

Name: HEUSINGER, Adolf.	ZS Nr. 69	Bd I	Vermerk: Vertraulich
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Gedächtnisniederschrift zur Unterredung mit Herrn A. Heusinger
am 25.1.52 in München.

1. Die Auswirkung der Fritsch-Krise ("Wachwechsel") sind gekennzeichnet durch ein Absägen der bisherigen operativen Führung des Heeres (Beck, Hansen, v. Manstein). An ihre Stelle tritt mit Halder, Griefenberg, Keitel jun., Paulus die "Ausbildungsgeneration".
2. Halder: sehr klug, sehr fleissig, gründlich und tüchtig ohne genialen Zug, etwas schulmeisterlich (auch Hitler gegenüber), konnte sehr zäh sein. Äusserlich "Pauker". Vielseitig interessiert (Medizin, Naturwissenschaften). Als Mensch weich, rührender Familienvater. Von geradezu pedantischer Ordnung und bürokratischen Formen. H. malte seine Unterschrift mit geradezu ritueller Feierlichkeit. Dazu gebrauchte er den Zwickler, während er sonst Brille trug. Während der Vorbereitung seiner Unterschrift überdachte er deren Berechtigung. Auch für Begrüssungen hatte er zeremonielle Formen, bei denen das Aufsetzen des Zwickers eine Art Höhepunkt ~~bedeutete~~ bildete. H. hatte ausgesprochen Herz für die Truppe. Konnte sehr nachträglich sein (Manstein, Guderian ...), erwies sich zäher als v. Brauchitsch. Sein Tagebuch entstand nachts an Hand der bei jeder Besprechung, jedem Vortrag, jedem Ferngespräch gemachten Notizen.

Halder's eigentliches Lebensziel: Arzt.

3. v. Brauchitsch: passionierter guter Truppenführer, aber kein Feldherr; Gegner der Schreibtischarbeit, in dieser überhöhten Position schwierig und oft unsicher bei der unerhörten Belastung durch Hitlers Eindringen in die militärische Führung und den Druck kritischer tüchtiger Unterführer, fühlte sich durch Halder oft gehemmt, zumal er die Besprechungen an sich viel lockerer führen wollte. Begeisterter Kavallerist und für Motorisierung sehr aufgeschlossen (wilder Kraftfahrer). Für seine Aufgabe überfordert und operativ nur normal begabt. (Deshalb zusammen mit Halder voll Animosität gegen v. Manstein.)

Ohne v. Gyldenfeldts und Herrn Heusingers Einfluss hätte der Fm. sein endgültiges Rücktrittsgesuch vielleicht nicht eingereicht, obwohl er seit Sommer 1941 in der Rolle eines Punchingballs zwischen Hitler und Halder war, vor denen er sich buchstäblich fürchtete. Die Entfremdung zwischen v. Br. und Halder begann in jener Zeit, als dieser erkannte, dass der Fm.

seine Durchschlagskraft verloren hatte.

4. Sudetenkrise: Hitler stellte die Bedingung, dass die Panzer am ersten Tag Prag erreichen sollten. Herrn Heusinger fiel in jenen kritischen Tagen auf, dass v. Brauchitsch trotz der offenkundig kritischen Lage seine Kommandostelle verliess und verreiste, um sich zum zweiten Male zu verheiraten.
5. Manstein: Seine Persönlichkeit ist von zentraler Bedeutung, denn er wurde zuerst von der OKH.-Führung, dann von Hitler bewusst in den Schatten gestellt wegen seiner eigenwilligen Genialität. Man fürchtete in ihm den überlegenen Geist. Auffällig ist, dass er instinktiv von Brauchitsch und Halder mit den gleichen Gründen abgelenkt wurde, wie später von Hitler.
Im Gegensatz zu Halder und dem bienenfleißigen Jodl von verblüffend sicherer Raschheit und geradezu eleganter Originalität.
6. Manstein-Plan: Mit dem Schlieffen-Plan 2. Auflage waren weder OKH. noch Hitler noch Rundstedt zufrieden. Mansteins 1. Denkschrift Anfang Dezember beim OKH. Ähnliche Gedanken wurden bereits in der Operationsabteilung geprüft. Mitte Februar 1940 kam Halder von Besprechung in Reichskanzler zurück und zeigte Herrn Heusinger eine Karte mit von Hitler eingetragenen Stoskeilen im Sinne von Manstein: "Jetzt bekommt die Sache endlich ein richtiges Gesicht!" Während v. Manstein als Kd. General eines Reservekorps in die Wüste geschickt wurde, hielt Halder verbissen gegen den wankehenden v. Brauchitsch, gegen Boch und die Bedenken selbst der Panzerführer während März und April an dem Plan fest und führte ihn schliesslich zum Erfolg.
Bei der Durchführung warf Halder v. Rundstedt vor, nicht straff genug zu führen (Guderian wollte in südwestl. Richtung auf Paris stossen, Kleist stoppte ihn.) Brauchitsch flog deshalb zu Rundstedt.
7. Westfeldzug-Führungskrise: Hitler begriff nicht das Weisungsprinzip, das dem ^{[Aus-}führenden im Rahmen der Weisung die Durchführungsfreiheit überlässt. Hitler hat schon damals die Erkenntnis gewonnen, dass v. Brauchitsch und Halder keine überragenden Geister waren und deshalb von den erfahrenen OB.s überspielt werden könnten.
8. Novemberkrise 1939: Hitlers militärisches Interesse wurde erst ab Okt./Nov. 39 wach. Von da ab beschäftigte er sich mit Operationsplänen. Damals erhielt beim Zusammenstoss mit v. Br. am 5.11. sein Vertrauensverhältnis zu diesem den unheilbaren Bruch. Bisher hatte er zu diesem Vertrauen teils aus eigener Interesselosigkeit, teils wegen der bisherigen Erfolge, die v. Br. bei der Aufrüstung und im Polenfeldzug zu verzeichnen hatte. Nach dem Zusammenstoss verkehrte das OKH. mit Hitler und OKW. bis Jan. 40 nur schriftlich.
9. Rolle Siewerts und v. Gyldenfeldts: Sie bemühte sich nicht, zwischen Hitler und v. Br. bzw. dem Schwanz Hitler zu vermitteln, sondern verhielt sich mehr alternativ, während v. Gyldenfeldt mehr nach Kontaktmöglichkeiten suchte.
10. Spätere Behandlung v. Mansteins: Dauernd vom OKH. gegängelt u. misstrauisch beobachtet. Holte sich durch improvisierten Verfolgungsmarsch westl. Paris in kürzester Zeit das Ritterkreuz und kam gegen alle Erwartung noch zum Zuge. Als Führer des Schwerpunkt-Pz. Korps der HGr. Nord 1941 im Gegensatz zum Korps Reinhardt völlig unzureichend ausgestattet. Der Meister der Bewegungsschlacht und des Panzereinsatzes wurde vor Sewastopol (ebenso vor Leningrad) als Armeeführer praktisch mit einer Pionieraufgabe betraut. Das Problem

