

Collier's

FEBRUARY 16, 1946

TEN CENTS

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OCCUPATION ETIQUETTE

GENERAL JOSEPH T. McNARNEY has recently worked out a definite plan for reduction of our German occupation forces to 300,000 by July 1st. As this is written, our forces in the European theater total more than 600,000. All this is good news for overseas G.I.s with low point totals. McNarney feels that 300,000 men can do an adequate occupation job, and that perhaps the force can be still further reduced next year.

Now that this matter is definitely arranged, we move that General McNarney and others in authority in occupied Germany and in Washington take the necessary steps to clean up another matter. We refer to the inexcusable conduct of some U.S. occupation soldiers toward German civilians.

Stories keep coming back to this country about American soldiers sticking up Berlin restaurants, or beating up German citizens, or looting German homes. How much of this stuff goes on, we don't know. We do know that some of it goes on, and that any of it is too much. Not that we believe in sobbing unduly over the German people. They let themselves be razzle-dazzled into the war by Hitler and his mobsters. But that does not excuse U.S. occupation troops for conduct which can only spread around the world the impression that Americans are given to talking like preachers and acting like thugs.

Occupation corrupts the occupying force—true. But such corruption can be combated by the government at Washington and by the officers in charge in Germany. Replacement troops for Germany and Japan should be thoroughly indoctrinated with the fact that they are not going on a looting foray, but to do a job which may be distasteful but must be done properly.

We came out of the war the most revered nation in the world, because of the colossal part our fighting men and our war goods played in winning the war. We can on no account afford to let U.S. occupation troops—mainly, now, replacements who saw no fighting—smear our national reputation. An unknown percentage of the boys are doing just that. It is time to step on them as hard as is necessary to cut such dirty work to the irreducible minimum.