bureaus and redirecting it to his office and the General Staff. These battle wounds were still fresh and many bureau chiefs looked to the upcoming reorganization as a chance to regain their lost authority. Being consummate palace infighters, they had the ability to supply a steady stream of ammunition to anyone looking to disrupt the reform process.

March understood their position but generally dismissed them, stating, “The permanent staff corps are always against us and desire independence and absence of supervision by the General Staff; and as they are permanently in Washington, they will have a respectable following among members of Congress.” March felt confident he could handle the bureau chiefs, operating under the view that the chief of staff was the principal military adviser to the secretary of war and the president, and that the General Staff set policy for the Army. He thus felt no need to build support for his reforms within the Army, believing that the responsibility for advising Baker and Wilson was his alone.

As with the bureau chiefs, March also chose not to consult with General Pershing—the one officer over whom he could not exert his full authority. Instead of coordinating with Pershing on postwar reform, something that theoretically was beyond the AEF commander’s purview, March and the War Department pushed forward with developing a reorganization plan. For his part, Pershing distanced himself from the reorganization issue. Even though he believed that Congress and the American people would oppose a large peacetime standing army, his staff also was developing a comprehensive reorganization plan. Yet by abstaining from the policy debate, Pershing held himself above the fray, able to step in as a mediator should circumstances require it. He sent representatives to Washington at March’s request to take part in devising the reform plan but provided little indication of what program they should pursue. The most important representative was Col. John McAuley Palmer.

An expert on army organization and administrative planning, Palmer had been instrumental in designing the initial organizational structure for the AEF. He had been working on the AEF’s reorganization plan when Pershing tapped him to go to Washington. Of his duties at the War Department, Pershing explained, “The problem of our future military organization is too big for snap judgment. There have been several proposals under discussion at



*March, Pershing, and Baker on official reviewing stand at the White House (Author's collection)*

headquarters, but I have never been able to give them the serious consideration that the subject deserves." He concluded that because Secretary Baker had never asked for Pershing's recommendations, he told Palmer to "use your own judgment." Unfortunately, Palmer did not arrive in Washington until after the March-Baker Bill went to Congress.

The reorganization bill received a frosty reception from lawmakers, fueled in large part by their animosity toward the chief of staff. March's fiery temperament and ruthless pursuit of efficiency had served the nation well during the war, but it also made a number of powerful enemies in Washington. He had a strict policy of refusing all political requests that did not suit the interests of the Army. He denied the wishes of congressmen and cabinet members alike, and alienated the people who would make decisions on postwar American military policy. In complaining about March, one representative stated, "He has no consideration for the desires of Congress. He has all the despotic will and

autocratic characteristics of Ludendorf [*sic*] and the military genius of the Crown Prince.” Although not every member of Congress was so strident, the chief of staff’s association with the reorganization bill earned it little sympathy on Capitol Hill.

The House of Representatives took up the bill during the final six weeks of the congressional session. It passed on 18 February, but languished in the Senate without debate or a vote until the session ended. When the Sixty-Sixth Congress convened in May, it was far less receptive to the War Department than its predecessor. Instead of addressing Army reform, the new Congress took up an Army appropriations bill instead. Forebodingly, Congress voted to fund a standing army of roughly 225,000 once the War Department completed demobilizing—a far cry from the force proposed in the March-Baker Bill.

When Congress finally took up the Army reorganization plan in August, they found that March had made an important revision. In response to several proposals circulating through the War Department and Washington, March included a provision for the implementation of a three-month program for universal military training for all American men when they turned nineteen. He noted that “the ‘Old Army’ belief that it took from two to three years to make a soldier was entirely erroneous under conditions as they existed during the [World] War, and would be equally erroneous under the conditions prescribed in universal training for the youth of all the land.” March considered this levying an adequate system for producing trained manpower from which the nation could draw in wartime.

The proposal for a program of universal military training represented a compromise by the chief of staff. In January, Senator Harry S. New (R-Ind.) had introduced a bill calling for universal military training for up to a year. It failed to gain popular support but generated enough interest that several senators called for the General Staff to study the idea. March turned the matter over to Palmer and the War Plans Division, who used the concept as a core component in developing a separate plan for Army reform. Palmer strongly believed that March’s big Army concept built around professionals violated the American tradition of relying upon citizen soldiers. He instead advocated for a small standing army of roughly 165,000 supported by an “organized reserve” formed initially by World War veterans and supplemented by universal military training. After eleven months of initial training, the citizen soldiers would continue periods

of compulsory training for up to four years. Palmer sent the proposal to March on 1 April 1919, but the chief of staff rejected it, preferring instead to push forward with the plan for a large professional Army.

Palmer reacted poorly to March's provision, illustrating his own views on policy formation and the role of the chief of staff. Palmer believed March operated as more of a commanding general than the leader of the General Staff and principal adviser to the secretary of war. Palmer thought March should present a range of options to the secretary and the president. March, however, felt no such compunction. When he took over as chief of staff, he had found the General Staff plagued by inefficiencies and the War Department in disarray. Instead of employing a consultative style, as Palmer advocated, March dominated the War Department and created order out of chaos through sheer force of will. He made decisions and expected the staff to carry them to fruition. March approached the question of Army reform in much the same manner. He did not present the secretary with a list of proposals reflecting the opinions of the General Staff, but rather drafted a plan for reform that he believed best suited the nation's needs. Baker supported the proposal but reserved the right to disagree with some of its points when called to testify before Congress. March, however, was confident that the bill would win out on its merits.

The congressional hearings on the March-Baker Bill quickly became a referendum on March's concept of a big Army. The chief of staff tried to justify the plan, stating, "The War Department . . . finds itself confronting a situation throughout the world of absolute unrest, unrest at home, and unrest abroad." He pointed out that, "There is actual fighting going on everywhere, and the War Department under those conditions did not feel free that it could afford to recommend, or to make a suggestion to Congress for an Army of less than 500,000 men under the circumstances." Unfortunately, by presenting the bill as the War Department's recommendation, March created an opening for challenges by those within the department and the Army who did not share his vision of reform. A line of professional soldiers displayed considerable disagreement over the bill. Maj. Gen. James W. McAndrew, the former AEF chief of staff, testified that, "I have never given thought to a larger Regular Army for the United States than 300,000 officers and men at the utmost." Palmer delivered the most withering critique, arguing that

the bill presented a system whereby “military policy is largely concentrated in a professional class,” and that, “The evils under this system may be summarized under the term militarism.” Palmer instead offered Congress an alternative vision for the nation’s military policy; that of a small Regular Army (no more than 300,000) supported by a citizen army built upon a robust system of universal military training. The colonel’s presentation so impressed some in the Senate that they requested he be assigned to the Senate Committee on Military Affairs as an adviser.

By the time Palmer finished testifying, the March-Baker Bill was all but dead. After three days of testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Military Affairs, Pershing, recently returned from Europe, delivered the coup de grâce by endorsing Palmer’s program. Congress responded by withdrawing the bill from consideration and spent the next nine months developing a new plan for Army reorganization. Palmer shaped the new proposal to a degree, securing the creation of an organized reserve and an undefined framework for a citizen army, but Congress rejected universal military training.

In the end, the idea of a radical reorganization of the Army became too politically volatile for war-weary legislators. As the first veteran of the war elected to Congress, Rep. King Swope (R-Ky.) concluded, “Everybody had a bellyful of the damn Army.” The National Defense Act of 1920 ended up being little more than a series of amendments to the 1916 act. It created a new assistant secretary of war charged with making “adequate preparation for the mobilization of material and industrial organizations essential to wartime needs,” believing that “to the extent that the army prepared for a major war, it could better do so through planning for mobilization.” It also included reforms such as the creation of a Chemical Warfare Service and an Air Service, and the firm establishment of the National Guard and the Army Reserve as the primary reserve forces for the U.S. Army. But even with these, the bill was a sharp rebuke to advocates for an aggressive reform effort. Instead, it was a return to normalcy, which “in military terms meant a small army, raised by volunteers, and garrisoned far away from the great industrial cities of the eastern seaboard.” Congress authorized a standing army of 18,000 officers and 280,000 men, but never appropriated sufficient funds to achieve that manpower level. For most of the next twenty years, the Army numbered less than 138,000 officers and men.

## DEMOBILIZING PERSONNEL

### *Casualties of War*

Even as military and civilian leaders debated the future of the U.S. Army, all parties agreed that in the immediate postwar period the United States would significantly reduce its forces. The method of doing so, however, remained undecided. At the time of the Armistice, only 13,000 men “whose services could not be utilized within a few months” had been sent home. The first soldiers to return from France were the sick and wounded. An estimated 175,000 men needed to make the journey while receiving continued care. Under an agreement between the Army and Navy, the Army assumed responsibilities for embarking and debarking the sick and wounded, and the Navy provided transport and hospital ships. Once they reached the United States, the Army distributed the men among military hospitals. They received only immediately necessary care at port facilities. The largest concentration of care facilities was in New York City, where six hospital ships operated by the Transportation Service moved patients from the general debarkation hospital at Ellis Island to various general hospitals within the metropolitan area. Considering that the maximum number of hospital beds available around Hoboken, New Jersey, totaled only 18,000, patients needed to be moved into the interior as soon as possible. The Army eventually distributed them among facilities within a twenty-five-kilometer radius. When their conditions improved enough to allow them to travel, special hospital trains moved them to facilities closer to their homes. The Transportation Service kept six of these trains, with a total of 250 hospital cars, in continuous operation. Regardless of where they recuperated, patients remained in the service until they fully recovered or at least reached a point where their conditions could not be improved substantially by continued care.

The most challenging element in discharging soldiers was determining the long-term physical and psychological impact of their service. Boards of physicians from various specialties thoroughly examined each man to calculate his level of disability. Soldiers received a form to claim any disability suffered during their time in service; if the government confirmed the claim, it determined compensation through the Bureau of War Risk Insurance, with the maximum payment set at eighty dollars a month (just over twice the monthly salary of a private serving



*Wounded soldiers being loaded for transport home*  
(National Archives)

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in the AEF). The bureau calculated the levels of disability as a percentage, meaning that a soldier judged to be 50 percent disabled had only half the earning power in his former profession. Those deemed to have a disability of less than 10 percent were not eligible for compensation. The Army had an estimated 265,000 disabled officers and men by the end of the war. Regrettably, the government's policy of not discharging disabled soldiers until their level of compensation had been calculated led many soldiers to not claim infirmity so as to speed up their return home. This became an issue in later years as men who suffered from disabilities that were not immediately apparent, such as the long-term effects of exposure to poison gas, developed serious health problems but then could not receive benefits.

Soldiers whose conditions merited long-term care, such as those with significant battle injuries that could be treated but not to the point where they could resume some semblance of a normal life, were another problem for the Army. As per War Department policy, these men remained on the rolls so long as they required

continued medical care. By 1941, tens of thousands of First World War veterans “who were under hospital treatment or domiciliary care, still awaited demobilization.” Soldiers needing prosthetics initially received them from the Army until such time as their cases could be transferred to the Bureau of War Risk Insurance, which would help soldiers receive further medical support. The War Department also provided reconstruction care (physical rehabilitation in modern parlance) as soldiers adjusted to their disabilities. Patients benefited from a cadre of reconstruction aides, or occupational therapists, drawn from assorted professions. The goal of such programs was to help patients adjust to their disabilities and recover sufficiently to return to civilian life.

Men suffering from psychoneurotic afflictions also received specialized care. Hospitals generally separated them from other patients and kept them in isolated facilities, such as at the Hampton debarkation hospital in Virginia. Physicians dealing with soldiers who had seemingly been healthy but later broke down mentally searched for ways to treat the condition they often called “shell shock,” which later would be known as post-traumatic stress disorder. Physicians eventually gave many soldiers a certificate of disability to receive further care under the Bureau of War Risk Insurance.

The Army’s medical services were ill-equipped to provide extensive continuing care for all of the injured soldiers, regardless of their disability. Although the Bureau of War Risk Insurance continued to cover payments for treatments, and facilities such as the Soldiers’ Home in Washington, D.C., or the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Hampton could provide some services, the need eventually pushed Congress to pass the Sweet Act in 1921, establishing the Veterans’ Bureau to provide continuing assistance to former soldiers. Plagued by corruption in its early years, it eventually reorganized to become the Veterans’ Administration in 1930.

Along with returning the wounded home, the AEF and the War Department immediately set about addressing the issue of prisoners of war. Clause X of the Armistice demanded the “immediate repatriation, without reciprocity . . . of all allied and United States prisoners of war, including those under trial and condemned. The allied powers and the United States of America shall be able to dispose of these prisoners as they think fit.” The Germans had captured around 4,120 American soldiers during the war, with about 2,400 held in Germany. They held most of the

enlisted at a camp in Rastatt in Baden and divided the officers among camps in Villingen, Karlsruhe, and Landshut. Immediately after signing the Armistice the Germans, “without prior notice,” released Allied and American prisoners from behind their lines to make their way back in whatever way they could.

The AEF GHQ responded to the prisoner release by sending the returned men to regional replacement depots to sort them, restoring fit soldiers to their units and sending sick ones to hospitals. For those soldiers held farther behind enemy lines, an armistice commission coordinated repatriating them through northern ports such as Copenhagen, Denmark, and through Switzerland. The commission also sent medical aid through the International Committee of the Red Cross to sick or wounded soldiers still in German hospitals. The Army repatriated the majority of Americans by the end of the first week of December.