jekt, ihn als OB.Ost einzusetzen (vonHerrn Heusinger vertreten) nach v.Brauchitschs Abgang, scheiterte an Hitlers Widerstand.

- 11. Alternative Seelöwe - Barbarossa: Hitler argumentierte für Barbarossa mit folgendem Argument: Ein Zweifrontenkrieg droht, weil England nicht zu fassen ist (bezw.USA.). Um ihm zu begegnen, muss der greifbare Gegner präventiv geschlagen werden (Russland).
- 12. Barbarossa-Planung: Hitler und mit ihm v.Brauchitsch-Halder hofften, aufgrund der vorliegenden Feindlagemeldungen auf vollen Erfolg der Grenzschlachten, über die hinaus nach dem Moltkeschen Prinzip keine weiteren festumrissenen Operationspläne bestanden. Man glaubte, alles Weitere lediglich den Panzerstichen ins Innere überlassen zu können (Hitler rechnete fest mit politischem Zusammenbruch des Bolschewismus).

U., 29.1.52

14/5.

Institut für Zeitgeschichte

Befragungsprotokoll zur Unterredung mit Herrn Gen.a.D. Adolf
Heusinger in München am 20.2.52

1. Herr Heusinger war von 1937 bis 20.7.44 in der Operationsabteilung des Gen.St.dH. ununterbrochen tätig, ab Herbst 1940 als deren Chef.
2. Charakteristische Unterschiede in der Planung für Westfeldzug 1940 und Ostfeldzug 1941:

Westfeldzug: Phase I erstrebte Abschneiden möglichst starker belg., nordfrz. Streitkräfte und des engl. Expeditionskorps mithilfe des Durchbruchs unter gleichzeitigem Aufbau einer Abwehrflanke gegen SW. unter dem Gesichtswinkel späteren offensiven Vorgehens in Phase II, deren Entwicklung abhängig davon, welche gegnerischen Kräfte tatsächlich abgeschnitten und erledigt wurden in Phase I. Ihr überraschend günstiger Verlauf führte zu neuen Überlegungen, bei denen Halder unbedingt für kühnes Vorgehen war, während Hitler dem eigenen Erfolg nicht recht traute. Hitler griff in die Operationsleitung (abgesehen von Dünkirchen in Phase I) nicht direkt ein, hemmte sie aber durch seine Sorge vor dem Hervorbereiten imaginärer fld. Streitkräfte aus Paris. Prinzipiell bestand Einverständnis über die Ziele der Phasen I - III, die ausser Zerschlagung der lebendigen Streitkräfte des Gegners Besetzung des holländ.-belg.-französ. Raumes erstrebte.

