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SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
Psychological Warfare Division

26 December, 1944

TO : Chief of Intelligence

REACTIONS OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION  
OF ANTWERP, PARTICULARLY THE DOCKERS, TO  
RECENT V ATTACKS.

1. This report is based on interviews and observations made in ANTWERP between Dec. 5th and Dec. 13th 1944. The interviews, with the exception of six made by Mr. R.E. Quinby, were conducted by the writer of this report aided, when Flemish was necessary, by Mr. F.C.B. Wood. The investigation was made during a period of comparative quiet, but this is not thought to have affected the main conclusions reached.

2. Summary of conclusions

(a) The morale of the town is good and there is no immediate danger of its being seriously lowered by the V attacks. These may even have the effect of increasing the amount of effort which the citizens are prepared to put into the war.

(b) In the dock area, the attacks are only one of a number of factors influencing morale and are more than counterbalanced by the high wages being paid, the good food being provided and the fact that four years of unemployment have ended. Indeed the chief disturbing factor is not the attacks but the lack of transport.

(c) In the rest of the town, the necessary adjustments - civic, domestic and psychological - to life under raid conditions have been made with surprising smoothness and speed. There are, however, certain very definite economic grievances. Food, especially fats, and fuel, especially gas, are short; there is a great deal of unemployment, and there are marked disparities between wages in the docks and those paid elsewhere to persons working for the Allies.

(d) There is a general expectation that Allied advances will soon bring Antwerp beyond the range of V weapons and that with the opening of the docks, food supplies would improve. If it becomes obvious that either of these hopes are going to be disappointed, or if the scale of the attack is markedly increased, morale may decline sharply, though even then the dockers are likely to be the last section of the community affected.

(e) Improved arrangements for simple housing repairs and more publicity for defence measures would probably do a good deal for morale. As far as the dockers are concerned, the most important task is to improve their transport; here an adequate supply of bicycle tyres would make a great difference.

3. Method and scope of the Investigation

For a number of reasons, of which the most important were the barrier of language (very few dockers and at most 50% of the townsfolk have either French or English) and the intensity with which work was proceeding at the port, a direct poll of the civilian population of Antwerp was found impracticable. Moreover, preliminary enquiries among authoritative spokesmen of the town

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produced such surprisingly unanimous answers that an over-all quantitative survey - only useful for determining the relative strengths of opposed and clearly distinguishable opinions - seemed unnecessary if not positively ill-advised. It was therefore decided to proceed by the method of intensive interviews of key-personnel in touch with the work of the port and with the transport and other vital services of the town. The names listed in Appendix "D" indicate how wide a cross-section of informed opinion was thus obtained. In supplement, groups of dockers were interviewed while at work.

#### 4. Main Findings

Certain basic facts about civilian morale in the town and port, repeated in almost every interview and nowhere contradicted, can be set out in generalised form. They will be followed by more particular comments on the morale situation, whether made by the dockers themselves or by other sources. Some personal observations are included at the end of this section, together with a brief account of the main psychological difficulties occasioned by V1 and V2 attacks.

##### (a) Points of General Agreement

(i) The great majority of the population regard the V attacks as Antwerp's real physical war-dose. The attacks have increased hatred of the Germans but have evoked no complaints against the Allies; on the contrary, the prompt and efficient aid rendered by the British fire-fighting and rescue services had added greatly to Allied popularity.

(ii) The majority of Antwerp citizens pride themselves on their traditionally sane and placid temperament. They like to think that they will never be perturbed by terror weapons, even though (an often repeated jibe) people in Brussels might well be.

(iii) A considerable evacuation of civilians, particularly women and children of the well-to-do classes has taken place. This is considered natural - and even sensible - for those who have the money, or the relations to go to, or no work to attend to - or look for. Exact figures are difficult to obtain, since many families return to Antwerp at intervals to draw their rations and many heads of families visit their evacuated families whenever business or transport allows. 30,000 (just over 5% of the total population) was the figure mentioned by one knowledgeable source.

(iv) On the other hand there is no suggestion that this evacuation has affected the public services or labour market. All public servants are at their posts; the Antwerp Gas Company has retained its staff intact; the Fords Motors has retained all but 3%.