A particularly contentious issue arose in response to alleged atrocities involving prisoners. During the war, both sides used prisoners to construct trenches and perform other hazardous tasks. With the war over, the Allies and Americans wanted to ascertain the truth of claims of mistreatment. Investigations revealed that Allied soldiers experienced some distinct hardships as laborers, but on the whole the Germans treated the American prisoners as well as circumstances permitted. They eventually returned all prisoners without significant incident.

Although difficult in practice, dealing with returned prisoners along with sick and wounded soldiers was relatively straightforward from a policy standpoint. Demobilizing the AEF and the bulk of the Army would be much more challenging.

### *Reversing the Machine*

Unlike the British, who produced their first formal plan for demobilization in 1917 and established an entire agency to oversee it, the War Department mobilized with a certain level of myopia regarding what would happen after the war. As Brig. Gen. Frank T. Hines, the chief of the Embarkation Service and later the Transportation Service, noted, “The [War] Department shipped troops over with scarcely a thought of how they were going to get back again. Future events were allowed to take care of themselves.”

When the War Plans Division of the General Staff finally took up the problem in mid-October, it first had to decide the method for demobilization. The division debated four basic approaches

for discharging soldiers: length of service, industrial needs and occupations, locality where inducted, and military units. After discussing the merits of each, the planners decided on 16 November to demobilize entire units. They reasoned that breaking up units and separating the men based upon length of service would be too troublesome. Using a system based strictly upon locality also would be overly burdensome, as the 4,648 local draft boards had neither the facilities to process the men nor the necessary level of uniformity to ensure equal treatment for all. The most appealing program, from an economic standpoint, would be to demobilize according to industrial needs, but the department's industrial data had not been organized and no existing government body could effectively coordinate between industry and the military. The planners thus decided to err on the side of expediency by discharging entire units, explaining that:

the policy adopted was to demobilize by complete organizations as their services could be spared, thus insuring [*sic*] the maximum efficiency of those organizations remaining, instead of demobilizing by special classes with the resulting discontent among those not given preferential treatment and retained in the service, thus lowering their morale and efficiency and disrupting all organizations with the attendant general discontent.

Before the men in Europe could return to the United States, however, the soldiers in stateside facilities needed to be discharged. The first step was to simply turn around troop trains and send them back to their points of origin, a process that began within an hour of the Armistice. Thousands of young men who had taken their oath of allegiance that morning thus found themselves civilians at home again that night. Hundreds of thousands of men training in prospective combat divisions soon followed them, and given the brevity of their service it was a relatively straightforward process to discharge them. Some problems arose with men training in special camps, such as those in the Air Service or Corps of Engineers, as they were drawn from a larger geographical base than infantry units built with state levies. The processing of the soldiers in these camps became a template for use with AEF soldiers. The War Department established thirty-three demobilization centers, primarily at former training camps and National Army cantonments. The goal was to discharge soldiers as close as possible to their homes. The process worked relatively

well, and by the end of February 1919 the Army had discharged 1.6 million officers and enlisted men.

Bringing the men home from Europe would be considerably more difficult. On 21 November, the War Department assured Pershing that American forces would return as quickly as facilities permitted. The chief impediment was shipping. During the war, roughly 50 percent of American troops traveled to Europe on Allied vessels, particularly British. After the Armistice, these ships were no longer available, effectively reducing available tonnage by two-thirds. Although ships could now forgo the convoy system and sail individually, the American-flag troopships had a monthly transport capacity of about 150,000 men. Without additional tonnage, the AEF could not be brought home until the spring of 1920.

To solve this problem, General Hines planned an aggressive increase in American shipping. The Emergency Fleet Corporation, a government-owned entity formed in April 1917 to build and operate ships, authorized American shipyards to begin converting cargo ships under construction into troop transports. They fitted fifty-eight vessels with bunks, galleys, mess areas, and sanitation facilities for service as passenger ships, more than doubling the capacity of the American troopship fleet. The U.S. Navy also installed bunks and other elements in fourteen battleships and ten armored cruisers, making room for an additional 28,600 troops on the transatlantic crossing. In an agreement with the British, Hines also secured ten large German vessels, including the SS *Imperator*, the largest ship in the world. Its sister ship, the SS *Vaterland*, had been seized in 1917 and already served as the American transport USS *Leviathan*. Finally, Hines chartered thirty-three passenger ships from the Europeans to carry American soldiers home. With these efforts, the United States increased its transport fleet to 174 vessels with a single-lift capacity of 419,000 men by June 1919. During that month, the United States reached its transport peak by embarking 368,000 men, or 60,000 more than any month during the war.

As transports became available, the men in Europe slowly began making their way to the ports. Soon after the Armistice, Pershing released all troops not needed for the Army of Occupation or its support for return to the United States. This meant that more than half of the AEF could return home. It took nearly a month to minimally prepare facilities to organize and process the men. The main embarkation depot in France was Le Mans, halfway between



*Soldiers disembarking at Newport News, Virginia*  
(National Archives)

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Paris and the Biscay coast. Serving as the AEF's classification and replacement camp during the war, the Le Mans facilities increased to accommodate 200,000 men by 14 December. After processing, the men went to port facilities at Brest, St. Nazaire, and Bordeaux. Brest's Camp Pontanezen, the largest embarkation facility, could hold 80,000 men. Most soldiers initially found the camp "a sea of mud in which they were stuck while waiting for their ships." By the spring, however, the Army completed most of the new construction, which made the camp far more livable.

Embarkations began in December. As they moved through the logistical chain, the men came under the responsibility of various organizations. The general staff of the AEF Services of Supply determined how troops moved from the interior to the ports and on which ships they would travel. The Railway Transportation Service oversaw all rail movement, and the Army Transport Service handled the movement of ships to the ports and the loading of the men. Finally, base commanders provided for the men's quarters, mess, baggage, and transportation orders. Although the men might stay in the embarkation centers for days or weeks, in only a few cases did

transport vessels remain at port for more than twenty-four hours. The average turnaround in 1919 for a ship to sail from the United States to France, load its passengers, and return was thirty-two days (down from thirty-six during the war). The transport USS *Great Northern*, acquired by the War Department outright in the spring of 1918, set the record by sailing from Hoboken to Brest and back again in twelve days, five hours, and thirty minutes. It also set the record of eighteen transatlantic circuits at an average of twenty-three days each. By the time the movement of men hit its peak in June 1919, just under a million soldiers had departed European ports aboard American-flagged ships. Regardless of ship nationalities, roughly 37,500 men embarked from England, whereas another 5,200 men left from ports such as Genoa, Italy; Rotterdam, the Netherlands; and Antwerp, Belgium. The remaining 1.2 million officers and men traveled through French ports. Transports continued over the summer, tapering off as the flow of men dwindled. Bordeaux closed as a port of embarkation on 30 June, followed by St. Nazaire on 26 July. By 1 October a few thousand men still needed to sail, but the War Department had brought home the bulk of the AEF—minus those remaining in the occupation—in roughly ten months without losing a single man. By the end of 1919, a total of 2,015,662 men had sailed for the United States.

For the soldiers, the process of demobilization was akin to being a package in a great shipping network. After traveling to embarkation depots by rail, truck, or on the march, the men went to a “dirty” camp for a thorough delousing—eradicating the ever-present body lice or “cootie” that was ubiquitous to life at the front. Once free of vermin, the men proceeded to a “clean” camp where they awaited movement to the ports. To make their wait as comfortable as possible, the camps had newspapers, banks, theaters, stores, libraries, restaurants, hospitals, churches, telephones, and electric lights. Sporting events abounded. The Army even set aside sections of the camps for wives whom the soldiers had married while abroad. Upon receiving fresh clothes and equipment, the men settled in to the routine of camp life. The soldiers initially received much of their pay in francs, but they converted it into dollars before they departed.

After their voyage across the Atlantic, soldiers went through more medical examinations and another delousing, and received new clothing as necessary. Then they were divided into detachments or casual companies and sent for additional processing. Most soldiers went through one of the five major

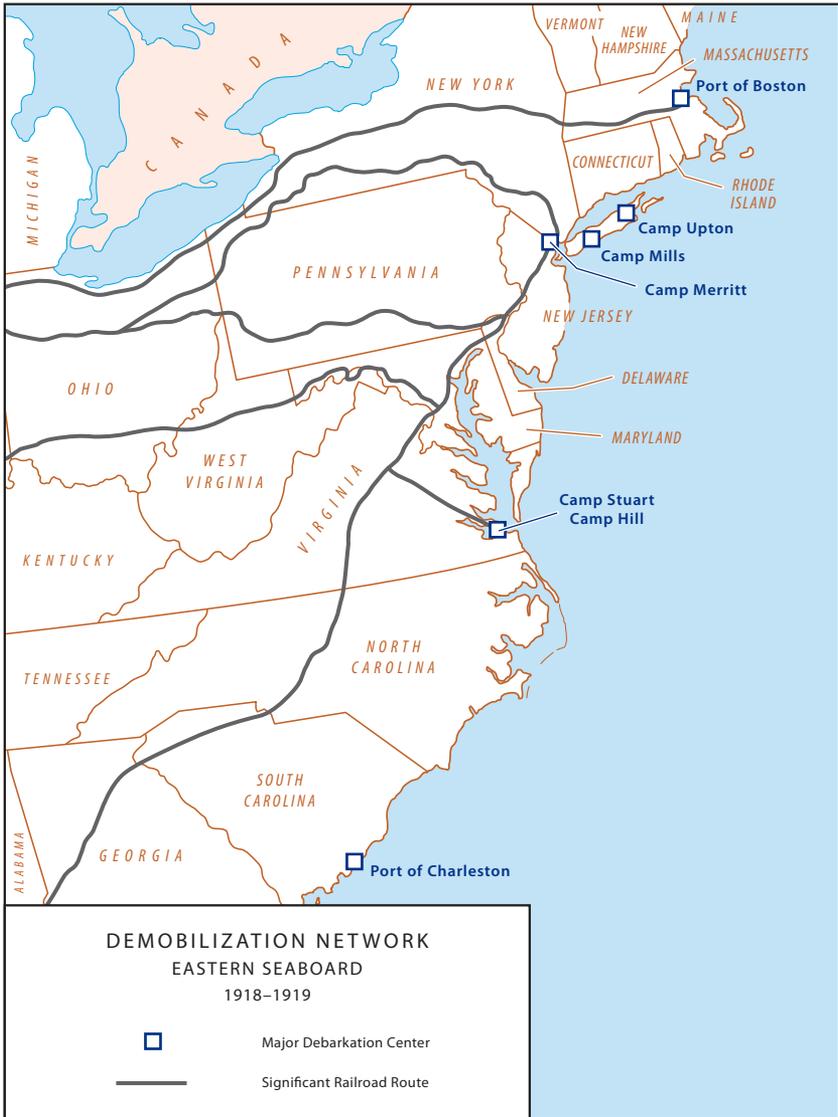


*Men leaving camp after discharge from the Army*  
(National Archives)

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debarkation camps: Merritt, Mills, and Upton in and around New York City, and Stuart and Hill at Newport News, Virginia. Numerous other camps processed men, such as ones in Boston, Massachusetts, and Charleston, South Carolina, the latter of which handled soldiers headed to southern demobilization centers (*Map 3*). At the centers, the two principal tasks for officials were examining soldiers physically and calculating how much the government owed them. On 24 February 1919, President Wilson signed a bill authorizing a cash bonus of sixty dollars to every man in uniform before 11 November 1918. Payment to those awaiting discharge was simple enough, but compensating those already out of the Army was a more challenging task that required a thousand clerks to process claims.

In demobilizing the men, the War Department sought to adhere to several basic policies. All soldiers should be discharged within 350 miles of their home, if possible. The War Department gave officers a chance to qualify for a commission in the Reserve Corps. The process was to be completed within two days of the soldiers' arrival at the debarkation camps, but insufficient medical personnel invariably caused some delays. Finally, commanders encouraged the men to travel directly home upon their exit from



**MAP 3**

the Army. That stipulation was to avoid discharged soldiers with their pockets full of money falling prey to temptations near the demobilization centers.

After the soldiers received their final pay and discharge papers, officers took the men to purchase a rail ticket home, often at a reduced rate. Each man had a new uniform, new shoes, an overcoat or raincoat depending upon his ultimate destination, and his personal baggage. The War Department allowed the men returning from Europe to keep their gas mask and helmet as souvenirs. Although the process did not always go smoothly, the final result satisfied Secretary Baker and General March. March later wrote that the method utilized “should be adopted in any future demobilization of our forces.”

### *A Return to Civilian Life*

For most doughboys, exiting the Army was bittersweet. Although glad to be free of the constraints of military life, their discharge also meant a dissolution of the connections and sense of belonging that had formed over their course of service. Many men were also apprehensive about finding employment after the war. Chaplain Earle M. Stigers reported in March that “the men believe they should be provided with work but there does not seem to be any marked tendency to expect ‘coddling’ because of military service rendered.” Unfortunately, the War Department’s policy of discharging soldiers in the United States first meant that members of the AEF were at a distinct disadvantage when they returned to the labor market. Those who had not been disabled during the war received little help from the government. Some sought refuge through reenlistment, but most struggled to transition back to civilian life. At the same time, a general sense of pride in their service and an almost universal belief that they had provided the critical mass to achieve the Allied victory raised their spirits.