Ostfeldzug: Phase I sollte in Grenzschlachten die russ. Schlagkraft brechen und die Linie Dnjepr - Peipussee erreichen. Phase II wurde von Anfang an nicht präzisiert, da die Weite des russ. Raumes und die Schwerpunktsstreuung (Leningrad, Moskau, ukrain. Industriegebiet) geschlossenes frontales Vorgehen ausschloss. Gegenüber der Frage, was in Phase II eigentlich gewollt werden könne, wurden die Augen geschlossen, zumal Hitler vom Zusammenbruch des russ. Heeres einen raschen Zusammenbruch des bolschewistischen Staatsgebäudes erwartete. Für Phase II waren nur Panzerstiche vorgesehen, um das Fallende zu stossen und wichtige Schwerpunkte zu besetzen. In der Kiew-Krise brach das bisher unerörterte Problem mit ungeahnter Schwere auf, denn trotz schwerster Verluste war das russ. Heer in den Grenzschlachten noch nicht entscheidend geschlagen.
3. Jodl: Klug, gründlich, von Fleiss, aber ohne genialen Funken. Seine persönliche Lauterkeit wurde getrübt durch Hitlers unbezweifelbaren Druck auf ihn, ohne jedoch seine persönliche Lebensführung in negativer Hinsicht zu ändern. Im Polen- und Westfeldzug hielt sich Jodl zurück. Der OKW.-Feldzug in Norwegen war seine grosse Stunde, die auch seine Position bei Hitler begründete. Im Ostfeldzug hielt sich Jodl stark zurück. Während der Kiew-Krise suchte Herr Heus. Jodl auf, um ihn und seinen Einfluss auf Hitler für Moskau zu gewinnen. Jodl erklärte, er sei überzeugt von der Richtigkeit der OKW.-Planung. Der Erfolg seiner Intervention bei Hitler war gleich Null. - In der Winterkatastrophe stellte sich Jodl ganz hinter Hitler und dessen Haltebefehl. Die Kaukasusaffäre führte zu einer bleibenden Verstimmung und stärkeren Selbständigkeit Jodls gegenüber Hitler. Hitler beachtete Jodls Urteil, ging ungern darüber hinweg, beugte sich aber ihm nicht. In operativen Fragen machte es sich Jodl ziemlich bequem. Auch im eigenen Ressort der OKW.-Kriegsschauplätze beschränkte er sich mehr auf technische Fragen.

4. Die rasende Entwicklung vor Kriegsausbruch erlaubte auch v. Brauchitsch und Halder keinen vollen Ueberblick, zumal Hitlers Politik auf Zeitgewinn abzielte und im Besitz des Abkommens mit Sowjetrussland in einem Blitzkrieg gegen Polen die Westmächte vor ein neues fait accompli stellen wollte, das ihr Eingreifen wegen des zwangsläufigen Zuspätkommens illusorisch machte. Noch am 18. August konnten die ~~Vorbereitungen~~ Aufmarschvorbereitungen auf die Herbstmanöver abgedreht werden. Dann erst fielen die Würfel.
5. Hitlers erster Eingriff in Westoperationen:
Der von ihm gegebene Befehl, die Pz.-Verbände auf der Linie Le-Cateau - Leon anzuhalten wurde durch das Telefongespräch zwischen Herrn Heusinger u.v. Tresckow abgelenkt (Befehl im Widerstreit S. 89 f). Das OKH. sah von Anfang an seine Hauptsorge darin, der HGr.A die Sorge für ihre Südflanke abzunehmen und diese durch überlegte Nachstaffelung für ihre offensive Aufgabe in der Phase II vorzubereiten. Hitler dagegen zeigte Angst vor der eigenen Courage und wagte kein weiteres Risiko da, wo es weit weniger bestand als beim Durchbruch durch die Maas-Linie.
6. Westfeldzugplanung: (Manstein"-Plan, Guderians Verhalten)
Bis Februar 1940 schwankten v. Brauchitsch und Halder zwischen zwei Möglichkeiten der Eröffnung: entweder Zurückhalten der Pz. Verbände bis zum Ausgang des taktischen Treffens und dann durch ihr ~~Hineinwerfen~~ Hineinwerfen Schwerpunktbildung entweder bei HGr.A oder B je nach günstigerem taktischem Erfolg oder von vornherein starre Schwerpunktbildung für überraschenden Durchbruch (Manstein-Plan!). Halders Zögern vor der Entscheidung war auch weitgehend darauf zurückzuführen, dass er abwarten wollte, wie weit ihm die Franzosen den Gefallen taten, in Belgien gegen den deutschen r. Umfassungsflügel aufzumarschieren. Die Vorlage des Mansteinschen Operations-Entwurfes bei Hitler durch Schmundt brachte Mitte Februar die Entscheidung.
Während der Gedankenbildung noch opponierte Guderian scharf gegen Verlegung des Schwerpunktes zu HGr.A, da er die Ardennen als denkbar ungeeignet für Pz.-Bewegungen ablehnte. Als er aber erfuhr, dass Hitler sich dafür entschieden habe, wechselte Guderian den Standpunkt und verlangte nun für die den Ardennenstoss alle verfügbaren Pz. Kräfte nach seinem Grundsatz: "Klotzen, nicht kleckern!". Guderian konnte nun nicht genug Kräfte bekommen. Guderians Verhalten war immer stark sanguinisch.
7. Kiew-Krise:
Nach Erhalt der Hitlerschen Gegendenschrift zum Vorschlag des OKH., auf Moskau zu stossen (21.8.41), waren v. Brauchitsch und Halder völlig niedergeschmettert. Resigniert kapitulierten Beide. Die Denkschrift Hitlers muss von Injurien gestrotzt haben. Nur v. Brauchitsch und Halder haben sie gesehen, da der Fm. sie sofort weschloss. /
8. v. Brauchitschs Position bei Hitler:
Litt unter beiderseitiger persönlicher Abneigung, die der Fm. sich zwar nie merken liess, aber er vermied nach Möglichkeit ein Zusammentreffen. Da er nur ungern zum Führer ging, meist nur gerufen, und sich am wohlsten bei Frontbesuchen fühlte, passierte im FHQu. während seiner Abwesenheit Manches, das er hätte verhindern können. So wurde das OKH. vor vollzogene Tatsachen gestellt? Da der Fm. eigentlich während des ganzen Ostfeldzuges krank war bis zur Entlassung, wurde seine Position fortlaufend schwächer, denn die schwere Aufgabe erforderte kerngesunde Robustheit, während der Charakter seiner Krankheit zu-

