

The Post-War Reconstruction of Police in Germany

By TIM WRIGHT



*Lt Col Reginald Mitchell
Senior Public Safety Officer*

Just too young to see active service in World War I, Reginald Mitchell served with the King's Royal Rifle Corps in India and Baluchistan before attesting in the Norfolk Constabulary in 1921. He was promoted sergeant in 1929 and inspector in 1937.

In 1936 when war with Germany was beginning to be seen as a real possibility, he had been appointed Training Officer for War Emergency Duties at Constabulary HQ, Norwich. With the outbreak of War in 1939 he continued in this post, which now included operational responsibilities.

In 1944, prior to the invasion of

Europe, he was released for service with Allied Military Government. 'C' Wing of Peel House, then the Metropolitan Police Training Centre had been lent to the Civil Affairs Branch of Supreme Headquarters Allied Forces Europe for courses for potential public safety officers, but it is not known whether Reginald Mitchell attended one of these. Presumably he passed through the Civil Affairs Mobilization & Training Centre at Eastbourne, and 228 Detachment Military Government formed up there. The nucleus of each detachment was two general administrative officers and two public

safety officers.¹

Landing in France he took part in the liberation of and re-establishment of civil administration in Turcoing near the Belgian border north-east of Lille, before moving on into Germany, about which he wrote:

*PUBLIC SAFETY IN MULHEIM-
RUHR, GERMANY.*

*AS EXPERIENCED BY A
PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER*

*228 DETACHMENT MILITARY
GOVERNMENT*

1945 - 1947

As described by Lt. Colonel Lawrence Ford. No. 228 Military Government Detachment found itself at Mulheim-Ruhr to take over from an American Unit of the 17th U.S. Airborne Division. I was the senior Public Safety Officer having with me Jack Gardiner another P.S officer who had joined us on our way through France, Belgium and Holland.

We had been loaded with much paper advice as to our future role. Much of it was indigestible, but one thing stuck out prominently and that was that somehow we must get some sort of Law and Order in the chaotic conditions then prevailing in the devastated area of Mulheim.

With Lt. Col. Ford, our Detachment Commander, I attended a briefing by the then General Templar at



William Büttner
Chief of Police

Munchen-Gladbach [sic] describing what was taking place in the near-defeated Germany. It was obvious that until Law and Order was restored nothing else by way of getting some sort of normal life could be done. Jack Gardiner and I set about the problem on that basis. Jack Gardiner was a great chap in every sense - always cheerful and energetic. He was forever undaunted. Nothing ever surprised him. General Templar had assured us that whatever we did and whatever mistakes were made he would stand by us provided that what was done was done in good faith. This was good news indeed as we could see the possibility of plenty of mistakes in the offing! Under our Detachment Commander's guidance we were assured of 100% co-operation from all Mil. Gov. personnel. On arrival at Mulheim I found a most efficient U.S. Army Unit dealing with Public Safety and took over. I was introduced to the German Chief of Police, Herr Wilhelm Buttner, formerly a Major in the German Police and C.O. at Mulheim. He proved to be a tower of strength and was my very good friend.

Of an approximate strength of 450 Police personnel only about 25 could

be mustered the rest having either just disappeared or been absorbed into the German Armed Forces. Herr Buttner worked wonders and in a short time he built up the strength of the Force complete with rank structure. The Mounted Branch was re-formed and the Police dogs provided with work to earn their keep. Vehicles were obtained and we were ready to do business. The Police Presidium, a vast building had ample room for us all. The Prison, in the same block, already full, was to play an important part in future events. It became so full at one time that minor offenders were released in order to make room for more serious cases.

Personnel of the former C.I.D. came to light and were found to be reliable and hard-working in the main. And so we became a going concern. Mil. Gov. Public Safety HQ for us was at Dusseldorf with a former British Colonial Police Officer named Nottingham in charge as Deputy Inspector General. The Inspector General with H.Q. some distance away had over-all control of Public Safety affairs in Germany and Austria - a colossal task. He was Col. G H. Halland a former Indian Policeman,

one time Commandant of Hendon Police College, Chief Constable of Lincolnshire and afterwards one of H.M. Inspectors of Constabulary.² Our bosses left us alone which was just as well as we knew our problems and needed no goading. Of course we suffered from self-seeking snoopers who "tried it on" but they were either ignored or seen off the premises.

Next came the question of uniform. A Mil. Gov. order said that the old German Grey-Green uniform was to be discarded. The colour was to be blue. Where the cloth was to come from was not stated. After much consultation with Herr Buttner a supply was obtained from where I know not.

¹ 'Civil Affairs & Military Government North-West Europe 1944-1946' F S V Donnison CBE 1961 page 62.

² Col Gordon Herbert Ramsay HALLAND CIE (1931) OBE (1918) b.1888 son of the Rector of Blyburgh, Kirton-in-Lindsay; Indian Police, Punjab 1908; Major IARO GSO2 AHQ India 1917; Principal Punjab Police Training School 1921-26; Lt Col GS Shanghai Defence Force & North China Cmd 1927; S/Supt Delhi 1930; CC Lincolnshire 12.10.31-15.1.34; ACP Met i/c Hendon Police College 1934.