As they returned home, many soldiers found American society as fraught with fear and insecurity as when they had departed. Fears of Communist and Socialist threats were rampant, creating a “Red Scare” that gripped the nation during 1919 and 1920. Enflamed by a series of anarchist bombings across the United States in the spring and summer of 1919, patriotic zeal often turned into condemnation and even violent action against those judged to be insufficiently American, such as immigrants and labor organizers. Veterans were often at the forefront of these patriotic movements via social organizations, the most prominent being the American Legion. Founded in Paris in March 1919 by soldiers of the AEF, one of its tenets was “To foster and perpetuate a one-hundred-percent

Americanism.” Many of the Legion’s actions fell in line with nativist movements sweeping the nation in the immediate postwar years. In addition to its purported role as a check against threats to American society, its members organized numerous civic activities within their communities. The organization also became a powerful lobbying group, most significantly in securing passage in May 1924 of the World War Adjusted Compensation Act (also known as the Bonus Act) that promised payment of a “bonus” for wartime service, redeemable in 1945.

Although the majority of soldiers adjusted, for better or worse, to their return to civilian life, two groups experienced a special mixture of pride and disappointment upon their discharge from military service. For women, the First World War marked the beginning of a transition of their role in society, both in Europe and the United States. A generation of women ready to break free of Victorian-era constraints seized upon job opportunities opened by the departure of men for military service. Although denied regular service within the armed forces, they had found numerous opportunities to contribute to the war effort. More than 11,000 joined the U.S. Navy as yeomen clerical workers, with another 350 enrolling in the Marine Corps. Although the U.S. Army did not officially sanction the enlistment of women, they still found ways to serve. Thousands went overseas with the YMCA, the YWCA, the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, the Knights of Columbus, and numerous other private service organizations.

Those women who managed to join the Army did so mainly as nurses and reconstruction aides, as well as a small group of bilingual telephone switchboard operators for the Army Signal Corps, commonly known as the “Hello Girls.” By 30 June 1918, the Army Nurse Corps totaled some 12,000 women on active duty, with 5,350 of them serving overseas. The corps reached its peak strength of 21,480 by the time of the Armistice. Of those who went abroad, 102 never returned home, many having died from pneumonia during the influenza pandemic. A further 134 Army nurses died in the United States. Although no American nurse died in combat, two had been wounded. In July 1917, shell fragments hit Beatrice Mary MacDonald while she worked at a British casualty clearing station in Belgium. Though she lost an eye in the attack, she eventually returned to duty and stayed in France until two months after the Armistice. Shell fragments also struck Isabelle Stambaugh while she worked at a casualty clearing station, this time during the German Spring



*Signal Corps telephone operators receiving decorations*  
(National Archives)

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Offensives of 1918. Like MacDonald, Stambaugh returned to her duties. Both women were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for their heroism. A further twenty-four nurses received the Distinguished Service Medal, including Julia C. Stimson, who went to Europe as head nurse for Base Hospital #21 and eventually took charge of all Red Cross nurses in France and then the entire Army Nurse Corps.

Although nurses were hailed for their service during the war, the women who served with the Signal Corps received no such laurels. Despite General Pershing specifically requesting the “organization and dispatch to France of force of Woman [*sic*] telephone operators all speaking French and English equally well,” the 223 women sent overseas with the Signal Corps found, upon their discharge, that the War Department considered them civilian or contract employees, not military personnel. Denied government benefits—including not receiving Victory Medals upon discharge—the women began a decades-long campaign for recognition. The effort culminated in 1977 when Congress approved veterans’ status for the eighteen living members of the Hello Girls.

In much the same way that the women’s contributions to the war were tied to larger issues about their role in society—most notably with the passage of the 19th Amendment granting

women's suffrage—African Americans' wartime service echoed social issues confronting the nation. Blacks made up 11 percent of the Army's total strength during the war, consisting of 404,000 officers and men in uniform. Although African Americans comprised just over 8 percent of the AEF, they made up less than 3 percent of combat forces. The vast majority of African Americans served in auxiliary roles, such as construction workers, stevedores, and gravediggers, with limited opportunities for advancement. As the return of combat units took precedence under AEF and War Department policy, black soldiers continued to serve in the Services of Supply, awaiting their chance to go home. The War Department tasked just under 10,000 of them with disinterring the American war dead who initially had been buried in makeshift cemeteries behind the lines. In the immediate postwar era, Army officials pointed to the poor performance of the AEF's 92d Division—almost completely ignoring the successes of the decorated 93d Division—as justification for continuing the segregation of units, placing white officers in charge of black units, and keeping African American soldiers out of the combat arms. The Army allowed the four traditional black regiments to atrophy in the postwar decades. Their ranks winnowed in favor of the Air Corps as the War Department struggled with diminishing congressional appropriations. By 1940, African Americans accounted for less than 2 percent of the American armed forces.

African American soldiers found that American society's racial views had changed little during the war. Although black soldiers paraded in celebration of their service in cities including New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., the era of good feeling did not last long. Segregation and discrimination remained prevalent, motivated by a desire among some in white society that the war's disruptions should not extend to an elevated status for African Americans. This fear and hatred found a violent outlet: over the course of 1919, race riots erupted in twenty-eight cities in both the North and South. Additionally, seventy-eight blacks were lynched, including ten veterans, several of whom were in their uniforms. Violence targeting African Americans continued during the interwar years, and many veterans and members of the black community grew embittered that service during the war had not secured blacks a better position in American society. Memories of the poor treatment of their World War I veterans would fuel African Americans' demands for civil rights reform during World War II,

which ultimately led to the desegregation of the armed forces in 1948. As the experiences of women and African Americans illustrate, for many Americans service during the First World War had a decidedly mixed legacy.

### *Honoring the Fallen*

In addition to returning the service members to the United States and reintegrating them into society, the Army needed a long-term plan for handling the remains of soldiers and American civilians who had died during the war. In May 1917, officials in the War Department anticipated that American forces bound for service in Europe would require an organization to oversee the war dead. On 7 August, they created the Graves Registration Service within the Quartermaster Corps, under the direction of retired chaplain Maj. Charles C. Pierce. Its first unit arrived in France that October to begin identifying and cataloging war dead and their locations. In general, members of combat units buried their dead, with chaplains coordinating with the registration service to catalog the sites for future reburial. With Americans serving across a wide swath of the Western Front, by September 1918 the service reorganized to manage affairs from the regional headquarters at Neufchâteau, Soissons, and Amiens.

While the Graves Registration Service toiled, policy concerns affected their work. On 4 September, the War Department disclosed a plan that would repatriate all war dead but would temporarily bury them in France until the war ended. However, by October some people began advocating to leave American dead near where they had fallen in France and Belgium. After the Armistice, the U.S. government offered the deceased's next of kin the choice of repatriating remains for burial either at home or at Arlington National Cemetery, or allowing the Army to oversee burying the fallen in permanent cemeteries abroad. In early 1919, the service took on the responsibility of collecting remains from more than 2,300 cemeteries and isolated burial sites and concentrating them in regional cemeteries. The War Department created a Cemeterial Division within the Office of the Quartermaster General, which included the Graves Registration Service, to oversee repatriations and to establish and manage the new American cemeteries.

Bureaucratic issues between the European governments and the United States delayed American efforts to care for

the war dead. The Europeans cited a variety of logistics and sanitation concerns and conflicting policies regarding the treatment of remains, and effectively placed American plans on hold in February 1919. Fortunately, the delay proved useful as it enabled the Americans to gather necessary supplies and plan the logistics of repatriation or reburial. During the delay, the War Department sent out 74,770 forms requesting information on how the next of kin wished the Army to handle their deceased, and received 63,708 responses by January 1920. The War Department resolved the majority of the diplomatic issues by December 1919, releasing the Graves Registration Service to continue its mission.

The service resumed exhumations in early 1920, with operations beginning in Great Britain in February and in France and Belgium in March. Graves Registration officers, along with assistants and laborers, exhumed, identified, and packaged remains, directing them either to mortuaries near ports for shipment home or to one of five planned cemeteries—one in England and four in France. In August 1921, the War Department realized that five cemeteries were insufficient and added two more in France and one in Belgium. By the end of 1922, the service interred more than 30,000 soldiers in the new cemeteries, and shipped the remains of nearly 47,000 war dead to the United States.

Besides accepting responsibility for returning American remains home, Secretary Baker formed the Commission of Fine Arts and the War Memorial Council in 1920 “for the purpose of arranging final plans for the establishment of Permanent American Cemeteries.” The commission created the outlines for the cemeteries, replicating the style of Arlington, and envisioned bronze maps with operational details as the primary memorials. However, in 1923, Congress created a specific organization, the American Battle Monuments Commission, to memorialize the war. In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt increased the commission’s mandate to include maintaining the cemeteries. The commission thus began its role in managing official American memorials and cemeteries abroad. The original American World War I cemeteries are the Aisne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, Oise-Aisne, Somme, St. Mihiel, and Suresnes in France; Flanders Field in Belgium; and Brookwood in Great Britain. In January 2017, the commission took over responsibility for the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial Cemetery in France, bringing the total number of World War I American cemeteries to nine.

With the demobilization of soldiers just beginning in mid-December 1918, the Third Army assumed control of the American occupation zone around Coblenz. Its soldiers confronted an unfamiliar land and people. The sentiments of General Hagood, whose artillery brigade was stationed with the III Corps east of the Rhine, typified those of U.S. officers. Acknowledging his predisposition to dislike Germans, Hagood admitted that most Americans “had no idea whatever, either as to Germany or as to the German people.” The Third Army faced a steep learning curve as it attempted to establish an effective military government along side the region’s existing administrative and political structures.

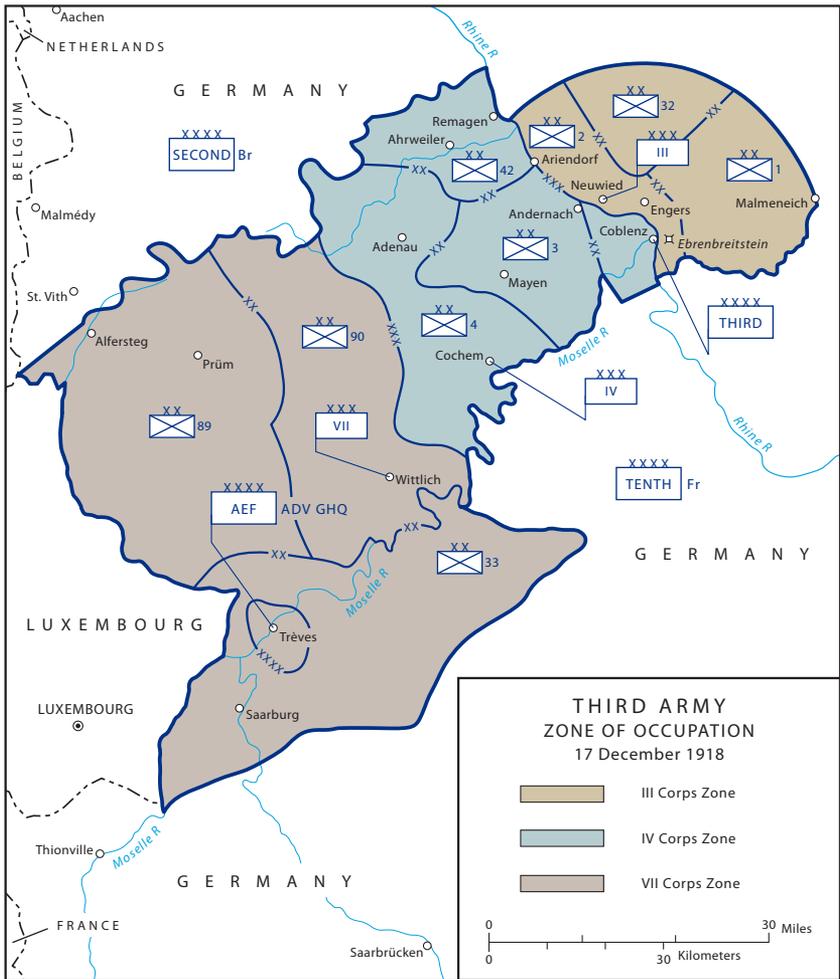
Unfortunately, General Dickman and the Third Army entered the Rhineland with little guidance from President Wilson, the State Department, or the War Department, all of whom failed to thoroughly analyze the possibility of a postwar military occupation. This partially came from Wilson’s and British prime minister David Lloyd George’s initial opposition to such an occupation, but also from the surprising speed of the German collapse. The result was that the Americans were unprepared when the Armistice placed governmental power for occupied Germany with the various Allied military authorities.