[Blick erhalten!]

P. de Mendelssohn
Die NürnbergDokumente. W. Krüger
Verlag Hamburg
1947, S. 44 ff.

sammen mit den dienstlichen Belastungen seine Nerven immer mehr zerrütteten. Seine Frontbesuche waren deshalb zuweilen eine Art Flucht.

- 9. Differenzen des Gen.St.Chefs mit HGr.Nord:
Nach Erreichung der Linie Peipussee - Pleskau - Ilmensee war Halder mit der Operationsführung nicht mehr einverstanden, weil die Kräfte der Heeresgruppe Nord in zwei Richtungen auseinanderfielen (Leningrad und Waldai-Höhen),
- 10. Leningrad:
Ein abschliessendes Urteil über die Eroberungsmöglichkeiten mit den verfügbaren Kräften ist nicht möglich. Hitler fürchtete einen Versuch dazu wegen des zu erwartenden Strassenkampfes, der Panzer und Truppen gekostet hätte, und wegen der Ernährungsschwierigkeiten für die 2Millionenstadt. Ausserdem erwartete man, dass L. später kampflös kapitulieren würde, weil man mit dem Bahnbau über Ladoga-See nicht rechnete und den Einschliessungsring zu vollenden hoffte.
- 11. v.Leebs Rücktritt:
Der Fm. lehnte im Februar 1942 die Verantwortung für die unhaltbar gewordene Front strikt ab und trat deshalb nach Aussprache mit Hitler konsequent zurück.
- 12. Moskau-Offensive (Phase I ab Mitte Nov., Phase II ab 1.12.41.):
Vor der von Halder abgehaltenen Chefbesprechung in Orscha (13. Nov.41) bereits endlose Erörterungen über weiteres Vorgehen oder Stehenbleiben, die bis zum letzten Antreten (1.12.) weitergingen. Da die Armeen nicht Farbe bekamen, wurde die Ansicht v.Bocks, auf den Halder viel gab, ausschlaggebend: das Risiko müsse eingegangen werden. Die Frage nach Ueberschreitung der Risikogrenze ist unfruchtbar, denn man konnte in greifbarer Nähe des Bahnknotenpunkts und Nervenzentrum Moskau nicht stehen bleiben, ohne einen letzten Versuch zu machen. (Russ. Offiziere bezeichneten Herrn Heus. gegenüber die Hitlersche Fehlentscheidung zugunsten Kiews und gegen Moskau Ende Aug.1941 als das russische "Marnewunder"!.) Das war umso mehr berechtigt, als es sich bei der Schlacht um Moskau um den Kulminationspunkt des Ostfeldzuges (infolge des Misslingens des ganzen Krieges!) handelte. Hitler warf alle ähnlichen Bedenken, die er gegen die Einnahme Leningrads vorbrachte, hier beiseite, weil er den grossen Erfolg suchte und auf einen Propagandasieg brannte. Nicht vergessen werden darf der Anteil des beispiellos harten Winters am Misserfolg, aber auch der russischen Improvisationsfähigkeit.
- 13. v.Brauchitschs Entlassung:
Herr Heus. erklärte v.Gyldenfeldt, der Fm. müsse gehen, weil zu krank - unter der selbstverständlichen Voraussetzung, dass ein Nachfolger die Stelle des ObdH. übernehmen werde. Diskutiert wurden v.Rundstedt (den Hitler ~~als~~ aus Altersgründen ablehnte) und v.Reichenau. Halder wäre wahrscheinlich dann in jedem Falle gegangen. V.Brauchitsch kam nach der Verabschiedung sehr befriedigt von Hitler zurück, weil dieser ihn nett behandelt und ihm seit Langem zum ersten Mal keine Vorwürfe gemacht hatte. Einen Nachfolger dürfte er von sich aus kaum vorgeschlagen haben, weil er froh war mit der ganzen Sache nichts mehr zu tun zu haben. (In der letzten Zeit zitterte v.Brauchitsch geradezu vor Hitler und den Begegnungen mit ihm.)
- 14. Halders Stellung nach v.Brauchitschs Entlassung:
Ursprünglich nur Ueberlegung: Einer muss die Stellung halten, um

Schlimmeres zu verhüten. Da Hi. Halder in der ersten Zeit "pousierte" (wie jeden neuen Mitarbeiter) und die Zusammenarbeit deshalb überraschend gut war, erhoffte sich Halder persönlich eine Chance, oberster Berater ~~zusammen mit Jodl~~ zu werden, sodass unter deren Ägide ein einheitlicher OKW.-OKH.-Gen.Stab die Strategie (mit verteilten Rollen) bestimmte. Nach zwei bis drei Monaten zerflossen diese Hoffnungen. Und Halder verlor seine Durchschlagskraft bei Hitler.

