

SECRET

50X1-HUM

STATUS OF THE PEAT AND LICHTE INDUSTRY IN FRANCE (1941-1943)

May 1941 - In spite of the great shortage of peat in Germany (requirements of the German Armed Forces plus those of the domestic economy), the Reichswirtschaftsministerium released certain quantities of peat for export to France and Belgium.

Exports of peat to Belgium and Occupied France are not to exceed 25% of the volume imported by these countries before the war. Peat for export is to be mostly of Dutch origin; in this instance released for export

to France	2,500	balles	of German origin
	2,500	" " "	Dutch "
to Belgium	2,300	" " "	German "
	5,000	" " "	Dutch "

Such peat as is exported must be used by importing countries only for the most urgent needs in agricultural enterprises (food industry), and is to be supplemented with saw dust, dried leaves, hay from meadows, etc.

May 1941 - Southwestern France:

Due to a lack of coal, peat is being mined at several points, PW's being utilized as laborers. A considerable increase in the use of PW's is planned. The services of a German peat expert are requested.

January 1942 - Exploitation of Peat Pans in Bretagne(a) on the lower Loire

In spite of the low quality of peat here, it is being mined because of the shortage of coal. The marketed product contains as much as 60% water. The output of the PW's is very low. A German peat worker produces seven times as much. Moreover, one guard is needed for every 3 prisoners. Other difficulties (drinking water supply, fuel required to ship it in), make the entire project uneconomical, unless the production is increased and the quality of the peat is improved (only 25-30% water content).

-1-

SECRET

SECRET

The exploitation of the bogs in Grand-Briere (some 5,000 hectares) is deemed inadvisable, since they are flooded until August. The same applies to bogs north of Banges (some 7,000 to 8,000 hectares), besides the transport difficulties there. Furthermore, the latter are already three-quarters exploited.

(b) Finisterre Bogs

(1) Brennilis Peat Works

This bog is better suited for exploitation (better dehydration facilities, lower ash content of peat, better quality.) However, it is 30 km from the nearest railroad station. A decision must be made by other offices as to whether exploitation is advisable in the light of the gasoline and rubber shortages (truck transport). A coking plant is under construction here, but since the local peat has a 6-7% ash content (and satisfactory coking is possible only with peat having no more than 1-2% ash content,) the success of the operation is questioned. However, tests will be made. If success is had, contrary to expectations, the transport problem would be compensated for by the high quality of the product and the smaller bulk thereof.

March 1942

Negotiations are in progress concerning the procurement of 106 railroad cars from Holland for the transport of 16,960 bales of peat to France.

The Chief of the Military Administration District B Southwest France addresses a letter of the Reichskommissar for the Occupied Netherlands Regions (Hague), telling of repeated French requests for iron allocation to be used in the construction of peat coke plants. Peat coke can be made into generator gas (motor vehicle fuel) with such by-products as tar, paraffin, and gasoline in small quantities. French claims state that such processing would be possible to an extent where it would be economical, even when coal again becomes available and under

SECRET

SECRET

otherwise stabilized economic conditions. The French state that the Dutch are experienced in this method of processing peat. The German authorities, therefore, request data from the Reichskommissar in Holland on equipment, processes, etc.

because of the great shortage of railroad rolling stock in France, no French railroad cars can be supplied for the shipment of Dutch peat to France. Suggest shipment by inland waterways from Holland to Paris, and from there on by rail, unless water transport can be arranged.

May 1942

Anticipating a possible lack of coal in the next few years, the Syndicate of French Spinning Mills intends to exploit peat deposits in the vicinity of Saint-Quentin-lez-Allennes (Seine-Inferieure). Tests have shown that if the grates of the furnaces are converted, the use of peat is possible, at a ratio of 1/3 coal to 2/3 peat.

Report for period 16 March to 15 May 1942

Re coal, Peat (Southwestern France).

Although total production increased slightly over previous months, the supply of enterprises important for the war economy cannot be considered satisfactory. Some enterprises had to be closed temporarily. Since PW labor can no longer be used in the largest peat deposits (Cros-sac and Brennilis), peat production has been destroyed. Whether compensation through French civilian labor is possible remains to be seen. Other peat deposits are being examined with respect to increasing their yields.

July 1942

Two Dutch firms are going to mine peat in the vicinity of St. Quentin, France, and process it by Dutch methods. A quantity of 50,000 tons is contemplated for 1943, with an increase in subsequent years. The project is deemed to be in the interest of Germany as well as France.

SECRET

SECRETAugust 1942

The French coal allocation office (Office de Repartition du Charbon) complains to the German authorities that Horns ^{et} Cie has made a contract in Nantes for delivery of 10,000 sters (cubic meters) of peat to a German anti-aircraft unit for use in fragment-proof protection installations. The allocation officer requests cancellation of this contract, since peat is to be used exclusively as substitute fuel which is otherwise tightly controlled.

The Military Commander informs the German Army unit (mentioned above) that ^{it} ~~is~~ is not entitled to delivery of peat. Peat may be ordered in lieu of coal only in those districts where the former is mined, and then usually on the basis of 3 tons of peat in place of 1 ton of coal. Shortages in coal for military units must be adjusted through the Military Commander of France.

A report on the possibilities of exploiting the largest peat bogs in Occupied France, located near Pont-Audemer (between Rouen and Benfleur) and containing some 1,000 hectares approximately 6-8 meters deep. The bog could warrant the construction of a large peat coal briquette plant, which could operate for several decades. Some French officials feel that existing enterprises should be furthered until new ones are planned. The writer of the report feels that such a new plant would create a new and strong base for the speedy alleviation of the very real coal shortage in France.

September 1942

The French Bureau of Mines (Secretariat of State for Industrial Production) suggests to the German authorities that use be made of German know-how in peat production matters and that permission be granted to send French engineers to Germany to study German methods.

-4-

SECRET

SECRETOctober 1942

The Chief of the (German) Military Administration District A (Northwest France), in a letter to the Military Commander of France, lists peat deposits in his area which, in view of the coal shortage, could be exploited to a far greater extent than at present time (only manual exploitation). Requests clarification of allocation of equipment needed for this. ----- In answer to the above letter, the Military Commander states that the question of procurement of material and labor is extremely difficult, since the allocations that can be granted to French mining enterprises and peat plants are very small. For this reason, care must be taken that the available labor and allocated material for mining is utilized in the most economical manner.

July 1942

A French lignite mining corporation in Hostens (Gironde) applies for permits for the continuation of construction of (a) a pressed charcoal factory utilizing fossil wood produced from lignite for making briquettes, with a projected annual production of 3,000 tons for gas generators and, (b) expansion of a lignite storage hall in connection with the operation of boilers and turbo-generators designed to increase the electrical energy supplied by Hostens. The Paris authorities are intervening upon French notification of an attempt by the Field Commander Bordeaux to stop the latter project. Continuation of the construction is argued in the light of the German interest in increasing the coal output of France.

December 1942 - Use of Peat as Fuel

The supply situation of solid fuels already shows the same signs of shortage as did that of liquid fuels. Request survey as to what extent dried peat or peat coke from French deposits can be employed as solid fuel in generators.

SECRET

7

SECRET

October 1942 - Experiments with Production of Briquettes of Mixture
of French Peat and Coal

A German engineer reports on the possibility of producing such
briquettes, utilizing French crude peat and lean coal without the addition
of bitumen. The conclusion is that the process is feasible.

-6-

SECRET