(v) In particular the recent attacks have in no way affected the supply, quality, or spirit of the labour in the docks. Military and civilian authorities alike are agreed that all foreseeable demands for labour, skilled and unskilled, in the docks can be met and to spare.

(vi) The quality of the dock-labour is the subject of sincere praise from the Allied Military. One British Officer considered it superior to dockers in Great Britain; another confessed that it compared very favourably with army standards; whilst an American officer considered it the best he had ever seen. Antwerp citizens, including some not prejudiced in favour of the working class, also spoke frequently and with pride of the dock-workers' skill and industry. From both military and civilians reports were heard of



ships that had been unloaded in half the time calculated to be necessary by British or American officers.

(vii) The dockers have of course a very strong economic motive for working well. Their wages are very high; the minimum wage for an unskilled worker in the docks is three times that offered for corresponding work on the railways. (See further d(vi) below and Appendix "B"). In addition, each man is entitled to three bully sandwiches and a mug of tea at a very moderate cost in the middle of each 7½ hour shift. Though referred to rather apologetically as "a snack" and "more of a gesture than anything else" by one British officer, the dockers are delighted with it (see Appendix "B"); one Belgian employer of labour described it first as the ideal food for the men, and later as "perfect politics" on the part of the military authorities.

(viii) Relations between the dockers, their representatives, their employers and the Allied Military authorities appear to be excellent. Many stevedore foremen have a useful smattering of English and employers and employees - in spite of occasional labour crises in previous years - have a long tradition of co-operation in serving the port; and present conditions of labour, wages, etc. have been satisfactorily worked out between them and the Military authorities acting on behalf of the Belgian Government (see Appendix "A").

(ix) Pride in the port (which is owned by the town) is very widespread, not among the dockers alone. Antwerp citizens realise that the town's welfare, not only in the immediate war-time situation, but in post-war years, is largely dependent on it. This attitude was typified in the Burgomaster's assertion that he was head of the port as well as of the town and that the basis of his regional policy was to get the port back to full working order as early as possible.

(x) News - true and false - of cargoes and ships arriving at the port is a main staple of Antwerp conversation. By contrast, the V attacks are not. Again and again during interviews it was found very difficult to keep the informant to the subject of the attacks and their effects on morale; his conversation tended to drift to the background causes of the good morale of the town or to those factors (transport difficulties or food shortages for example) which in his opinion, constituted the only real menace to it.

(xi) The satisfactory working conditions of the dockers, and the good effects on their morale resulting from these, are not paralleled in other trades and services. The position of railway workers appears to be particularly hard. A glance at Appendix "B" shows a great disparity between their wage-scales and those of the dockers, and their hours, in view of the present disorganisation of the railway system, are erratic and often painfully long. This is the one field in which the military reported a definite shortage of available labour. There is, moreover, a good deal of unemployment in the town. Owing to administrative re-arrangements and the very fluid state of the labour market, official figures for unemployment could not be given. (The figure of 50,000 was, however, mentioned by two independent intelligent sources). It is among workers who can see no prospect of an early return to their normal callings that the V attacks, if continued, intensively, may be expected to produce a noticeable deterioration of morale.

(xii) The main factor militating against the present good morale of the town is certainly the shortage of foods, particularly fats, meats and calorific foods, and of fuel, particularly gas for cooking purposes. Many sources who asserted emphatically that the V attacks by themselves would never affect the workers' morale, admitted that if the food situation did not improve during the



winter and if V attacks were resumed with the same intensity as during the last weeks of November, the situation might well begin to deteriorate.

(b) Points specially emphasised by the Dockers themselves

Dockers were spoken to in both the British and American sectors of the port; in the pay office of C.E.P.A.; at the recruitment centre (British sector) where foremen select their teams for the day; and on the wharves and quays wherever groups could be tactfully engaged in conversation.

