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The Supply of Raw Material for German Industry (08.07.1919)

Memorandum

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Formalia:

Typoskript

Regest:

In Deutschland wurde bereits während des Krieges intensiv darüber diskutiert, wie und ob es der deutschen Industrie gelingen würde, verlorengegangene Märkte zurückzugewinnen. Dabei überwog die skeptische Ansicht, dass dies außerhalb der Bereiche, in denen die deutsche Industrie unbestreitbar einen großen technologischen Vorsprung besaß, sehr kompliziert werden würde. In dieser Quelle findet sich eine britische Perspektive auf diese Frage: Dort wurde die deutsche Konkurrenz gefürchtet und der dortige Pessimismus eher mit Erstaunen wahrgenommen. Das Projekt, in großem Stil russische Rohstoffvorräte auszubeuten, blieb bis zu Beginn der 1920er Jahre auf der Tagesordnung der deutschen Politik und wurde 1921 sogar im Reichstag verhandelt.

The Supply of raw material for German Industry.

German Trade Competition in Allied and neutral markets.

Participation of Entente in German Trade Profits.

Exploitation of Russia's natural resources.

While the victorious powers are looking forward with some apprehension at the revival of German industrial competition after the War, the Germans themselves are by no means optimistic as to the measure of success they are likely to have in this respect.

Leaving aside the internal difficulties Germany has to face in order to regain her pre-war position in the world's market, she has hanging over her head the fact that the Allies (especially the Anglo-Saxon portion) control practically all sources of raw material and means of over-sea transport. The power which this state of affairs places in the hands of England and America will in the opinion of the Germans be used not only in favour of English and American trade and industry but also to throttle any inconvenient competition on the part of Germany. As it will not be at once apparent which German industries are likely to become inconvenient competitors arbitrary action on the part of the Allies is probable which will create an atmosphere of uncertainty as to the future and render the reorganisation of industry very difficult. In fairness to the Germans it must be admitted that they look upon the reorganisation of their industries, not so much as an opportunity for again successfully competing with other nations in the world's markets, than as a mean of reducing unemployment and restoring social order on a stable foundation. In return for the guarantee of the supply of [2] certain quantities of raw material for their factories and to compensate us for the inconvenience of successful competition in any particular industry the Germans would be disposed to let British and American industry have a share in the profits of German industry.

Another scheme favoured by the German Government is the exploitation of Russian natural resources and the organisation of Russian labour under joint Allied and German supervision.

Russia rich in natural resources but always poor in organizing capacity, (now after the massacre of the bourgeoisie more so than ever) will require all that the Western and Central European nations can spare in the way of brains for her reorganisation. Some German industrialists are sanguine enough to imagine that it would be possible to thus get the war expenses of both sides out of Russia and at the same time restore order and quiet by the way of compensation.

The German Government would be only too glad to meet any responsible and competent representative of British industries to discuss a modus vivendi on the above lines. The idea originated with some German manufacturers, who laid their scheme before the Government where it found a certain amount of favour notably with Herr Noske and Erzberger.¹

1 Der damalige Reichsinnenminister und Reichsfinanzminister.