As Col. Irvin L. Hunt, the Officer in Charge of Civil Affairs (OCCA) in Occupied Territory for the Third Army, explained, “Military government under even the most favorable circumstances is a formidable task.” The AEF’s focus had been on field operations and it had devoted little time to studying the civil problems inherent in an occupation. Moreover, given that the period between the Armistice and the Third Army’s crossing of the German border was less than three weeks, the circumstances were far from “favorable.” Even though the Army had established military governments in the American South during Reconstruction as well as in Cuba and the Philippines after the War with Spain, it did not train officers in civil administration. None of the service schools offered courses on military government, and a pamphlet prepared by the U.S. Army General Staff in November 1918 on the German governmental system proved woefully inadequate. Hunt concluded that the Army “lacked both training and organization to guide the destinies of the nearly 1,000,000 civilians whom the fortunes of war had placed under its temporary sovereignty.”

The basic administrative unit of the Rhineland was the *Regierungsbezirk*, which was subdivided into *Kreise* (the equivalent of American counties). *Kreise* were either urban (*Stadtkreise*) or rural (*Landkreise*). An *Oberpräsident* administered the province, an *Oberbürgermeister* oversaw each *Stadtkreis*, and a *Landrat* supervised each *Landkreis*. For generations, these roles had been filled by Prussians. American civil affairs officers believed that the autocratic nature of this system “peculiarly fits it to adapt itself to the wishes of an occupying military force.”

Fortunately, the Armistice placed German courts, legislatures, executives, judges, and customs officials under the direction of the armies of occupation. American officers subsequently weeded out inefficient or recalcitrant officials. Keeping these institutions in place, along with most of the Germans who staffed them, spared the occupiers from having to erect such assets from scratch. The jurisdiction of the central authority of the Rhineland, *Oberpräsident* Rudolf von Grootte, extended over almost the entire American zone. Furthermore, the Third Army avoided interfering with local legislative bodies. American authorities also decided not to limit the jurisdiction of German courts over German civilians, although the OCCA did provide them with a measure of supervision.

Pershing’s General Orders No. 225, issued on 10 December 1918, defined the Office of Civil Affairs’ duties, establishing a foundation for the American military government in Germany. The orders created Inferior and Superior Provost Courts and gave army, corps, and division commanders the right to convene military commissions for trying citizens for offenses against the military government. Pershing divided the American zone into nine areas: seven occupied by divisions and one each occupied by III Corps and Third Army troops (*Map 4*). Division commanders were responsible for the administration of civil affairs within their district and had to detail officers to oversee each territorial subdivision. Pershing appointed Brig. Gen. H. A. Smith as the OCCA at the AEF Advance General Headquarters in Trèves. This made Smith the highest civil authority within the American zone. His duties included drawing up and supervising the implementation of ordinances governing the civilian population during the occupation. Smith’s role, however, conflicted with General Dickman’s responsibility as commander of the Third Army to maintain public order in the region. Ultimately, Smith permitted Colonel Hunt as OCCA of the Third Army to oversee the civil and political work of all tactical unit commanders. Therefore, the Office of Civil Affairs at



**MAP 4**

Advance GHQ remained the “fountain-head of civil authority” for the American zone. Most tasks intrinsic to military government filtered down to Hunt and the OCCAs of the Third Army’s tactical units who took charge of the respective subdivisions.

On 13 December, Advance GHQ issued Orders No. 1, the fundamental charter of the military government. The order created five Advance GHQ departments that were concerned solely with civil administration: public works and utilities, fiscal affairs,

sanitation and public health, schools and charitable institutions, and the legal department. Although this structure theoretically was sound, several of the departments never functioned more than nominally. Moreover, many problems during the occupation did not fall neatly under the purview of a single department.

The Americans needed to work closely with local German officials to remedy such situations before they became problems. The Rhineland's Oberpräsident thus acted as a liaison between the Office of Civil Affairs at Advance GHQ and the German population. The OCCA, Third Army, was stationed with the Oberpräsident in Coblenz and transmitted all communications between the military and civil governments, inspecting the correspondence of German officials, and reporting any failure to comply with American orders. The OCCAs of tactical units performed similar duties for each Kreis by working with local German officials. In Höhr-Grenzhausen, for example, Hagood detailed Col. Paul H. Weyrauch, a German-American born in Coblenz, to be his OCCA and coordinate civil control through the town's burgomaster.

American staff officers met frequently with their British and French counterparts to discuss their respective methods of military government. Within months, Hunt and his fellow OCCAs realized that the Americans had made a "grave mistake" in structuring the military government like tactical units as opposed to using the Rhineland's existing civil and political hierarchy. The British and French, who benefited from greater experience in colonial administration, modeled their military governments on the German civil system from the outset. Unlike the Americans, the British and French immediately gave their army commander undivided and centralized control over the administration of their occupation zones. The French Tenth Army created a special section of its general staff, the *Bureau des Affaires Civiles*, to handle civil administration. The British Second Army formed a new division of its general staff for this same purpose. Hunt came to believe that the most effective system was to assign civil administrators permanently to a political subdivision of the occupied territory, and then "provide for their automatically becoming staff officers of the commander whose unit occupies the area."

The British, French, and American approaches differed in many other ways. Although the French and the Americans lacked personnel trained in civil administration, the British maintained a number of staff officers devoted to studying the problems of occupation. Indeed, each area commandant in the British zone had a

staff trained in civil affairs. Conversely, French civil administrators were independent of tactical commanders. Like the Americans, the French assigned sanitation and public health to army medical services and put public works and utilities under the control of military engineers. However, the French also minutely supervised all German financial matters and dedicated a section of their civil affairs bureau to suppressing dissent in the German press.

Even with an imperfect system of military government, the Third Army made rapid strides in returning political and civil affairs in the Rhineland to normal. Because President Wilson and other American leaders frequently had defined the war as a struggle against an autocratic German government, Pershing and Dickman, as well as most American soldiers, desired to give Rhinelanders a free and fair chance to express their political opinions. Consequently, the Third Army oversaw the German National Assembly elections within their occupation zone on 19 January 1919. The Office of Civil Affairs, Third Army, did not receive a single complaint of interference in the election. Chancellor Friedrich Ebert and his Majority Social Democratic Party received more than 11 million votes, or 38 percent of the nationwide total. Their share, however, was less in the American zone, where 71 percent of votes went to the Centre (Catholic) Party, which advocated federalism and moderate social reform. On 6 February, the new National Assembly convened in Weimar and elected Ebert president. A supporter of peace based on Wilson's Fourteen Points, Ebert formed a Weimar Coalition government of Majority Social Democrats, Centrists, and Democrats.

Although the Americans restored the right of Rhinelanders to vote in German elections, the population remained subject to a number of rules and regulations. General Pershing's *Anordnungen* (ordinances) of 9 December 1918 laid out the guidelines for the conduct of the inhabitants of the American zone. Because the American officers who composed the code lacked sufficient knowledge of the region's culture, many of the laws were a departure from centuries-old German customs. This created substantial friction between the Army and the population, and eventually led military authorities to modify the *Anordnungen* until it ceased to be recognizable.

The *Anordnungen* governed people's movements, firearms, public assemblies, alcoholic drinks, and the press in the American occupation zone. It required every person over age twelve to carry identity cards, and burgomasters regulated all travel under



*Firearms collected from German civilians*  
(National Archives)

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the supervision of American authorities. By January 1919, the administrators permitted inhabitants to circulate freely within the American zone, but those wishing to travel to unoccupied Germany or the zones of the other Allied armies had to apply for a pass from their burgomaster and then get that pass approved and stamped by the Third Army's Circulation Office at Coblenz. This process hampered business and angered Germans who were

forced to stand in line for hours. Amendments in March and April weeded out applicants by requiring all requests to be approved by the *Handelskammer* (Chamber of Commerce) and by simplifying interzone travel by substituting a trilingual *Ausweise* (identity card) for travel passes.

The Anordnungen also banned the civil population from carrying arms or gathering for public assemblies without the consent of the local military commander. Except for the German police, which the Americans recognized as an adjunct to the Army for the preservation of order, all citizens had to turn over their firearms to local authorities. Because hunting was a longstanding element of German culture, local officials consistently appealed for the return of sporting weapons. In mid-August, the Americans began returning hunting weapons to their owners. American authorities also gradually restored the right of assembly to civilians, but the supervision of subsequent public meetings placed a heavy burden on American personnel.

The desire to safeguard public order provided the impetus for restrictions on alcohol and the press. All alcoholic drinks except light wines and beer were forbidden, and the orders limited the sale of these beverages to a three-hour period in the afternoon and two hours in the evening. Although some local commanders requested that alcohol be banned altogether, the Third Army's Office of Civil Affairs thought it "inconceivable" that OCCAs could stamp out the traffic in wine or beer. Pershing and Dickman's reluctance to modify this policy had as much to do with curtailing the drinking of soldiers as it did with the fear of intoxicated and unruly Rhinelanders. In a corresponding measure to prevent civil disorder, unit commanders screened all newspapers and suppressed any material injurious to the military government.

Even as the Third Army enforced Pershing's Anordnungen, it strove to interfere as little as possible in civil and political matters that it considered "purely German." This policy stood in stark contrast to the French. The differing responses of Lt. Gen. Hunter Liggett, who replaced Dickman as Third Army commander on 20 April, and General Charles Mangin of the French Tenth Army to the Rhenish separatist movement provides a case in point. In the chaotic days preceding the 11 November Armistice, separatists began pushing for the creation of an independent state they called the Rhenish Republic. The Allied advance into the Rhineland quelled much of this agitation, but the movement resurfaced in May 1919. On 22 May, a delegation of French officers visited

Liggett and informed him that Mangin was prepared to recognize an independent Rhenish government headed by Düsseldorf businessman Hans Adam Dorten. Proclamations calling for self-determination and the formation of a republic appeared throughout the French zone on the night of 31 May. Most Rhinelanders reacted negatively to the initiative, with the Centre Party and Social Democrats issuing a joint proclamation in the *Coblener Zeitung* newspaper that denounced the separatists.

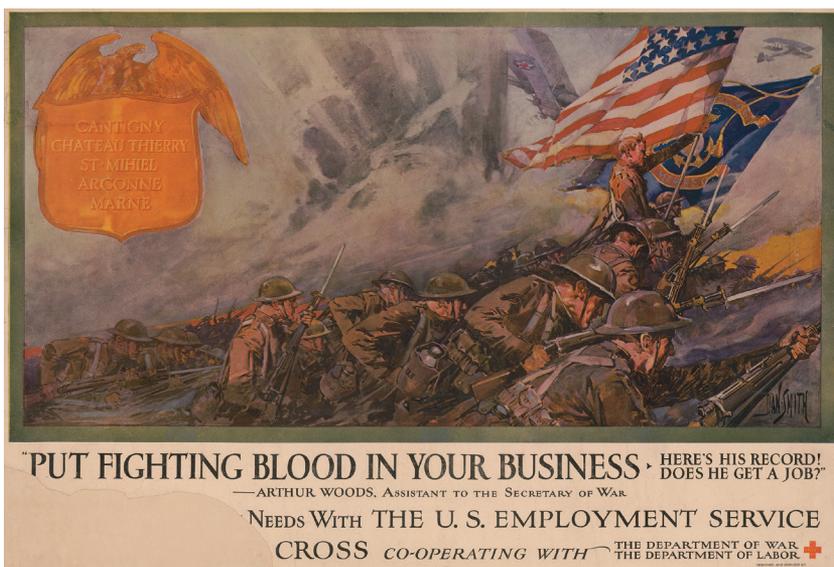
American OCCAs saw the separatist movement as a “purely internal affair,” and therefore the Third Army commander did not feel at liberty to interfere. When Mangin requested that Liggett allow Dorten to announce the new “nation” from its future capital at Coblenz, Liggett not only refused to cooperate but also informed Pershing, Wilson, and Prussian officials of the scheme. Liggett made clear to Mangin that the Americans would “decline to deal with any new government and would recognize only the one existing.” Mangin persisted, but the French announcement of the creation of a Rhenish Republic on 2 June brought protests from the American, British, and German governments. Within a day, Clémenteau ordered Mangin to adopt the American position of “complete neutrality” in regards to the separatists, which caused the supposed republic to immediately collapse.

The Rhinelanders appreciated Dickman and Liggett’s decision to intervene as little as possible in German affairs and to implement the military government in a just manner. Many came to see the Americans as a benign and even beneficial presence. One German in Trèves claimed that the people “feel much safer now that we have American troops here,” and a resident of Coblenz wrote to his son that “the American is a fine, noble minded person. We associate like comrades.” These sentiments represented a degree of self-interest, as Germans in the Coblenz region realized that American occupation was light-handed compared to that of the French. It remained uncertain, however, just how long American forces would remain in Germany.

## INDUSTRIAL DEMOBILIZATION

### *Managing the Economy*

As the Third Army settled into its occupation duties, the process of demobilization continued. The War Department and



*Propaganda poster for the U.S. Employment Service  
(Library of Congress)*

the American government needed to disassemble the largest military industrial machine in the nation's history. The scale of the challenge proved tremendous. As one postwar analysis surmised, "Of the labor, the machinery, and the processes which normally manufactured these materials into commodities of American commerce, the Government had become almost the only employer; only now it had woven these facilities, the industrial facilities of the largest of industrial nations, into the intricate fabric of an arsenal." Seven million men and women supported the war through their labor. They felled the trees, mined the ore, quarried the rocks, wove the fabrics, packaged the vegetables, and performed other necessary tasks to supply the nation's military forces. "Nothing less than the whole of America's material resources had been pledged to the end of victory." The Armistice came just as that machine started to function at full capacity. Like any behemoth lumbering in a set direction, changing the course of U.S. industry was a delicate process. The wartime production lines could not be shut down all at once without destroying the national economy.

