

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RIGHT HON. THE PRIME MINISTER.

Department of External Affairs, Wellington, N.Z., 17th December, 1921.

I FORWARD herewith the first report on the administration of Western Samoa, which has been prepared by my direction, pursuant to Article 6 of the Mandate for German Samoa.

E. P. LEE, Minister of External Affairs.

REPORT.

PRIOR to the war the legislative and administrative affairs of Samoa were conducted by an Administration set up by the German Government; and, besides the indigenous inhabitants, a European community existed consisting of persons of various nationalities who were engaged in trading and planting pursuits, the plantations being held and conducted mostly by Germans.

These organizations, when the New Zealand troops invaded and occupied Samoa in August, 1914, were necessarily and suddenly thrown into a state of great disorganization. Immediately upon the occupation of the country the occupying Force established an effective Military Administration, which carried on the essential administrative affairs of the country under the laws left by the Germans. This remedied the disorganization so far as the administrative government was concerned; but, however good its work may have been, it did not, nor could it, cure the effect of the disruptive shock which the community and its affairs suffered by the invasion.

The liberties of the German inhabitants were necessarily restricted by the occupying Force, and for some time at least all portions of the community were subject to the inevitably drastic military rules of a hostile occupying Force. These restrictions added to the disorganization, and although restrictive measures subsequently were relaxed, the relaxation could not have gone further than to somewhat ameliorate the situation.

During the military occupation, which continued for many years, the necessities of the troops were provided in the ordinary military manner by the importation of such things as they might require, and by the setting-up of such administrative departments as were necessary for their requirements, with little dependence upon the ordinary trading facilities of the community.

There thus were, irrespective of the indigenous inhabitants, three concurrent organizations: firstly, the garrison of the occupying Force; secondly, the Administration set up by the occupying Force to carry on the Civil Government, which was a Military-Civil Administration, necessarily interwoven in its relations with the garrison; and, thirdly, the original community itself, consisting of traders, planters, and others of German and many other races, carrying on its activities as best it could, and taking conscious or unconscious advantage in some respects of the organizations set up by the garrison.

Every one suffered from a feeling of insecurity of tenure. The garrison knew that its duty was only temporary, and sooner or later it would go. The Germans must have felt, as the fortunes of war rose and fell, insecurity for their future, and the remainder of the community must have shared in this sense of insecurity; and up to the time that the Armistice was declared, in 1918, a steady deterioration was only to be expected. This deterioration was accentuated by the repatriation of the majority of the Chinese labourers, who were essential to the maintenance and cultivation of the plantations; so that by this time not only was there a deterioration in the organization of the community, but there was also a serious deterioration in the plantations, which constituted its main wealth.

In November, 1918, the influenza epidemic struck the place, which, like most of the world, was wholly unprepared for such a blow. Any epidemic sickness would have had serious results in such a country; the influenza epidemic was disastrous, causing the death of many thousands of people, and but for the presence of the garrison, and the excellent services the garrison rendered, the results would have been more disastrous. The Natives regarded the epidemic as a ground of great grievance, not appreciating the fact that it visited many other parts of the world in the same unexpected manner. Their numbers were diminished, and they blamed their loss to the New-Zealanders occupying the place, just as they would have blamed any other nation which happened to be occupying the country at the time of the visitation. Their temperamental cheerfulness received a severe blow. A great number of the older chiefs died, younger and less experienced men succeeded to the positions as chiefs, and nothing could have occurred to have so prepared the minds of the Native people for the insidious action of agitators or for the reflection of the views of the dissatisfied portion of the community, which, though it had suffered nothing of the actual horrors of war, had had its organization shattered, its manner of life disturbed, and was blind to any profit or advantage it had gained, and saw only its losses and inconvenience.

In 1919, after the Covenant of the League of Nations had been published, and in anticipation of the issue of the Mandate, a Proclamation was issued prohibiting the further importation of intoxicating liquor, and shortly afterwards total prohibition became a fundamental portion of the Constitution. Prohibition was imposed in what was considered to be the best interests of the community, but it was received with great dissatisfaction by a considerable portion of the community other than Native. This accentuated a state of mind already existing in the community of antagonism to administration by New Zealand, and to any constitution which New Zealand might set up.

Early in 1920 the garrison was evacuated, and with it departed those elements of assistance to the administrative Government and to the community generally upon which both had, perhaps unconsciously, learned in some respects to lean.

This, then, was the state of things when the Civil Administration was instituted on the 1st May, 1920. The task of the new Civil Administration was to establish a new set of laws, to institute a reasonable and effective Government based on the principles of the Mandate, and to reorganize or to assist in reorganizing those aspects of life which had suffered.

The fiscal year of the military occupation (1914-20) closed on the 31st March, 1920, and the occupation itself ceased on the 30th April, 1920. Although the month 1st April to 1st May was really the last month of military occupation, it will make a convenient starting-point in reporting on the Civil Administration.