(i) The dockers spoken to were almost unanimous in expressing dissatisfaction with present transport arrangements, both inside the port and between the port gates and their homes. One man claimed that, with trains running as at present, he had to leave his home at 8 a.m. in order to arrive in time for the 2 p.m. shift. Others stressed the fact that, over and above actual working hours, they had to walk for an hour (often in the rain) from the port gates or recruitment centre to the wharf where work was waiting them. In pre-war days, there was apparently an efficient bus service inside the port, besides bus services to certain outlying suburbs not easily reached by tram or train. But buses at present are few and the train services slow and infrequent. Much the most common complaint, however, was that, owing to lack of rubber tyres, dockers could no longer come to work on their bicycles - the most popular method of conveyance in pre-war days. (It is understood that Civil Affairs have made a strong recommendation on this head).

On the scrappy evidence available it was quite impossible to form an opinion as to the best method of easing the present transport difficulty. Each docker spoken to tended, very naturally, to answer in terms of his own particular case. The transport problem has been described in some detail here because it is the only industrial grievance mentioned by the dockers themselves. It is not at present occasioning any definite ill-will or affecting hours or quality of work. British and American officers agree that the dockers arrive with surprising promptitude considering their difficulties.

(ii) The dockers spoken to expressed scorn and personal indifference to V attacks. Typical comments were -

"We soon got used to them"

"We don't listen to them any more - often we don't hear them".

"There would be just the same danger, whether we were working here or sitting at home".

A checker, questioned on one of the wharves, said that he could remember only one case of a man leaving his work on the docks because of the Vs. This was a foreman who received news that his house, in the near neighbourhood, had been hit. He left his work and went home to discover that his wife had been killed. Nevertheless he was back at work next morning.

Another stevedore told how he had seen his sister-in-law hideously mutilated as a result of a V explosion. But this, he claimed, did not make him any more afraid of "those things".

(iii) Like the rest of the population the dockers spoken to preferred to express their views and ask questions on other subjects. One of the men came forward with a suggestion of his own for expediting the work of clearing the wharves, which, whether practicable or not, at least showed an intelligent interest in the



work from the Allied Military standpoint. In general the dockers professed to be avid for work, perhaps because of four years' severance (for the great majority of them) from their normal occupation. (See Appendix "A"). One of them said "We have a great reputation for work. We have got to live up to it."

(c) Assets in the present situation mentioned by certain sources

(i) A number of sources were approached with the following question: did not the thought that their homes might be hit while they were out at work distract and worry the dockers? Mr. Der Haies and M. Hendryk (see Appendix "D") claimed that such worries had not affected their men in any noticeable way. A British Movement Control Officer in the British sector expressed exactly the same view. The men, he felt, showed no undue worry when a bomb fell on the town or in the surrounding area. It is a considerable asset that from the docks, or indeed from anywhere in Antwerp, save a high observation post, it is extremely difficult to judge whereabouts a V has fallen even when the flash is seen.

(ii) M. De Winter, a leading notary of the town and a man of obviously right-wing political sympathies, expressed the view that the Vs had in some ways actually improved the morale and working efficiency of the town, since the common danger had increased inter-class solidarity and the example of the British Military had had a wholesome effect on the workers. These, he considered, would otherwise have begun to agitate over general economic conditions (particularly the food and fuel shortage); and they would never have understood (without the Vs as a reminder of Germany and the war) that the port must first be used for the landing of military supplies.

(iii) Lt. Phillips, R.A. and Captain Rambout described, from the British and Belgian standpoints, the co-operation of military and civilian services, in fire-fighting and rescue work. It appears that the British services are generally first on the scene, but that the Belgian services are now far better organised than during the early weeks of the attacks. From the morale standpoint the important facts, are, on the positive side, that praise for the British services is widely heard, and on the negative side, that in all the interviews obtained no criticism of the Belgian services were expressed. (A full report on the functioning of the Belgian services has recently been submitted by Mr. F.C.B. Wood).

(iv) Apart from the widespread appreciation of the prompt aid rendered by the military fire-fighting and rescue services, another beneficial result has followed; anti-air-raid precautions and feeding and rest centres for the bombed out are being organised largely on the British model and with the aid of British Civil Affairs officers. These confess that there is still a good deal of confusion on the Belgian side, but there has been no suggestion of resentment at British interference and quite the contrary, co-operation is excellent.