They first had to be slowed down and then transitioned back to peacetime production.

Theoretically, the government would use a centralized agency to coordinate and oversee the program of industrial demobilization. The only agency even remotely capable of such an endeavor, the War Industries Board, had been created on 28 July 1917 to coordinate purchasing of supplies between the War Department and the Department of the Navy. But an executive order eliminated that organization on 1 January 1919 on the pretense that it was no longer needed after the Armistice. Without centralized oversight, the War Department forged ahead in transitioning away from the war economy in an ad hoc fashion.

Three primary considerations dominated the process of industrial demobilization. First was the impact on the domestic economy. Next was the desirability of additional production in order to contribute to military materiel reserves. Finally, a decision as “to what extent and in what ways facilities and machinery should be retained for an industrial reserve.” Considering that the Armistice was only a technical cessation of hostilities, the War Department could not completely demobilize in case fighting resumed. Additionally, the possibility of future conflicts demanded the maintenance of sufficient materiel reserves to avoid the lack of preparedness the nation faced in April 1917. Converting the economy to a peacetime footing thus demanded careful planning and execution both for the country’s immediate economic health and potential combat effectiveness as well as its long-term military capability.

During the war, industries within the United States generally fell into five categories. The first were those that continued to produce the same products they had during peacetime, and for whom the war did not cause a significant disruption. On the whole, they weathered the war and transitioned to peacetime relatively easily. Next were those industries that had diverted their normal production to war use without overhauling their facilities. Like those in the first group, they managed the shift from peace to war and back again reasonably well, with no more disruption than they might experience with any standard change in customers. Third were those companies who continued to produce the same products, but at substantially increased quantities to meet the war emergency. Many overexpanded their production, generating increased profits during the war but also creating an excess once hostilities ended. The companies experienced a period

of contraction after the war as they disposed of their surplus production and adjusted to peacetime demand. Although they found the immediate postwar period somewhat challenging, it was not as difficult for them as for the fourth group—those industries which had converted their plants to war production. They faced the greatest disruptions as they underwent a complete overhaul in their operations. Many had only recently completed their transition to war production at the time of the Armistice and unfortunately had not made sufficient profits to weather another transition, resulting in their collapse. Others had planned effectively for the inevitable reversion to peacetime production and survived, although not without significant hardship. Finally, there were those industries created entirely to produce war materials. With the crisis over, these generally ceased to exist, and their capital was diverted to other parts of the economy. For all industries, regardless of which category they fell into, effective management was usually a determinative factor in whether they survived the upheaval of the shift to peacetime.

The most pressing need in industrial demobilization was to halt military production. Between 6 April 1917 and 1 June 1919, the War Department entered into approximately 300,000 contracts, with a promised disbursement of more than \$14.5 billion, or almost one-fourth the national income in 1918. As of the Armistice, the War Department had roughly 30,000 ongoing contracts with producers obligating the government to pay in excess of \$7.5 billion. Less than half of these contracts had been completed by 11 November. Terminating them, however, was a delicate process. It was generally understood that, “At the base of modern business stability lies the inviolability of contracts. He who breaks a contract must expect to pay an indemnity, and the Government cannot except itself from this rule.” On 9 November, the production bureaus within the War Department prepared to enforce all termination clauses of contracts should the fighting cease. On the morning of 11 November, the government announced a suspension of all Sunday and overtime work on government contracts. The War Department informed its contractors that production could continue, but should be tapered off at a reasonable rate. To this end, the various procurement bureaus within the War Department began preparing termination schedules for their outstanding contracts under the approval of the General Staff’s Division of Purchase, Storage, and Traffic.

Canceling formal contracts proved simple enough and by 5 December, terminations and reductions reached \$2.5 billion.

At this point, the War Department turned over the stoppage of war industry to the heads of the military-industrial districts established during the war. The number of districts varied by branch, with quartermaster production divided among fourteen districts, Air Service production concentrated in four districts, and chemical warfare manufacturing split in two. Other industries had continued to be administered directly from Washington. The system of utilizing district boards to negotiate specifics directly with manufacturers provided the War Department a modicum of flexibility within the parameters of the overall demobilization. So as not to overwhelm Maj. Gen. George W. Goethals, the director of Purchase, Storage, and Traffic, Secretary Baker established the War Department Claims Board under Assistant Secretary Crowell in January 1919 to focus all field activities of industrial demobilization.

The most difficult element in drawing down war production was settling informal contracts, or those that did not adhere strictly to regulations. The “hurry and rush to get things done” mentality pervasive during the war had built up contracts that represented roughly \$1.5 billion of the War Department’s outstanding obligations and needed to be settled in an equitable manner. The comptroller of the Treasury Department initially declared all such contracts null and void, threatening to throw the economy into a panic. President Wilson averted the crisis on 2 March 1919 when he signed the Dent Act, authorizing the government to honor informal contracts that had been entered into in good faith. These included not only written contracts that did not meet all regulation criteria, but also contracts reached through written and oral communications. By the time it disbanded on 1 July 1920, the War Department Claims Board settled nearly 98 percent of the government’s outstanding wartime contracts, saving more than \$3.3 billion in expenditures through arbitration. However, even with the effective termination of contracts, the government was unable to stave off an economic recession. Fortunately, the downturn proved relatively mild and the economy generally recovered by the summer of 1919.

### *Disposing of the War Surplus*

Coupled with the task of returning the war economy to its peacetime status was the challenge of determining what to do with millions of tons and billions of dollars of now-superfluous

war materiel. At the time of the Armistice, the Army had an estimated \$2 billion in surplus materiel in the United States. The AEF had accumulated a further \$1.3 billion of surplus supplies and munitions in Europe. These figures did not include goods still under production by stateside manufacturers, which added additional millions to the nation's stores. In considering what to do with the surplus, the government had to balance "maintenance costs and obsolescence with possible future requirements." It also needed to determine how to effectively provide for the immediate needs of the AEF in case hostilities resumed, while also moving to dispose of excess war materiel as quickly as possible. In addressing the first issue, the War Department established a new reserve materiel policy:

To maintain no war reserves of supplies that could be obtained on the open market within thirty days; to maintain a sufficient reserve of those supplies which required more than thirty days but less than six months for procurement for expansion of the peacetime army into a war army with complete initial equipment; to retain a six-months' supply for the war army of supplies requiring more than six months but less than a year for procurement, and a year's supply for support of the war army for those items requiring over a year to obtain.

With this policy established, the War Department set about disposing of its surplus both at home and abroad. Excess materiel could not simply be sold at nominal rates, lest it undercut manufacturers and depress the market. Instead, it needed to be infused into the market judiciously. To accomplish this, the War Department established the Sales Branch of the Division of Purchase, Storage, and Traffic soon after the Armistice, which immediately began small sales to some foreign companies and governments. By 29 July 1919, Congress authorized domestic retail sales of food, clothing, and household supplies. It eventually established seventy-seven stores throughout the country to sell surplus goods over the counter at a price of 80 percent the prevailing rate.

Although direct sales to the public did relatively well, the government suffered its most significant financial loss with the disposal of surplus facilities. The numerous Army camps and cantonments established during the war now served little purpose and their often-haphazard construction limited their



*Ammunition carts awaiting shipment to the United States*  
(National Archives)

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market value. The Army condemned and disposed of all National Guard camps and most special purpose camps constructed during the war for an estimated \$4,215,000. The overall cost to the government was considerable: Camp Hancock in Georgia, for instance, had cost \$6 million to construct and returned only \$75,000. However, given that any return was a net gain for the Army, it faced little in the way of public disapproval, in keeping with the American tradition that “short-term economies generally should prevail over hoped-for long-term economies, and economy in general should prevail over military readiness, and in demobilization speed should prevail over all.”

It was easier to dispose of war surplus in Europe than in the United States. Near the end of November, Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord, the commanding general of the AEF Services of Supply, created an Advisory Liquidation Board to oversee surplus American materiel in Europe. Its members included Edward R. Stettinius, former assistant secretary of war and special representative to Secretary Baker working to renegotiate European contracts; Col. John A. Hull, a judge advocate general; and Brig. Gen. Charles G. Dawes, the AEF’s general purchasing agent. Harbord also appointed Brig. Gen. Charles R. Krauthoff as the AEF’s general

sales agent to begin arranging for the sale of surplus property. On 11 February 1919, the War Department created the United States Liquidation Commission, with the express purpose of “disposing of all American surplus military property on foreign soil.” It thus oversaw the actions of the Advisory Liquidation Board and other Army agencies involved in the liquidation of materiel.

In negotiating with the former Allies, the Army operated on the principles that no nation should profit at the expense of others, and that international agreements and understandings, even if informal, would be treated as binding contracts. All parties, being sovereign nations, had a vested interest in honoring international contracts. Considering that the other participants in the negotiations were demobilizing as well, they all generally accepted estimates and lump-sum payments rather than draw out the discussions over minute particulars. As one study summarized, “The important thing was to get the business over with justice done to all.”

Talks between the Americans and the Allies for settling their wartime business affairs continued throughout the spring and into the summer. They needed to ascertain the remaining war debts and outstanding contract obligations the Allies owed to the United States. Ultimately, the French agreed to a figure of nearly \$163 million, and the British accepted an obligation of more than \$35 million. Minor claims against Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, and Czechoslovakia came to almost \$5 million. The United States weighted all these against the \$35 million it cost to cancel its European contracts.

After evaluating its ongoing domestic needs, the Army shipped nearly 850,000 tons of equipment—mostly artillery and road-building machinery—back to the United States. The remainder went up for sale, and the French purchased most of it at a cost of \$400 million in ten-year, interest-bearing bonds. The equipment included both fixed and movable property, removing camps, cantonments, and other facilities that had been on the American ledgers. When combined with the sums from deals with the other Allies, the United States eventually took in approximately \$800 million. After paying outstanding American debts to the Allies, the United States netted \$757 million, or roughly 60 percent of the property’s original cost of \$1.38 billion.

In total, as of 17 April 1920, the War Department had expended just over \$16 billion of the \$24 billion congressional appropriation for the war. Subtracting deductions for the overseas sales, as

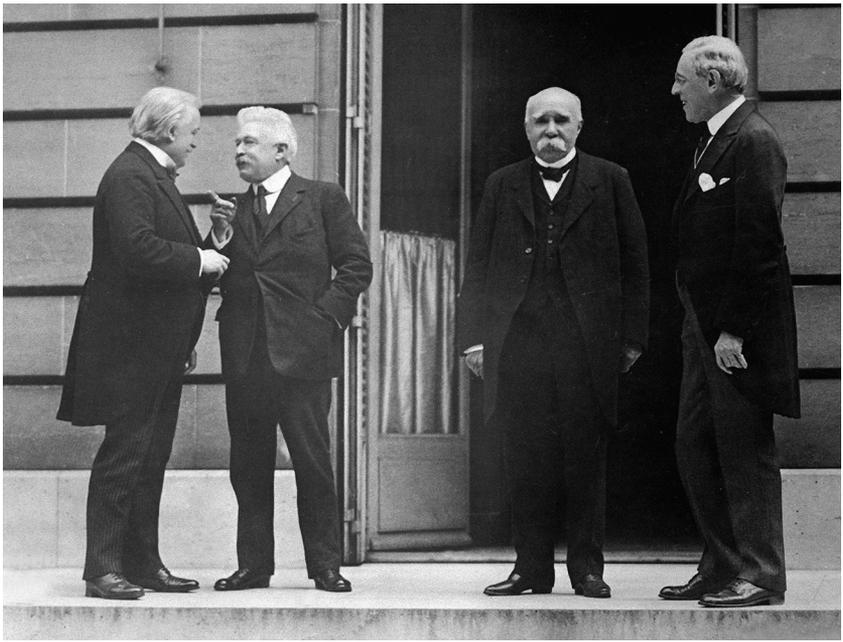
well as property set aside for the Army and continued military readiness, the final bill for the war came to an estimated \$8.885 billion, or roughly \$2,200 per man in the Army.

## THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

As the Americans and the Allies settled their wartime business affairs and established the occupation of the Rhineland, the peace conference that brought the First World War to a formal end convened in Paris during the first six months of 1919. As Margaret MacMillan noted, the concentration of political leaders in the French capital made it, for a brief period, the de facto “capital of the world.” Although twenty-seven nations sent official delegations, five countries initially took precedence. The heads of state of France, Great Britain, and the United States, together with Italy and Japan, and their respective foreign ministers constituted the so-called Council of Ten, or simply the Supreme Council. Gathering several times a day in special sessions apart from the rest of the conference attendees, the core members of the Supreme Council—the French, British, and U.S. heads of state—resolved the most pressing questions on their own. Plenary sessions, involving delegates from all of the represented nations, were largely a formality.