Mounted Police

Very soon therefore Mulheim Police were clothed in a complete smart blue uniform and boots, peaked cap and great-coat. My chaps were as happy as circumstances permitted. We were the first Police Force in Germany to be so equipped. The question of police pay and finance was left to somebody else. Gradually our strength and efficiency improved and we began to make our presence felt. Of course I was pressed to disclose the source of the supply of blue cloth for our uniform, but as I did not know I could not tell.

Police Foot Patrols under the British Shift and Beat System were found to be workable after a time. Marauding gangs of Russians, Poles and others caused a great deal of trouble. They were mostly dealt with by the U.S. and later British Army Units in the locality. The German Police dealt with their share of the problem with efficiency and courage.

Crime was rampant. Burglary, theft of all kinds, serious breaches of Curfew etc. ran parallel with the ever recurring paying off of old scores and denunciations.

Thus we began to instal some sort of Law and Order. The Germans being a well-disciplined race were in the main most co-operative and law-abiding. There were scoundrels of course.

The Police themselves caused little trouble- the few "bent" ones were soon dealt with.

Then we came to the De-Nazification Programme. A panel was set up to cope with this, under Jack Jackson. It became evident that as always members of the Nazi party and fellow-travellers were anxious and willing to denounce their neighbours. A load of delicate work was got through by the Panel and those whose guilt was confirmed were sent to a higher Court. What happened to them all I do not know as I had no time to find out.

One major problem was the issue of Passes for every kind of thing:- accommodation (which was very limited), extra food for medical reasons, exemption from clearing rubble from the streets by the sick lame and lazy, furniture from over-stocked houses, clothing and footwear from the well-to-do. Here I might mention that a great deal of the rubble was removed in bullock-drawn carts: All this was managed by a very able staff, some German, some Dutch and other Displaced Persons. In this connection I give great credit to Heinz Linnmann a former German soldier who had discharged himself, John Klein a Dutchman who as forced-labour had remained in the locality and many

others too numerous to mention and whose names a forgotten. They all brought to bear a vast amount of loyalty and administrative skill and became my friends. I still keep in touch with several of them.

Co-operation with the British and U.S. Armies of all arms was excellent. As the inevitable crises arose as in theft of crops, demonstrations against this and that, a request for military presence to support the German Police was always forthcoming.

Towards 1947 things had greatly improved. The German Administration was on its feet thanks to the efforts of Lt. Col. Ford and his advisers. In Mulheim the Police still had a long way to go but they were 100% co-operative. I left in 1947 having enjoyed the experience. My successor was a P.S. officer from a Scottish Police Force.

Now I should like to pay tribute to those people who did so much to assist P.S. First and foremost must be Lt. Col. L Ford who gave us a free hand. Then the late Wilhelm Buttner, the German Chief of Police who co-operated fully in what was often an unpopular task of assisting Mil. Gov. He was a good German. His sole object was to restore Law and Order for the benefit of the public regardless of his own personal

interest. He visited me and stayed at my home in England and we kept in touch until his tragic death in a road accident later. My family and I have been welcome guests in some of their homes in Germany. The "contacts" made outside Police circles must not be overlooked. They were many and varied and kept us in touch with public opinion and the effect and scope of the Black Market which was rife. Officers of the C.C.G⁽³⁾ of other functions were able to feed us with information gathered in their travels. Prominent in this connection was Joe Everiss (Engineering) whose interest in P.S. was invaluable.

Military Government of which Public Safety was part proved its worth. It had its faults, of course, but few in the work of personnel on the ground. Without the work of Mil. Gov. the chaos in the stricken Germany would have been much the same as it was in the Russian Zone. We were indeed fortunate in our Detachment Commander who welded it together. We all admired his sterling qualities of leadership. He was cultured, efficient and modest. What success we achieved was solely due to the example he set us. In the course of events he left us but his influence remained.

P. S. personnel at Mulheim changed from time to time and continued to give unstinted service. They were as follows:-



Criminal Investigation Department

Reg. Mitchell.
P.S.O. 1 (Lt. Colonel)
(Norfolk)

Jack Gardiner.
P.S.O. 11 (Major)
(Warwickshire)

Bob Port.
P.S.O. 11 (Major)
(Kent)

Jack Turner-Jackson
P.S.O. 111 (Captain)
(Liverpool City)

Frank Wallis
P.S.O. 111 (Captain)
(Metropolitan)

Reg Ward
P.S.O. 111 (Captain)
(Bedfordshire)

All Police Officers of long and varied experience with a lot of "Know-how".

Lt Col Mitchell returned to the Norfolk Constabulary in 1947 being promoted to superintendent in command of the Sandringham Division with HQ at Dersingham, in which post he remained until retiring from the police service in June 1959 to take up an appointment as Director of the Cyrenaica Defence Force Officer Cadet Academy at Benghazi, Libya. He had been awarded the King's Police Medal for Distinguished Service in 1953 and was made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order in 1960. On 1 July 1946. for his work at Mulheim he had been awarded the Medal of the Swedish Red Cross. His son, John, served in the Northern Rhodesia Police and the Swaziland Police before, having qualified as a barrister, being commissioned into Army Legal Services also attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel.

3 C.C.G. = Control Commission Germany, the successor to Military Government.



Women Police

TIM WRIGHT joined the Northern Rhodesia Police in 1957, attaining the rank of Chief Inspector in which he retired from the Zambia Police in 1967. He then qualified as a solicitor and served in Army Legal Service, retiring as a colonel in 1996. He has been a PHS member almost from the start and is the author of *The History of the Northern Rhodesia Police*.