(d) Difficulties and Potential Dangers mentioned by certain sources

(i) Official figures of casualties due to V attacks on Antwerp are apparently not published, at least they do not reach the great mass of people. In the case of one of the most serious incidents, occurring on Dec. 2nd, a number of intelligent sources spoke of 500 fatal casualties (with complete confidence in the accuracy of the figures) whereas the official figure was less than 100. While it is impossible, without a full knowledge of the factors determining policy, to make a recommendation on this issue, it seems clear that rumours of this kind certainly increase the morale effects of the V attacks.



(ii) Two quite independent sources (M. De Winter and an officer of the Port Superintendent's Staff) urged the need of greater Allied publicity, especially in connection with defence measures taken against the Vs. Both sources claimed that local opinion regarded the Vs as a form of attack against which effective counter-measures neither were nor could be taken; a view which might, if the attacks were violently resumed, have a considerable affect on morale. M. De Winter added that the British Information Service would be greatly improved if its staff contained some Flemish speakers. (Approximately 50% of the Antwerp population is without French or English).

(iii) Major Foreshow of Civil Affairs (Civil Defence and Fires) mentioned two other causes of possible difficulties and dangers. In the first place no steps had been taken to help working-class families to obtain the materials for making small repairs to slightly damaged houses. The effect of this, both on health and morale, might become noticeable as winter progressed. Secondly a number of bombed out families had taken to living, by day as well as night, in public air-raid shelters. This was bad from the point of view of hygiene and re-enforced the previous point: that there is already a need to rehabilitate lightly damaged houses. The need of glass was particularly stressed by M. Janbers. (Major Foreshow is actively engaged in attempting to obtain the necessary action on both these issues from the Belgian Authorities).

(iv) Included in the much repeated complaint regarding food and fuel were frequent references to the persistence of the black market and occasional references to the fact that, as regards fats at least, the situation was far worse "under the Allies" than it had been - right up to September 1944 - under the Germans. The recent arrival of food-ships in Antwerp may have helped to straighten out this difficulty, at least as regards British responsibility for the present shortage of foodstuffs.

(v) The marked disparity in wage-rates (see Appendix B) as between dockers and other transport workers, particularly, railwaymen, may conceivably give rise to a certain jealousy and friction between these two groups. This is more likely to occur if black-market transactions, especially in food stuffs, continue on the present scale. For the dockers' high earnings would enable them to obtain (along with the bourgeoisie) necessary foodstuffs which are at present beyond the range of other manual workers. In this case there is the danger that the Allies might be included in a wave of local ill-feeling against the dockers, who would be felt by the mass of the community to be the only workers in whom the Allied authorities had any real interest.

(vi) As regards political disturbances, the only organisation in Antwerp that is likely to try to exploit local difficulties is the local branch of the 4th International (Trotskyite) Communists. These, though weak in numbers, have had great successes as agitators in the port and town in the past and they are again holding meetings. A very full report on them was recently issued by Mr. Wood.

#### (c) Personal Observations

The writer of this report visited the scene of a V2 explosion in the main street of Antwerp within 30 minutes of its occurrence. The bomb had fallen in a large corner building containing commercial offices and a number of floors in which suspected collaborators had been held. Buildings on either side and in adjacent side streets had suffered blast-effects.

The affected area had been roped off and British and Belgian ambulances were in position waiting for casualties to be got from



the buildings in which British and Belgian rescue squads were at work. A crowd of not more than 500 was watching the proceedings, but the great majority of people in the neighbourhood had resumed their normal afternoon business. There were no signs of panic or undue anxiety. (An earlier explosion in the main centre of the town had, it is understood, a much more powerful psychological effect on the townspeople; largely because, when the smoke and dust cleared, a very large number of people, probably five times the number of fatal casualties - were seen on the ground, crouching for safety, shocked or actually stunned. For this reason wildly exaggerated reports of the number of casualties involved in this incident were still circulating a fortnight later).

Casual conversation with a variety of townspeople bore out the findings of the main section of this report. The first impression given was one almost of passivity, but it was quite clearly not the passivity of dejection or despair, rather a very surprising combination of commonsense, fatalism and courage.