15. Entlassung Hoepners:

Hitler bekam bei der Nachricht über eine selbständige geringfügige Absetzbewegung Hoepners zur Frontbegradigung einen Tobsuchtsanfall wegen Uebertretung seines strikten Haltebefehls und befahl in der Erregung dessen Ausstossung aus dem Heer. Eine Revision lehnte er ab, auch später.

16. Halders Einstellung zur Doppeloperation Kaukasus-Stalingrad:

Zu jener Zeit hatte Halder bereits resigniert und bearbeitete die Operationspläne ohne Passion und Liebe. Er versuchte noch einmal zu protestieren, als die Operation bereits zerflatterte. Während der Entschlussbildung schwankte Halder noch, ob Moskau oder der Süden das lohnendste und zweckmässigste Operationsziel bildeten, und war im Grunde froh, dass Hitler ihm die Entscheidung abnahm. Halder hatte schon jeden Einfluss verloren und kapitulierte.

17. Halders Entlassung:

Im Nach dem schweren persönlichen Zusammenstoss mit Hitler, bei dem Herr Heus Augenzeuge war, (Ende August 1942) erklärte Herr Heus Halder auf der Heimfahrt: "Jetzt ist es aus!" (Hitler hatte Halder angebrüllt: "Sie haben nicht einmal das Verwundetenabzeichen und wollen mir einreden, was die Front fühlt und aushalten muss!" - Dieses Zitat ist nicht zur Veröffentlichung bestimmt, sondern nur zur persönlichen Unterrichtung über das Klima der Unterredung!!!)

Die Entlassung ging in ein paar Minuten vor sich, wie sie Herr Heus in "Befehl im Widerstreit" schilderte.

18. v. Bocks Rücktritt während Moskau-Winterschlacht:

Meldete sich noch gerade rechtzeitig krank, da Hitler bereits die Absicht hatte, ihn seines Postens zu entheben.

19. Halders Entlassung - ein Wendepunkt?

Gegenüber der Glanzzeit Halders zweifellos. Von nun an wurde nicht mehr so gründlich gearbeitet. Anstelle sachlich fundierter Befehle kamen mehr und mehr Schlagworte und Gummi-Befehle. Andererseits rang Zeitzler mit Hitler viel mehr und wesentlich robuster als Halder. Aber er konnte Stalingrad so wenig verhindern, wie Halder dazu in der Lage gewesen wäre.

20. Bedeutung der persönl. Animositäten zw. Hitler u. v. Brauch.-Halder:

Ausserordentlich belastend, zuerst zwischen Hi. und dem Fm., dann dem aus dem Schatten tretenden Halder, aber nicht von prinzipieller Bedeutung, denn auch der ganz anders geartete, deshalb von Hitler berufene Zeitzler konnte sehr bald auch nicht mehr mit ihm. Hitler verlangte von seinen Mitarbeitern charakterlich wie sachlich Unmögliches und kam deshalb mit ihnen nicht zurecht.

21. Entartung der Befehlsgebung und militärischen Führung:

Ab 1943 wurde die bewährte Auftragstaktik vollends über den Haufen geworfen. Von da ab setzen die bombastischen, am Vortschwall sich berausenden Befehle ein mit propgandistisch-psycholog. Zielsetzung und zunehmendem Realitätsverlust.

22. Aufstellung von Kavallerieverbänden:

Ab 1943, da gute Erfahrungen mit ungar. Kavallerie, führte zur

Aufstellung von 2 Kav.Korps.

23. v. Brauchitschs Stellungnahme zum Nordafrika-Provisorium 1941:
 Der Fu. protestierte tatsächlich im zeitigen Frühjahr gegen die halbe Lösung, die mit Entsendung ~~der verstärkten~~ 5. lei. Div. getroffen wurde, und verlangte Entsendung stärkerer Kräfte, um reinen Tisch zu machen und nicht von verspäteten Nachforderungen überrascht zu werden.

24. Gründe für Entschluss zu Barbarossa:

Für Hitler bedeutete der Ostfeldzug Rückkehr zu seinem ideologisch-aussenpolitischen Programm. Der sanguinische Entschluss übertäubte aber nicht die rechnerischen Kalküls (beide greifen bei Hitler sehr oft eng ineinander vgl. sein technisches und statistisches Interesse!)

Die russische Stärke und deren Kräfteverteilung waren richtig errechnet und beobachtet. Nicht richtig eingeschätzt waren: 1. die Grösse des Raums, 2. die Widerstandsfähigkeit des Bolschewismus, 3. die russische Improvisationsfähigkeit, 4. der Umfang der russ. Reserven (Menschen und Material).