When Woodrow Wilson arrived in France on 13 December 1918, exultant crowds greeted him. For millions throughout the world, Wilson symbolized a more peaceful and democratic international order that would justify the suffering and loss of the war. For his part, Wilson believed that the end of the war, and the widespread enthusiasm for the ideals outlined in his Fourteen Points address of January 1918, presented an opportunity to realize his long-cherished ideal of a “League of Nations.” The other members of the American “Peace Commission” shared Wilson’s vision for a new era of international relations in which a “general association of nations” would “[afford] mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”

Secretary of State Robert Lansing and retired diplomat Henry White accompanied the president during his weeklong voyage. Colonel House, the president’s right-hand man, was already in France along with General Bliss, the American representative to the Allied Supreme War Council. Together, this group represented American interests during negotiations with their Allied



*Lloyd George, Italian prime minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, Clémenceau, and Wilson (left to right)*  
(National Archives)

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counterparts. Bliss, the sole military member of the American contingent, had a limited role in the conference, meeting with Wilson one-on-one on only five occasions between January and June 1919. Bliss' influence was confined specifically to military questions, which the president was happy to delegate. The other members held roles of varying importance. House served as the president's deputy, whereas Wilson entrusted Lansing with only limited responsibilities. White's contributions were marginal at best. Regrettably, Wilson did not invite any Republicans, who had won control of the Senate in the November 1918 midterm elections, to join the American delegation.

Wilson's efforts in Paris met with some success, although the president's single-minded devotion to creating a League of Nations, and to an ill-defined ideal of "self-determination," were a source of conflict with the more pragmatic British and French leaders. Prime Minister Clémenceau's priority, for example, was

to guarantee France's security through binding alliances and to hobble Germany as a military power. Although Wilson agreed that Germany as a whole—not just its “militarist” Prussian elite—should be subjected to punitive terms, he objected to France annexing German territories such as the Rhineland on the basis of strategic advantage because it violated the principle of national self-determination. Wilson also opposed French efforts to create a League army or general staff, believing that these entities would compromise American sovereignty. Clémenceau, infuriated by Wilson's stubbornness and idealism, complained to House that “talking to Wilson is something like talking to Jesus Christ!” Wilson, for his part, distrusted Clémenceau, whom he considered “too old to comprehend new ideas.” In spite of these contentions, Wilson managed to personally oversee the creation of the League of Nations' “covenant,” which was approved on 24 April.

It ultimately took more than four months for the Peace Conference to complete a draft treaty. The full Treaty of Versailles, which the Allies presented to representatives of the German government for the first time on 7 May, consisted of 433 separate articles organized in 15 parts and totaling some 436 pages. The terms, which entailed the loss of 13 percent of the German Empire's prewar territory and 10 percent of its population and required Germany to submit to an extended occupation of the Rhineland and the loss of its mining rights in the coal-rich Saarland, outraged the Germans. Most egregious, however, were the clauses that required Germany to accept sole responsibility for the outbreak of the war and reparations totaling 60 billion marks, or about \$15 billion—an amount roughly equal to Germany's annual national income. The treaty provoked a massive popular backlash, and the entire German cabinet resigned in protest on 20 June. It briefly appeared that the war would resume, and Marshal Foch made plans for an invasion of Germany with forty-five Allied divisions. Convinced that a military campaign would be hopeless, a reformed German cabinet finally accepted the treaty without modifications on 23 June. The formal signing ceremony took place five days later.

Wilson left Europe on the day of the treaty signing. Upon his return to the United States, he faced a new round of negotiations—this time with intransigent American politicians. Embittered by their exclusion from the negotiations, Senate Republicans had deep misgivings about the treaty. They had concerns that the League of Nations' covenant would usurp the Senate's constitutional

authority to make war by committing the United States to potential military actions in defense of other League members. This, combined with the president's refusal to compromise on the terms of the treaty, led to the emergence of a small faction in the Senate known as the "Irreconcilables." They opposed the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations in any form. Another group, the "Reservationists," was willing to accept the treaty with certain modifications. Wilson refused any alterations and despite vigorous campaigning in support of the treaty in the fall of 1919, he failed to secure the two-thirds Senate majority necessary to ensure its ratification. The Senate ultimately rejected the Treaty of Versailles, and the United States never became a member of the League of Nations. The United States and Germany eventually negotiated separate peace treaties, as did Austria and Hungary in 1921.

### AMERICAN FORCES IN GERMANY, 1919–1923

As Allied and German leaders negotiated in Paris, the future status of the occupation remained nebulous. American sentiments were divided between advocating for the soldiers to remain in Europe "until the civilized world is safely started upon its peaceful reconstruction plans" and wanting the men to come home. In early February, as the majority of the AEF prepared to return to the United States, Pershing transferred military control of the Stadtkreis of Trèves from Advance GHQ to the Third Army. This began a five-month transition period in which substantial changes in both the strength and composition of the Third Army ultimately culminated in its replacement by the American Forces in Germany. On 17 March, the 42d Division was the first of the Third Army's divisions to be relieved from duty in the American zone. The 4th Division of the IV Corps replaced it in Ahrweiler. By the first week of May, Pershing had transferred the 32d, 89th, and 90th Divisions from the Third Army to the AEF Services of Supply for transport back to the United States. After Pershing disbanded the First Army on 15 April, he ordered Liggett, its commander, to succeed Dickman as commander of the Third Army. In late April, Liggett reassigned the 4th Division to the III Corps to replace the 32d Division. The 59th Infantry regiment of the 4th Division moved to the east bank of the Rhine, and by extending the III Corps' 1st and 2d Divisions, which already were east of the river, the Third Army filled the remainder of the Coblenz bridgehead vacated by the 32d Division.

By 11 May, the IV and VII Corps ceased to be a part of the Third Army as their headquarters and corps troops departed for the United States. All air service, artillery, signal, engineer, and sanitation units attached to these corps left Germany. Liggett reassigned the 3d Division to the III Corps, the only American corps left in the Rhineland. Of the eight divisions that had served extensively with the Third Army, only the 1st, 2d, and 3d Divisions remained. However, when Pershing discontinued Advance GHQ on 1 June, the Third Army's responsibilities actually increased. As the sole American force remaining in the occupation zone, totaling just over 100,000 officers and men as of 1 July, Liggett's command now exercised all powers incident in military government.

With the strength of the Third Army rapidly diminishing but the territorial boundaries of the American zone unchanged, Liggett had to find a way to garrison all of the vacated sectors. A number of military police companies joined the Third Army in May and took control of towns such as Saarburg, Wittlich, Cochem, and Adenau, where they remained for the summer. The Third Army also vested more power in the German civil police, which maintained order in the outlying sections of each Kreis. Jurisdiction over these districts had rested with tactical commanders and their provost marshals, but the transfer of combat divisions back to the United States over the spring and summer of 1919 necessitated a change. The new system enhanced the prestige and morale of the German police and reduced friction with the civil population.

Paradoxically, during the period of rapid decline in American combat strength in the Rhineland, it appeared that the Third Army might be required to resume military operations because of the German government's unwillingness to sign the Treaty of Versailles. On 16 June, Marshal Foch notified Pershing that Allied armies should be prepared to advance into Germany. The Third Army's strategic objectives would be threefold: to separate northern and southern Germany by occupying the Main River valley, to seize the Ruhr industrial district, and to threaten the German seats of government at Weimar and Berlin.

The next day, Liggett issued operational orders for the prospective advance. The III Corps was to concentrate in the outer Coblenz bridgehead, with the British Army of the Rhine on its left (north), and the French Tenth Army guarding its right flank. The 1st and 2d Divisions would lead the advance with their main columns covered by armored guns and motorized machine guns. Liggett ordered them to reach Frankenberg, 150

kilometers to the northeast, within five days. The 3d Division would support them and would cross to the east bank and leave guards at key railway and telegraph stations. General Mangin loaned the French 2d Cavalry Division to the Third Army and Liggett directed it to maintain contact between the III Corps' left flank and the British forces. Liggett made clear to his soldiers that all armed resistance was to be "promptly overcome," and any opposition from the civil population should be "suppressed and the offenders severely dealt with."

The American Third Army, French Tenth Army, and British Army of the Rhine all completed their concentrations by 19 June. Liggett inspected the Third Army's advance outposts and found everything in "proper condition" for a forward movement. Foch set the date of the advance as 23 June, but that day, the German government notified the Paris Peace Conference that it would sign the treaty unconditionally. Despite this, Foch sought assurances from Liggett that the Third Army was prepared to commence offensive operations. On 28 June, however, the Allied and German governments concluded the Treaty of Versailles, removing the need for an advance and enabling the Americans to return to their previous assignments.

The final treaty provided for a fifteen-year Allied military occupation of the Rhineland. Throughout the negotiations, Foch and Clémenceau had argued that Germany remained a military and economic threat to French national security. America and Britain, however, refused to consent to the detachment of the Rhineland and remained reluctant to agree even to extend the occupation. President Wilson and General Bliss considered the French position "radically wrong." Clémenceau backed off his demand for a separation of the Rhineland, but public pressure forced him to remain firm on the necessity of an occupation. He soon grew so frustrated with Wilson's position that he accused the American president of being "pro-German." After a series of proposals and counterproposals, Clémenceau, Wilson, and Lloyd George finally agreed on 16 June to a prolonged occupation, which they justified by the need to ensure that Germany would fulfill its treaty obligations, particularly reparations. The U.S. Army was to participate in this occupation, even though both Pershing and Wilson wanted to remove all U.S. soldiers from Germany. As Clémenceau told Wilson, "Without your flag by mine, I will not be able to present [the treaty] to parliament."

Clémenceau made the occupation acceptable to the Americans and the British by promising that their contributions would be

minimal. In his words, "All I strictly ask is a battalion and a flag." This role would not be filled by the Third Army, but rather a new organization, the American Forces in Germany (AFG), which came into being on 2 July. The Third Army, which had dipped to a total strength of approximately 92,000 officers and men, was discontinued. As the III Corps was relieved, it transferred the 1st, 2d, and 3d Divisions, along with various military police, artillery, engineer, motor transport, quartermaster, signal corps, and other support units, to the AFG. The AFG was fully independent of Pershing's GHQ in France. Command went to Maj. Gen. Henry T. Allen, who had experience as a military governor in the Philippines and commanded the 90th Division during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Allen witnessed the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, arrived at AFG headquarters in Coblenz on 7 July, and officially assumed command the next day.

Shortly after the signing of the treaty, the Supreme War Council fixed the total strength of the occupation army at 6,500 officers and 151,000 men. In accordance with Clémenceau's promise that he required only a small contribution from the United States, Pershing, Bliss, and Wilson agreed to provide only 6,500 men, or around 5 percent of the Allied total. Pershing and Foch had already reached an agreement on 30 June whereby the 1st, 2d, and 3d Divisions would return to the United States within three months. The actual pace of the withdrawal was even quicker; by 21 August, all three divisions had left the Rhineland. As a result, by September, the strength of the AFG had plummeted to 11,000 men.

The 5th and 8th Infantry regiments, neither of which had seen combat during the war, took the place of these departing divisions. The 8th Infantry, which arrived in Coblenz in August, was mostly raw recruits, many of them teenagers that Allen described as "irresponsible boys." In September, Allen complained to Pershing that the 8th Infantry had at least 1,000 men who "because of physical or mental defects should not be representing the United States." Allen knew that a force as small as the AFG required disciplined, well-trained soldiers. In November, he lectured the War Department on sending higher-quality replacements in the future.

The American situation in the Rhineland remained critical because of constant French attempts to encroach upon the American zone. Upon assuming command of the AFG, Allen wanted to maintain the entire American sector, but soon realized

this was impossible. On 1 August, Allen met with Pershing and found the AEF commander's views "absolutely in accordance with mine as to the maintenance of the American status and dignity on the Rhine . . . regardless of the size of our force." Given the shrinking size of the AFG, however, both Pershing and Allen came to see the necessity of reducing the territory in the American zone. The problem was that Foch and Mangin, for political reasons, were "obsessed" with occupying part of Coblenz as well as the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein. Pershing and Allen rejected this and counteroffered the French control of all areas of the American zone outside the Landkreise and Stadtkreise of Coblenz. On 27 August, Foch granted the AFG continued control of Coblenz and its bridgehead, as well as four Kreise north of the Moselle. This new zone encompassed only 40 percent of the territory initially occupied by the Third Army.

With the boundary dispute settled, General Allen and the AFG faced a larger problem. The Treaty of Versailles had created an Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, a civilian body that was to function as the supreme Allied authority in the Rhineland. The treaty vested the High Commission with the power to suspend civil administration in any province or Kreis, and to issue ordinances for the security of the armies of occupation. Although the U.S. Congress failed to ratify the treaty, Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium did so on 10 January 1920. Consequently, the Allies were bound to implement the High Commission, which American representatives to the Peace Conference had helped to shape.

The issue was that the United States technically remained at war with Germany, and therefore the military government under the AFG still existed in the American zone. Allen suggested that he could solve the problem by issuing the High Commission's ordinances as his own military orders. Even before he received Secretary Lansing's approval on 13 January, Allen published the initial ordinances defining the legislative rights of the regime and restoring unrestricted travel within occupied territory. Thus, the American military government in the Rhineland essentially ended when the High Commission assumed its functions.