#### (f) Psychological Observations

The remarks that follow are based largely on the views of Lieut. Phillips, R.A. of the British P.A.D. unit in Antwerp. Having worked as a P.A.D. officer in London during the 1940-41 raids, in Malta from 1941-43 and again in London during the V attacks of June-September 1944, Lieut. Phillips had a remarkable experience to draw on.

(i) Intensive V attacks call for a wholly new adjustment on the part of the civilian or soldier subjected to them; previous experience with ordinary air-raids or with shell or mortar fire is no adequate preparation. Capacity to make the required adjustment is greatly helped by a positive desire to continue one's work through and despite the attacks; and the majority of Antwerpians, especially those working in the port, have such a motive - largely, though not wholly, an economic one. Another important factor is the amount of resistance, or power of quick recovery, which the attacked community possesses. Here again the people of Antwerp are in a favourable position; the occupation has no doubt weighed heavily on them in many ways but they have suffered very little physical strain in the way of prolonged air bombardment. Consequently their resilience, at the time of writing, compares favourably with that of London in 1944; and the average Antwerp civilian is probably better adjusted to meet a bad spell of V attacks than is a soldier coming to Antwerp from a front where Vs are virtually unknown.

(ii) Two kinds of adjustment are called for; first the physical adjustment to part-time shelter or cellar life with all the increased cold and discomfort that this involves; second, the mental adjustment - the adoption of a fatalistic insouciance (not only for oneself but for one's family) so far as V2's are concerned. The Antwerp people seem now to have succeeded to a large extent in making both these adjustments and the latter surprisingly quickly and effectively.

(iii) It has long been recognised, in connection with all kinds of air attacks, that the most severe nervous shocks are suffered by the "near-misses", i.e. those who can literally see and feel how near their escape has been and perhaps see many fatal casualties of the bomb they themselves have escaped. But, in the case of V2's, there are relatively very few near-misses; consequently the likelihood of having a large number of nervously rattled people in the town is not great. By contrast with the experiences and reactions of near-misses, the normal reaction of a man whose family has suffered casualties is tougher; hatred and the desire for revenge being uppermost in his mind.



(iv) The time-factor in this connection is an almost unassessable one; it is not so much a question of how long a given community can endure periodic attacks, as of how long, at any given date, its members can envisage themselves enduring their present ordeal. In the case of Antwerp, most people believe that further Allied advances will soon put the city out of effective range for V2's, as well as for V1's. And this belief helps the present situation considerably. If, however, it should prove at the end of another three months to have been quite unjustified, then the attitudes of mind described in this report might begin to alter a good deal.

(v) To sum up, resistance to air-attacks is in the nature of a contact between active adjustment and habituation on the one side, and the fatigue produced by prolonged strain and occasional sharp nervous shock on the other. As far as one can see, in the case of Antwerp adjustment and habituation have got a good start on fatigue, and this position is improved by a reasonable optimism regarding the probable length of the raids and of the war.

W.B. GALLIE  
Major.



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APPENDIX "A"

METHOD OF RECRUITMENT OF DOCKERS IN THE PORT  
OF ANTWERP

The following account was given by the Port Superintendent, Lt. Col. Haddock, R.E.

The Allied policy has been to maintain normal contract procedures as far as possible and this in turn has meant the extension by the workers of their pre-war system of rights, welfare, compensation, etc.

Labour is recruited daily by foremen who are executives of the contractors associated in C.E.P.A. Foremen naturally choose whenever possible, gangs of men whose working capacity they know. But workers from other trades have poured into the docks during recent weeks, and the foremen's policy is to select from among these unskilled workers already used to heavy labour in adjacent trades. This naturally militates against the skilled worker who has come to the docks because his own trade offers no prospect of immediate employment.

The firms associated in C.E.P.A. normally served as contractors to the port authority of which the Burgomaster is head. Though this situation has been somewhat complicated by the roles of the Allied military and of the Belgian government in the present arrangement, as far as the ordinary docker is concerned he is working on the pre-war basis, except that he sees Allied Officers giving orders to his foreman and that he pays 9 francs per day for Allied food.