Das anfängliche militär. Übergewicht der SU. bestand nur quantitativ und war wegen der besseren Qualität der deutschen Führung, Truppe und Ausrüstung, wegen des Prestiges und Kampferfahrenheit der deutschen Armeen sowie der gelungenen Ueberraschung des Gegners nicht ernst zu nehmen.

Neben allen anderen Ueberlegungen hinsichtlich der strateg. Lage Deutschlands, des drohenden Zweifrontenkrieges und der Aussichten, gegen die Westmächte zu einer Entscheidung zu kommen, spielte auch die Tatsache eine erhebliche Rolle, dass die deutsche Schlagkraft zu jener Zeit einen Höhepunkt erreicht hatte, von dem es bei dieser Anspannung aller potentiellen Kräfte nur bergab gehen musste in Zukunft (Reserveproblem!).

U./25.2.52

D. 14/5.

25-69-70

7.12.1950.

Institut f. Zeitgeschichte München ARCHIV
998/53

Sehr geehrter Herr von Sieglar,

Ich danke Ihnen sehr fuer Ihre Zeilen vom 6.11.1950.
 Ich freue mich, dass mein Buch Ihnen gefallen hat. Es scheint
 den von mir erstrebten Eindruck gemacht zu haben, d.h. zu zei-
 gen, in welcher unendlich schwierigen Situation sich das Offi-
 zierkorps befunden hat, und zu warnen vor so voreiliger Kri-
 tik, wie wir sie in den letzten Jahren erleben mussten.

Ihre sehr gruendliche Aufzeichnung ueber die Befehls-
 verhaeltnisse habe ich gelesen, ohne freilich Ergaenzungen ma-
 chen zu koennen. Ich glaube, sie ist sehr gut und wird der
 kriegsgeschichtlichen Forschung von grossem Vorteil sein koer-
 nen. In Goettingen beschaeftigt sich ja der Professor Percy
 Schramm, Universitaet, mit diesen Problemen. Vielleicht wuerde
 er grosses Interesse fuer Ihre Zusammenstellung haben.

Mit bestem Gruss bin ich

Ihr sehr ergebener

A. Juuinger

mit sehr gut!
↑

Korrigiert haben in der Liste schon *Rothkopf*
 u.a. Keitel, Harpe, ^{Faerner} Kern (Gut), Meiner (SS) Rintel
 Westphal (Schiff), Kerling, *Friedrich*, *Vomann*
niets zu korrigieren hatten u.a. *Haller*, *Kessinger*

25-69 -11

Dr. Freiherr von Siegler

München 22, den 11.6.1952
Reitmorstr. 29

Herrn Generalleutnant a.D.
Adolf Heusinger

Bonn
Argelanderstr. 105

Sehr verehrter Herr General!

Im Rahmen meiner Tätigkeit für das Institut für Zeitgeschichte München arbeite ich an einer Zusammenstellung der höheren Kommandostellen der Wehrmacht im Kriege und wäre dankbar, wenn Sie mir die anliegenden Fragen beantworten könnten.

Indem ich im voraus für Ihre Liebenswürdigkeit bestens danke, verbleibe ich, sehr geehrter Herr General, mit verbindlichsten Empfehlungen

Ihr sehr ergebener



(v. Siegler)

Anlage:

Heusinger

1. Ergänzung und Verbesserung nachstehender Liste:
 Oberquartiermeister I:
 von Wietersheim (Gustav) vom 1. Mai 35 bis 37
 von Manstein vom 37 bis 3. Febr. 38
 Halder vom 4. Febr. 38 bis 31. Okt. 38
 von Stülpnagel (K:H.) 1. Nov. 38 bis 40
 Mieth vom 40 bis 2. Sept. 40
 Paulus vom 3. Sept. 40 bis 5. Dez. 40
 Blumentritt bekannt.
2. Chef der Operationsabteilung:
 Feige vom 31 bis 30. Sept. 33
 von Gossler vom 1. Okt. 30 bis 30. Apr. 34
 von Wietersheim vom 1. Mai 34 bis 30. Apr. 35
 von Manstein vom 1. Mai 35 bis 37
 Hansen vom 37 bis Mai 38
 von Greiffenberg vom Mai 39 bis 40
 Heusinger vom 40 bis 21. Juli 44
3. Stimmt es, daß die Verbände, die 1936 ins Rheinland einmarschierten etwa 10 bis 12 Bataillone stark waren, von denen nur 3 auf das linke Rheinufer übertraten?
4. Stimmt es, daß die linkerheinischen Truppen den strikten Befehl hatten, auf das rechte Rheinufer zurückzugehen, falls die Franzosen Gegenmaßnahmen ergreifen und es zu Zusammenstößen kommen sollte?
5. Stimmt die Schätzung, daß damals die Wehrmacht etwa 20 bis 24 Divisionen insgesamt zählte?
6. Waren damals für den Notfall Maßnahmen vorgesehen, um "Miliz oder Landsturmdivisionen" (Name von mir erfunden) aus SA, SS, NSKK oder Polizeieinheiten zu bilden, kurz die Wehrmacht irgendwie zu verstärken?
7. War General Haenike bis zur Räumung Wehrkreisbefehlshaber im Generalgouvernement?
8. Bitte anliegenden Durchschlag zu verbessern.