### *The Role of the American Army in the Rhineland*

During both the initial period of military government and after the establishment of the High Commission, the American forces' primary mission in the Rhineland remained to preserve

order. But as the Office of Civil Affairs pointed out, “The invasion and occupation of any country by a foreign army, even if it comes as a liberator, is apt to give rise to constant sources of friction.” The poor economic conditions in the Rhineland and the daily contact between American soldiers and the civil population made maintaining good relations challenging.

Through its Inferior and Superior Provost Courts and military commissions, the Army conducted thousands of trials of German citizens. Charges ranged from assaults on American soldiers to violations of sanitary regulations to failure to obey the orders of military authorities. By far the largest number of cases related to the violation of circulation orders and the sale or unlawful possession of U.S. military property. In June 1919, General Liggett required that complaints against American soldiers for offenses against civilians be investigated and recorded by OCCAs. All reports included the initial complaint and the resulting punishment, or the reason why the soldier was not disciplined. By October, OCCAs had dealt with 800 complaints, which ranged from murder and rape to accidental destruction of property. Felonies accounted for 256 of the complaints, a rate of two per thousand soldiers a year. Of the twenty-five homicide cases, OCCAs tried eleven soldiers and convicted six, and five of the eight soldiers tried for rape were convicted. In total, the 256 complaints resulted in only 118 trials as the OCCAs often struggled to identify the soldier or soldiers purportedly involved in the incidents.

In addition to judicial matters, the Office of Civil Affairs also controlled all public utilities in the American zone to ensure the efficiency of civil services. Army engineers subsequently supervised the management of gas and electric plants. To save personnel and interfere as little as possible in day-to-day operations, however, the Army administered these utilities through whatever German authorities had operated them before the occupation. In June 1920, Allen transferred supervision of local economic affairs from the OCCAs to civilian Kreis representatives, who answered directly to him.

One of the primary threats to public order in occupied Germany was the ever-present danger of labor strikes. When the Third Army entered the Rhineland, industrial conditions were in chaos as discharged German soldiers crowded into cities looking for work. The fluctuations of the mark over the next several years made the cost of living in the American zone rise exponentially in relation to workers’ wages. The burden placed on the German economy by war

reparations and the Weimar government's inability to negotiate a foreign loan or a significant extension to meet the payments caused the price of many foodstuffs to increase more than threefold. This, in turn, resulted in escalating labor disputes.

Although the Office of Civil Affairs claimed that "disorder cannot be tolerated in a military government," it also recognized that the Army had to display "equal amounts of tact and firmness" to handle labor disputes. Therefore, the Americans tried to adopt a neutral position and frequently acted as a mediator between employers and workers. If OCCAs could not prevent a dispute before it became a strike, they summoned each side to a meeting and encouraged both parties to settle the dispute before the Army stepped in, a policy that generally worked. Strikes involving industrial laborers, shop clerks, and transportation workers did break out at Neuwied in April 1922 and in Coblenz in June of that same year, but in both cases the strikers managed to obtain an increase in wages before violence occurred. When strikes involved the U.S. Army directly, however, it handled them in a different way. If the Army was the employer or if it was dependent on a particular industry's labor—such as railways, gas plants, or waterworks—it prohibited strikes under threat of court-martial and promised "severe punishment" for offenders. Military authorities obtained the names and residences of known labor leaders and threatened to arrest them immediately in the event of any strike that interfered with the Army.

The flexibility of American forces in handling labor disputes was one way that American views of the occupation clashed with the French. By the spring of 1920, the United States' failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and the public pressure on the new French premier, Alexandre Millerand, to enforce the treaty's harshest terms led French policy toward Germany to become more aggressive. Pierrepont B. Noyes, the American observer on the High Commission, criticized French threats to occupy the Ruhr. He claimed that France was making "illegitimate use of the powers of occupation" to secure "illegitimate ends." Noyes grew so hostile toward the French that U.S. Ambassador to France Hugh C. Wallace complained to the State Department that Noyes's stance on the occupation was causing irreparable damage to Franco-American relations. On 17 May 1920, the State Department cabled Allen and instructed him to replace Noyes on the High Commission. As a result, after May 1920, Allen held the dual roles of commander of the AFG and American observer on the High Commission. This put

the general in the unique position of being, in his words, “a military man on this civil commission preeminently created to moderate the actions of military chiefs.”

Because Allen thought dissension on the High Commission encouraged German resistance, his initial views were more pro-French than those of Noyes. The French, however, consistently forced the general to resist their attempts at limiting the AFG’s influence, occupying the industrial Ruhr district, or separating the Rhineland entirely from Germany. Rumors also circulated in both France and Germany of a complete American withdrawal, which made Allen’s efforts to maintain the AFG’s authority in its zone even more challenging.

Although the strength of the AFG held steady at around 13,000 men throughout 1920 and most of 1921, the War Department rapidly reduced it thereafter. Warren G. Harding had publicly stated a month before his election as president that American soldiers “haven’t any business” in Germany and “ought to come [home].” But in March 1921, newly appointed Secretary of War John W. Weeks announced that the AFG would remain at Coblenz for the foreseeable future. Weeks was concerned that Germany might mistake a U.S. withdrawal as support for a renegotiation of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles pertaining to reparations. Faced with a diminished defense budget and criticism from isolationists in Congress, Weeks changed his stance and told the press in October that 8,000 soldiers from the AFG would be on their way home within five months. A subsequent cable from Washington to Allen made clear that the reduction of the AFG to 372 officers and 5,200 men was final. The War Department ordered Allen to send the 5th Infantry and all of its headquarters and auxiliary units back to the United States. Allen completed this when the transport USS *Cambrai* departed Antwerp with 1,100 men in early January 1922.

On 15 December 1921, General Jean-Marie Degoutte, the commander of the French occupation armies, visited Allen and told him that the reduced AFG was not “adequate” to garrison Coblenz and its bridgehead. Degoutte proposed moving French soldiers into the city, an offer that Allen rebuffed, emphasizing that there would be “no changes in the civil or military control and administration of the American zone.” However, Allen received a War Department cable on 17 February 1922 that fundamentally altered the situation by ordering another 3,200 officers and men back home. Allen knew that the French would repeat their demand,

and he lamented that he “must accede due to the cutting down of forces.” Indeed, the next day Foch sent Degoutte back to Allen, who continued to insist that Coblenz must remain “off limits” to the French. Harding and Secretary Weeks indicated that they might withdraw all American soldiers from Germany by the end of the fiscal year, but instructed Allen in early May to keep two battalions of the 8th Infantry and an engineer company at Coblenz pending further instructions. The strength of the AFG therefore was fixed at 1,200 men. Consequently, Allen and Degoutte finally agreed on a plan to use French soldiers in the American zone. Allen was to retain his authority as “territorial commander,” and the AFG provost courts would continue to exercise jurisdiction over all cases between the civil population and Allied soldiers.

The first French unit to arrive in the American zone was the 4th Dragoon Brigade on 5 May. By 7 June, Degoutte submitted a plan to garrison an entire French division in barracks he intended to construct at Andernach and Neuwied, but Allen blocked the plan. Over the next several months, the AFG commander continually told Degoutte that the French had stationed too many troops in Coblenz. Moreover, Allen believed that the French habit of marching through the city streets while singing patriotic songs and insulting German civilians created unnecessary friction. Allen demanded that the majority of battalions in the three French regiments be quartered outside the city and refused Degoutte’s suggestion to let French soldiers carry their bayonets while off duty. In doing so, Allen sought to impress upon Degoutte that the AFG was not content to be simply “the tail to the French kite in the American zone.”

“Little did one imagine,” Allen wrote, “when we came to the Rhine . . . we should in the end be serving in a way as a moderator for our recent enemy [Germany] against her traditional enemy, our traditional friend [France].” Yet this was the role the AFG increasingly assumed. Allen’s position as observer on the High Commission and his dealings with Degoutte and Foch convinced him that their fear of Germany’s economic and military resurgence was the sole driver of French policy in regard to the occupation and reparations. Allen strenuously objected to French proposals to occupy the Ruhr and to Degoutte’s attempt in January 1922 to use a strike by German railroad workers as an excuse to seize control of all the railways in the Rhineland. Additionally, despite French pressure to support a renewed separatist movement led by Dr. Joseph Smeets, Allen kept the AFG neutral on the grounds

that it was strictly a German matter and that most Rhinelanders strongly opposed a change in their political status. Allen's gradual adoption of a more sympathetic position toward the Germans did little to ease tensions between the AFG and the French, but it did bring the general into line with the opinion of the American soldiers occupying Coblenz and its environs.

### *The American Soldier in Germany*

When the Allied and German governments signed the Armistice, American soldiers naturally wanted to return to the United States. Few considered that they would be sent to occupy German territory, especially considering that the United States did not agree to participate in a military occupation until the very end of the war. However, although the soldiers of the Third Army initially were displeased at having to stay in Europe, many came to view occupation duty in the Rhineland as a choice assignment. The 8th Infantry, in fact, witnessed a high rate of reenlistment from 1920 to 1922.

One reason for this was that the heavy casualty rates during the war had left a shortage of German men, which made local women look to American soldiers for companionship. In March 1919, a *Vanity Fair* reporter who visited the American zone ridiculed the women of the Rhineland, claiming that there was "nothing doing in fraternization" because the "Rhine maidens" held "little charm for young men of good taste." This assertion, however, was far from true. Despite Pershing's November 1918 antifraternization order, some American soldiers came forward in the spring of 1919 announcing their engagements to pregnant German women whom they intended to marry even if they faced a trial. This created a dilemma for military authorities who did not want to erode discipline by allowing soldiers to willfully violate the order, but who also realized that preventing the marriages would reduce German respect for the soldiers. In July, they granted this privilege, provided that each soldier signed a statement acknowledging he was the father and that his fiancée submitted to a physical examination.

General Allen revoked the fraternization ban on 27 September 1919. The AFG was the last of the armies of occupation to take this step, which initially caused a surge in prostitution and cases of venereal disease. In fact, the department of sanitation and public health in the Office of Civil Affairs determined that the



*American soldiers fraternizing with German women*  
(National Archives)

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rate of venereal disease for soldiers in the AFG increased from 9 per 1,000 a year to the “extremely high figure” of 422 per 1,000 a year. In response, Allen and German authorities agreed in October to criminalize prostitution, resulting in the decline of venereal disease cases.

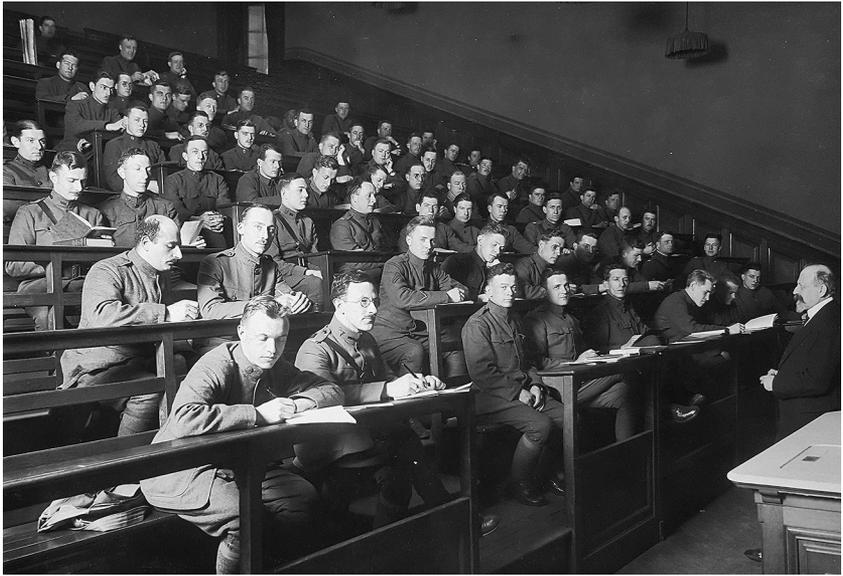
Eventually, Allen amended his orders regarding marriages because of the “astonishing” number of officers and soldiers who tried to take advantage of the policy. In February 1920, he mandated that no soldier below the rank of first sergeant could marry, regardless of whether or not the woman was pregnant. The general feared that the sheer number of available German women would lead to numerous marriages and leave him with a “partially Germanized command.” Nevertheless, by January 1921, 10 percent of American soldiers in the AFG had married German women, and another 10 percent had submitted marriage requests but were denied permission.

A feature that made the American soldiers stand out to German women was their spending money, particularly considering the tenuous nature of the German economy. The Army nominally paid its soldiers in dollars, but they actually received their pay in

marks. Therefore, as the mark depreciated, the pay of the average enlisted man rose in relation to that of German workers. This gave the soldiers of the Third Army, and later the AFG, unrivaled purchasing power. As an Office of Civil Affairs report noted, "Soldiers proverbially spend money like water, and the American soldiers in Germany are no exception." This report estimated that 70 percent of soldiers' pay quickly found its way into the pockets of German merchants. As a result, Coblenz became Americanized as local businesses started to cater to the occupying soldiers. Some restaurants, for example, began to serve apple pie. Given their standard of living and greater purchasing power, many soldiers felt fortunate to be part of the occupation.