A week before the opening of the port there were 2,500 dockers, registered as available on the contractors' books. This number jumped up quickly and on December 9th there were just over 9,000 dockers at work, and the military authorities had been assured by C.E.P.A. that 8,000 skilled and 10,000 unskilled dockers were already available to meet further labour demands. This figure easily covered present needs and all foreseeable commitments.







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APPENDIX "B"

WAGE SCALES FOR DOCK-WORKERS AND MOTOR TRANSPORT  
AND RAILWAY WORKERS IN ANTWERP

Dockers: The base pay of the Antwerp dock-worker at the present time is 131 francs per diem;\* when bonuses and over-time is added the average worker is reputed to earn as high as 200 francs per working day. This is very high in Antwerp, but the Allied Military authorities who were interviewed feel that the money is well spent as the labour is skilled, very willing, and is sticking to the job despite the bombings.

When the National Labour Conference met on September 16, 1944, it recommended a series of wage increases ranging from 20% to 40% above the pre-war levels in various industries. Although no recommendation was made at that time for the dock-workers, the base-figure of 131 francs established for them by the National Committee of the Port of Antwerp exceeds the 40% increase on the pre-war figure which was 90 francs daily with surplusses included.

It must be kept in mind that the dock-workers employment, being dependent on the activity of the port, is not steady. Therefore, since 1929, the practice has been to calculate a theoretical rate of weekly pay based on four days actual work. The probabilities are that the worker will equal or exceed this standard while the flood of Allied material continues to pour into the port.

The Allied Forces have been providing the men with 3 substantial sandwiches and tea at noon for 9 francs. This is an outstanding value in Antwerp today, and adds to the economic value of a docker's job, as well as aiding morale and good will.

Motor Transport Workers: According to the President of the Antwerp Transport Workers Union, the men are paid between 10 and 13 francs an hour during a 7½ hour day. Their pay would vary between 75 and 97.50 francs a day, exclusive of any over-time.

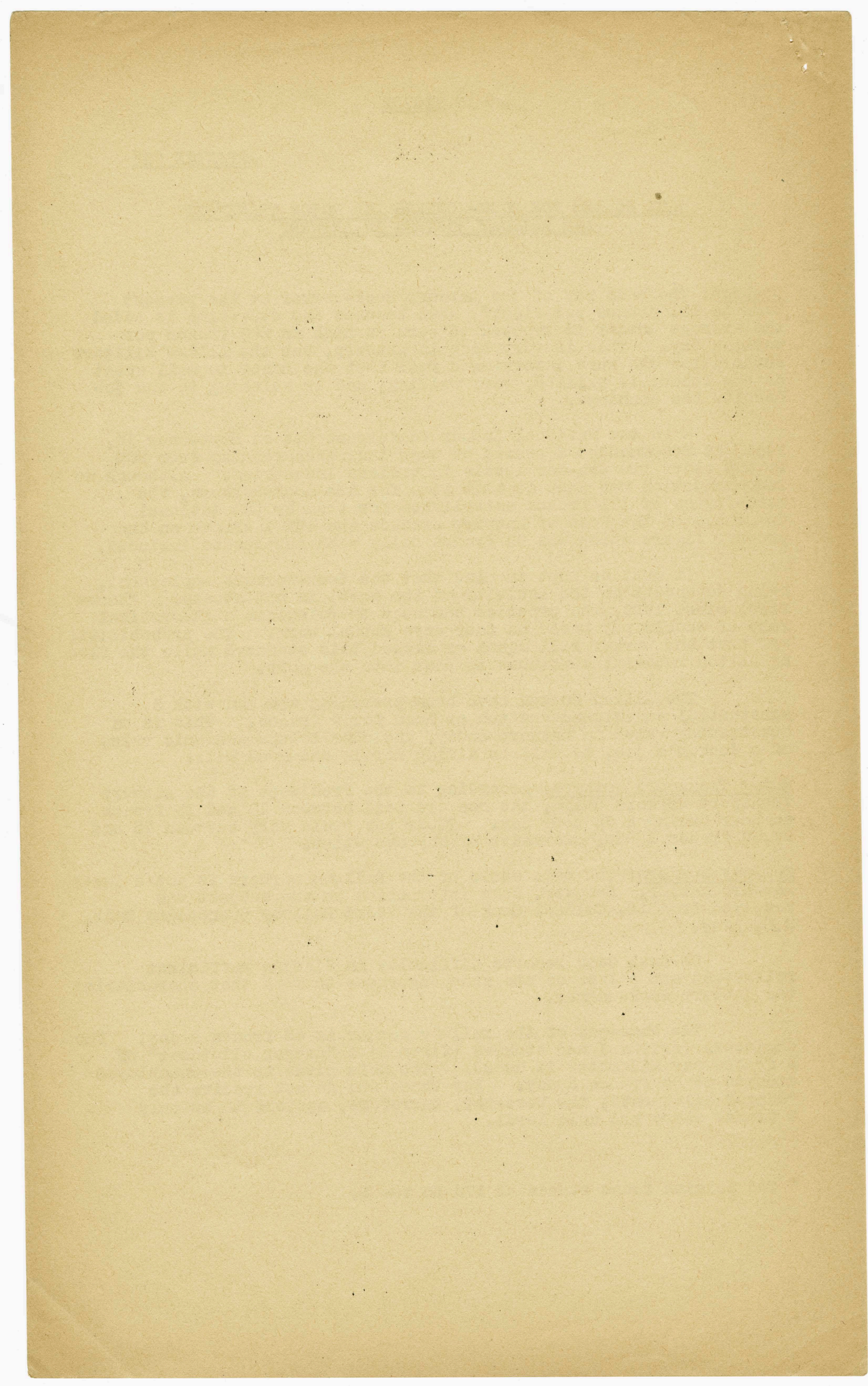
Railway Workers: The wage scale of the Railway workers is not a local Antwerp matter. However, some information on the subject was received from Lt. Colonel Cook of the 743rd Railway Operations Unit, U.S. Army.