ZSG - 13

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München
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998/53

Dr. Freiherr von Siegler

München 22, den 11.6.1952
Reitmorstr. 29

Herrn Generalleutnant a.D.
Adolf Heusinger

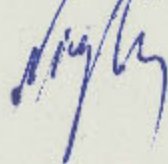
Bonn
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Ihr sehr ergebener



(v. Siegler)

Sehr geehrter Herr v. Siegler!

*Ich bitte Sie mit den Fragen an den König-
Steiner Preis (Heldentag) zu wenden. Vor Sie,*

18/6.

00012

Sind die kryptischen Unterlagen vorhanden. Ich
habe nicht die Zeit, mich im gegebenen Aus-
druck mit diesen Wegen zu befassen.

Mit bestem Gruß.

Ihr sehr ergebener

Herringer.

Institut für Zeitgeschichte Archiv

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25-69 -75

INTERROGATION OF HEUSINGER

Interrogation of
Adolf HEUSINGER on 4 June 1947

by Mr. RAPP - 10:45 hours
Stenographer: R. MUMMLER

Institut f. Zeitgeschichte
München
ARCHIV

1948/56

Q.: Will you please state your full name for the record ?

A.: Adolf HEUSINGER.

Q.: General HEUSINGER, I would like to question you today as a witness in connection with the so-called retaliation measures in the South-Eastern area.

There are but three points I have to discuss with you; we think you can make certain statements on these three points.

What was your position in the Army from 1 April 1941 until the collapse in May 1945 ?

A.: Between 1 April 1941 and 20 July 1944 I was Chief of the Operation Division of the OKH. After 20 July 1944 I was relieved of my command, arrested by the Gestapo and, after having been detained for two months in the Gestapo-cellar Albrechtstrasse in Berlin as well as in Fuerstenberg, I was released for lack of evidence. Until the collapse in May 1945 I had to stay in my apartment and had no further military assignment whatsoever.

Q.: Did you belong to the Fuehrer Reserve ?

A.: During that time I belonged to the Fuehrer Reserve in Service Command XI.

Q.: General HEUSINGER, is it correct that you were Chief of the Operation Division during the invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia ?

A.: Yes.

Q.: As far as you remember, it was the 12th Army under Field Marshal LIST, and the 2nd Army under Field Marshal WIRTHS, which carried out operations at that time ?

A.: Yes.

(page 2 of original)

Q.: I do not know whether at that time WIRTHS was a Field Marshal already; perhaps he was a general.

A.: A General.

Q.: I merely say this to clarify matters. Now, General HEUSINGER, in your capacity of Chief of the Operation Division you probably also received certain reports from Army Headquarters 12 dealing with the situation in the South-Eastern area ?

A.: I received the daily reports of the situation from the 12th Army.

INTERROGATION OF NEUSINGER
CONTINUED

(page 2 of original cont'd)

- Q.: Is it correct, General NEUSINGER, if we assume, that the Fuehrer, and at that time perhaps BRAUNHITSCH and KRITTEL too, were of the opinion that the invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece in itself would be an easy matter and could be carried out without any major military consequences ?
- A.: Since our troops were already in Bulgaria we thought then that, due to Yugoslavia's encirclement from two sides as a result of this, the defeat of the Yugoslav forces would not take too long.
- Q.: And it was actually done that way, was it not ?
- A.: Yes, it was actually done that way.
- Q.: General NEUSINGER, as far as you know, did the OKH or OKW or even the Fuehrer - in planning this invasion of both Greece and Yugoslavia worry about unrest which perhaps might arise after victory, but during consolidation within those countries ? I am now speaking of the planning.
- A.: After the experiences of World War I, the situation in the Balkans could not be considered as simple, above all in view of the extremely difficult communications with the rear. I personally cannot recollect any discussions/the pacification of the country and any apprehension in connection therewith. (In planning operations).

(page 3 of original)

- Q.: But every officer of the General Staff, for reasons of experiences gained during World War I as well as for reasons of general education and knowledge, was aware of the fact that in the South-East area there is a number of various peoples with various religions and traditions, with a legendary love of liberty, and with a legendary courage.
- A.: Yes.
- Q.: If, then, something went wrong, as it actually happened, they surely were not too much surprised ? I am not speaking of the campaign at present, but of the pacification.
- A.: In view of the peculiar condition in the Balkans we had to reckon with corresponding difficulties.
- Q.: It would not be good planning nor a good group of General Staff officers if this had been overlooked ? Is that correct ?
- A.: That is correct.

INTERROGATION OF HEUSINGER
CONTINUED

(page 3 of original cont'd)

Q.: Now, to come to the direct question which I would like to discuss with you today and about which I would like to hear your opinion: as you perhaps can still remember, complaints were made by LIST to the OKH and OKW to the effect that it was a question here not organized, military matters, but frequently of units in civilian clothing or units of partisans and that, according to his - LIST's - opinion, violations of the Hague and Geneva Conventions prevail. Is it correct, General, that after the outbreak of the revolt the OKH or the OKW respectively, held also that, according to International Law, the insurgents, because they failed to wear uniforms or were unorganized, etc., had put themselves outside the framework of the rules of land warfare?