American commanders in the Rhineland worried that their soldiers' excess of money and spare time, in addition to their fraternization with German civilians, would erode military preparedness. To combat this, Generals Dickman, Liggett, and Allen ordered frequent drills and inspections to maintain discipline. During a visit by General March in June 1920, the AFG conducted infantry, cavalry, and artillery exercises, as well as firing demonstrations that pitted automatic weapons against rifles. Under Allen, the AFG also used local steeplechase grounds to experiment with joint maneuvers involving tanks and infantry armed with machine guns. In September 1921, Pershing returned to Europe to bestow the Medal of Honor on the French *Poilu Inconnu* (Unknown Soldier) in Paris. He traveled first to Coblenz for an inspection of the AFG, after which Allen claimed that his command "in field fitness, shooting capacity, and appearance, is probably the best group of soldiers that the United States has ever possessed." Even Degoutte, who also witnessed the inspection, claimed that any general who disagreed with this sentiment "does not know good soldiers." An inter-Allied shooting competition at Cologne in October 1922 proved Allen right, as American teams won every event.

In addition to training, Pershing and Dickman established an extensive program of educational classes and athletics in an effort to keep American soldiers occupied and thus limit friction with the civil population. Pershing also hoped to reduce the illiteracy rate across the AEF, particularly in the Third Army. The number of illiterate replacements that arrived in Germany from the United States "astonished" Chaplain Duffy: in the 165th Infantry alone, he noted, 200 men could not sign their names to the payroll. Therefore, Duffy praised the "strong movement" to teach the men reading, writing, and arithmetic. Additional



*American soldiers awaiting transfer home attend a chemistry class  
at the Pasteur Institute in Paris  
(National Archives)*

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courses available to soldiers included automobile operation, road construction, and principles of the telephone. The Army Educational Commission and the section of the general staff that coordinated education and training managed to secure a substantial number of textbooks on topics ranging from American history to farm management and business law. The commission permitted officers to requisition these books for post schools. The general staff divided the books by subject, classified them by level of education, and shipped the Third Army's books to Coblenz. Pershing wanted the "educational stimulus to be brought to bear upon the largest possible number" of soldiers, but he recognized that the schools organized at Army posts were incapable of reaching everyone. Therefore, the general asked his commanders to identify enlisted men and noncommissioned officers capable of teaching classes on "special subjects." Pershing intended for these educational programs to keep soldiers out of trouble and to provide them with a "profitable and enjoyable method" of spending their spare time.

Likewise, American commanders promoted athletic competitions because, as Pershing pointed out, the “fighting efficiency” of a company depended upon the number of physically fit men it took into the firing line. Officers most commonly played polo and enlisted men engaged in baseball and boxing. In January 1919, Advance GHQ organized the AEF Athletic Championships, a series of boxing, wrestling, track and field, basketball, and football contests in which the competitors represented their respective units. They held the finals for all of these events in March and April. The most popular games were undoubtedly the baseball championships, which pitted teams from the 2d and 3d Divisions against those from GHQ, the Services of Supply, and the District of Paris. Each team played a full twenty-one game league schedule that began in June, and the team with the highest winning percentage was named AEF champion. Baseball was so popular among soldiers in the AFG that they continued to hold a regular season every summer.

On several occasions, athletics merged with other forms of entertainment. The Fourth of July celebration in the American zone in 1920 involved a series of boxing matches against the French and English and a baseball game at Coblenz. It finished with a parade led by a fife-and-drum corps dressed in Continental uniforms and a fireworks display over the high walls of Ehrenbreitstein.

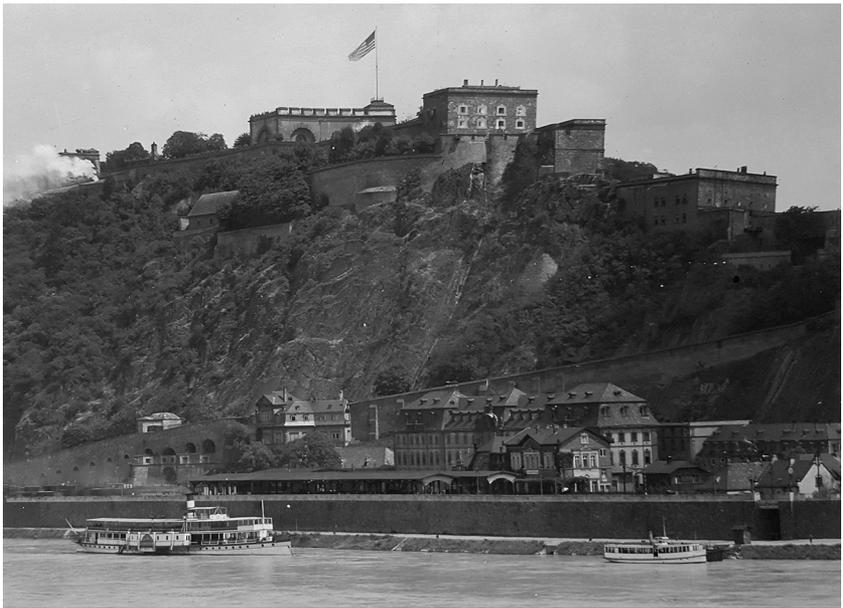
Furthermore, each division and corps in the Third Army and the AFG had entertainment officers who cooperated with the YMCA to schedule shows and “amateur nights” for the soldiers. The men of the 42d Division spent as many as five nights a week at the YMCA or Knights of Columbus building. Many of those who worked to provide this entertainment were women who had traveled to Germany and volunteered their services. In Höhr-Grenzhausen, two members of the Women’s Department of the YMCA took charge of a large gymnasium and used it to hold balls, theatrical performances, and musical comedies for the soldiers. According to Hagood, these women did “an astounding amount of work, at great personal sacrifice.” His French aide, Roger Wurtz, was so impressed that he exclaimed, “When the aviators reach the moon, the first thing they see will be an American YMCA worker, probably a woman.” Although German citizens occasionally lodged complaints about drunk and disorderly Americans, the educational and recreational programs succeeded in making productive use of soldiers’ time in Germany.

## *The End of the American Occupation*

On the last day of 1922, General Allen lamented the “unrest and unhappiness” in Europe. He was caught between the notion that it was generally unwise to keep American soldiers in Germany and the fear that the French would occupy the Ruhr if the AFG withdrew, a move he considered “hostile to peace and European restoration.” Ultimately, however, the decision to withdraw troops was not Allen’s to make. The issue had been debated intermittently by Congress since Senator Joseph M. McCormick (R-Ill.) introduced a resolution in September 1919 calling for the return of all American soldiers stationed overseas. By November 1922, the AFG’s strength had declined to a little over a thousand men and the War Department cabled that Allen could expect no further replacements.

After a conference of German and Allied officials held in Paris on 2–4 January 1923 failed to produce a solution to the reparations question, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution withdrawing the remainder of the AFG from Germany. On 10 January, Allen received the news via telegram. It directed him to immediately send all troops except the Graves Registration Service back to the United States aboard commercial liners and the U.S. Army Transport *St. Mihiel*. This decision, combined with a new outburst of French militarism, caused the general to remark that it was a “baneful day for the welfare of the world.”

As Allen was well aware, French military and political leaders had long wanted to occupy the Ruhr, and this desire became more pronounced in December 1922. This caused discord between the former Allies, as the Americans and British felt that the French were going too far in their efforts to weaken Germany. At the start of the new year, Degoutte began to concentrate multiple French divisions for an advance. Many of these passed through Coblenz on their way to Düsseldorf, a fact that infuriated Allen. On 9 January 1923, the Reparations Commission declared Germany in default because of its delinquencies in coal deliveries. The French seized on this as a justification to finally occupy the Ruhr, which they did two days later. Although German chancellor Wilhelm Cuno protested what he called a “grave violation of international law and of the Versailles treaty,” the French were unmoved. By 2 February, they had expelled the Oberpräsident of the Rhine Province, cordoned off the entire Ruhr District, and begun enforcing a customs line.



*American flag over Ehrenbreitstein fortress in Coblenz*  
(National Archives)

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Allen strongly disagreed with French actions and believed they would have “serious results for all Europe,” but with the AFG set to depart Germany, he was helpless to alter the situation. Although he lamented the general’s position, Chancellor Cuno wrote to Allen that the German government appreciated the AFG’s “non-interference in purely German political affairs” and claimed that the conduct of American soldiers had “materially lightened . . . the depression and hardships which are unavoidably connected with the occupation.” At noon on 24 January, Companies D and M of the 8th Infantry looked on as two privates and a noncommissioned officer of the 7th Machine Gun Battalion lowered the American flag at Ehrenbreitstein while a French band played “The Star-Spangled Banner.” A French infantry detachment then raised the tricolor and the 8th Infantry’s band returned the French compliment by playing “La Marseillaise.” That evening, with French soldiers lining the roads, the 8th Infantry passed in review before Allen and the Rhineland High Commissioners on its way to the Coblenz train station.

The flag-lowering ceremony marked the symbolic change of power in the Coblenz region. Three days later, Allen officially turned control of the American zone over to the French. With the removal of American forces from Germany, the U.S. government felt it was no longer necessary to maintain an observer on the High Commission and Allen withdrew from that body on 3 February. Within two weeks, the general and his staff departed the Rhineland for good.

In his farewell message to the AFG, Allen praised his officers and men for an “eminently successful execution” of their mission. For four years, the U.S. Army had held its place on the Rhine alongside the armies of its allies. Its goal, as Allen made clear, had been “to act with justice toward all” and to conduct the occupation “with a maximum of effectiveness and a minimum of hardship on the population.” The AFG’s commander believed his Army had achieved this and told every soldier that they should carry in their hearts “the consciousness of a duty well done.”

The AFG’s withdrawal prompted an outpouring of support from Rhinelanders, who viewed the Americans as fair-minded occupiers and as a moderating influence on the French. Despite its shrinking size and the continual threat of withdrawal, the Third Army and the AFG managed to restore local government, maintain public order, and win the support of the civil population within its zone. As Allen summed up the day he left the Rhineland, American forces in Germany “had arrived as enemies and were leaving as friends—a rare occurrence in history.”

## ANALYSIS

In examining the occupation, Colonel Hunt’s final report noted, “Enforcement of a change of customs on any people, no matter how insignificant the change may be, is more provocative of dissention than anything else.” That many Germans developed an appreciation and even fondness for the American occupiers is a testament to the professionalism and sense of fairness that the soldiers exhibited toward the local population. Regretfully, they received little fanfare or even acknowledgment upon their return to the United States. The Army would not establish a medal honoring their service until 1941. On the whole, the Army ignored the experience of conducting a military government until the 1930s when Hunt’s report began to draw interest again, culminating in the issuance of Field Manual 27–5, *Military Government*, on

30 July 1940. However, the United States' entry into the Second World War and the vastly expanded challenges for military government that the conflict brought largely overshadowed the Army's experiences in the First World War. The members of the Third Army and the AFG thus had to content themselves with the pride of a job well done, even if its lasting impact was minimized in the ensuing decades.

The legacy of the post-First World War American demobilization was more pronounced than that of the occupation, albeit with mixed results. In a 1918 article, F. H. Sexton declared "it is harder to demobilize than to mobilize." Alfred Milner, the British secretary of state for war, went further in explaining that demobilization "involves—quite inevitably—just as many complications, hardships, inequalities [as mobilization]. . . . The difference is that while war is on, people mind less. The sense of national danger, national necessity, submerges complaints." The government's lack of planning exacerbated the challenges the United States faced in both the occupation and demobilization. Given the expectation that the war would extend into 1919, and President Wilson's aversion to using the Army as an occupation force, the shock of the Armistice caught the War Department and the AEF unprepared. As a result, as with mobilization, U.S. military and civilian leaders had little time to plan and coordinate the daunting tasks of occupation and demobilization.

And yet, for all the difficulties involved, the government succeeded in transitioning to peace rapidly without seriously affecting the national economy. The War Department turned the trains around, overcame its dearth of shipping, and brought the men home within a year of the Armistice. Even so, the process was traumatic for many soldiers. With the exception of treating the disabled, the government had no comprehensive plan for helping soldiers transition back to civilian life or assisting them once they were out of uniform. Many struggled during the ensuing decade, and especially during the Great Depression that followed it, leaving them feeling abandoned by the nation. To avoid a repeat of these sentiments, the U.S. government adopted a more robust support program at the end of the Second World War—most notably with the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (also known as the G. I. Bill) to help soldiers reintegrate into civilian life.

The turmoil of the postwar years, from the harsh treatment of African American soldiers and the public hysteria of the Red

Scare to the United States' failure to join the League of Nations, disillusioned many Americans. The rise of totalitarian regimes in Germany and Japan and the outbreak of the Second World War only exacerbated these mixed feelings about the "War to End All Wars." However, in occupying the Rhineland and demobilizing after the fighting, the U.S. Army accomplished all that the War Department asked of it in a timely manner and with minimal hardships for civilians. Any failures in both undertakings were more the result of U.S. policymakers' lack of vision and planning than of any shortcomings of the men carrying out the missions. As with the war itself, the soldiers and bureaucrats tasked with overseeing demobilization and conducting the occupation faced tremendous challenges with little effective guidance for how to meet them. That they overcame these challenges and accomplished their missions is a worthy epitaph for the American experience during the war.





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PIN : 205915-000