Colonel Cook reports difficulty in finding sufficient railwaymen and a lack of the same eagerness to work that characterise the Antwerp dock-worker.

The base-pay of the railway worker is 45 francs a day. For engineers (drivers) and stokers (firemen) a "danger allotment" of 3 francs per kilometer is added. The dole given to the unemployed amounts to 36 francs a day. For those who do not receive the "danger allotment", the base-pay, therefore, appears to be only 9 francs above the dole level.

\* The Belgian franc stands at 175 to the £.







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APPENDIX "C"

FIGURES OF THE ANTWERP LABOUR SUPPLY AVAILABLE  
TO THE ALLIED MILITARY FORCES

In recruiting Antwerp labour the Allied military forces work in co-operation with the National Bureau of Classification and Unemployment whose Director is M. Bastiedennsens.

Major Luis of the 962nd Pioneer and Civil Labour Unit gave the following figures on the Antwerp labour market :-

- (a) Applicants for work November 29, 1944 .....about 51,000
- (b) Applicants for work Dec. 12, 1944 .....about 50,000
- (c) Directly employed by Allies, Nov. 29, 1944 ...about 11,000
- (d) Directly employed by Allies, Dec. 12, 1944 ...about 26,000

Thus 15,000 men have been absorbed from the pool of unemployed, and new applicants have refilled it to only 1,000 less than the figure that obtained two weeks ago.

Captain Rein of the U.S. Army Civil Labour Unit gave the following figures from the labour supply in all categories available to the Allied Forces in the Antwerp region:

Nov. 18, 1944	...	...	52,807
Nov. 25, 1944	...	...	65,023
Dec. 9, 1944	...	...	65,681

The difference between these figures and those supplied by Major Luis may be due to a more inclusive basis both in regard to the categories and the territory concerned.

Captain Rein also stated that those directly employed by the American Army were :

On Nov. 18, 1944	...	...	about 700
On Nov. 25, 1944	...	...	about 1,000
On Dec. 9, 1944	...	...	about 1,900

From the same source, the daily average of dock-workers employed by the U.S. was :-

On Nov. 25, 1944	...	...	about 3,000
On Dec. 9, 1944	...	...	about 5,000

From the above figures and from statements made by sources, it would appear that there is no shortage in labour, except in regard to Railway workers.