A.: May I ask a question?

Q.: Please do.

A.: You are speaking now of a revolt. What period have you in mind?

Q.: I am speaking of the revolt of the national-Serbian movement under the then Colonel MICHAILOWICZ about June 1941, the revolt which, deprived of his initiative later on, was continued by TITO until 1945.

(page 4 of original)

Speaking about List and the High Command of the 12th Army, I especially mean the time of Christmas 1941, when there were no differences with MICHAELONICE as yet.

A: I should like to mention in this respect that, as far as I remember, the Balkan area was taken from the Army High Command and directly put under the orders of the High Command of the Armed Forces at the beginning of the Russian campaign. Therefore I can only express my personal opinion concerning this question.

Q: May I interrupt for a moment ?

A: Herr General, this is not correct. The High Command of the 12th Army remained under the orders of the Army High Command and of BRAUCHITSCH until nearly August 1942, with the one exception that HIELER then took the place of BRAUCHITSCH, but the Army High Command directed the operations of the 12th army, the Commander in Chief of the 12th army being, in personal union, Commander in the South-East area too.

A: I openly admit that this matter is not quite clear to me any more. At that time we were too much occupied with the Russian campaign.

Q: Your personal opinion is much more important anyhow.

A: Then I may correct my statement this way: my personal opinion was that the resistance in the occupied Balkan territories at that time was an irregular, spontaneously developing resistance that therefore did not fall under the rules of the Hague Convention concerning land warfare.

Q: Now an other question (Document is presented):

Who was the group "Near East and Balkan-Office Zeppelin" ?

A: Group "Near East and Balkan-Office Zeppelin" ? In my opinion that can only have been a group within the department "Alien armies in the East".

Q: You do not know who that man was, do you ?

A: No.

Q: Well, I do not want to deviate from the subject. But I believe it to be of importance to us to show you a fundamental order of List in order to make you understand the meaning of my question. (Document is being presented). The article "F" is of special importance.

(page 5 of original)

A: Yes, I have read article "F".
That is it what I meant before. Practically the matter was actually so that the OKH, in the end, was competent only in the field of supplying all these troops.

Q: But you did get informations, did you ?

A: Yes.

(page 5 of original, cont'd)

Q: Now for the following questions: Was it your opinion then and is it your opinion to-day that the fighting methods used by the German troops, as clearly expressed here in this order by List, were merely based on the fact that the opponent, owing to his lack of uniforms and uniform command, violated the Hague Convention, or was it your opinion then and is it your opinion to-day that, even if such acts of terrorism would have been committed by Serbians in uniform and within the rules of the Hague Convention, the answer would have been nearly the same; in other words my question is: In your opinion has there been a causal connection between the methods ordered by List and the alleged violation of the Hague Convention by the enemy, or is it possible to say that, no matter - what happened, the insurrection as such had to be suppressed for reasons of security in connection with the Russian campaign, even, if the enemy fought within the framework of the Hague Convention. It is not by chance that the date of such orders coincides with the Barbarossa operation. LIST had also lost a lot of troops, so that the German forces there were numerically inferior to the enemy.

A: I think that ---

Q: And I am talking now about the initial action of LIST, he received his orders from HITLER too.

(page 6 of original)

- A: Yes, I think the absolute control of the Balkan area situated on the lower flank of the campaign against Russia which had meanwhile begun, was an irrevocable necessity. Furthermore, I believe that the security of the extraordinarily thin lines of communication running through this area likewise necessitated absolute control of these life-lines especially.
- Q: May I interrupt you a moment? We also have a campaign in North Africa.
- A: You mean in connection with the Balkan area?
- Q: Yes.
- A: These lines of communication were of special importance not only for the Russian campaign, but to supply chiefly the German troops stationed in the Southern Balkans, and finally, as it became apparent during the course of time, for the support of our own troops fighting in North Africa. Therefore the pacification of the country must be regarded as a decisive military task.

I also believe, that if it had been clearly established that the groups of insurgents which were forming, were regular units of the armies concerned, and the corresponding prerequisites of international rules had been unmistakably fulfilled, the German soldier would have taken such measures against this opponent, as -

- Q: -- as was the case in the West?
- A: Yes, -- or as was the case with other regular armies.
- Q: Good. Now for the next group of questions, which perhaps is not so extensive. Later on, when WEICHS took over the supreme command of Army group F in 1943, and unequivocally was directly subordinate to the OKW, you also did receive copies of the reports for information, did you not?

(page 7 of original)

- A: I believe so.
- Q: It is obvious as far as LIST is concerned, in his capacity of Commander in Chief of the AOK 12; can you remember whether LIST, and in particular WEICHS, repeatedly protested against the orders for reprisals, draconian reprisals, given by Herr KEITEL or HITLER?

And secondly, in your opinion is not the assumption that such a protest took place an admission in itself, that these reprisals were considered unjust by these 2 generals, i.e., that if the enemy's methods had not been so drastic, then the German Wehrmacht would also not have retaliated so drastically?

(page 7 of original, cont'd)

A: To question 1: I personally cannot recall that repeated and decisive protests regarding the reprisals were made by the leading army groups in the Balkans. However, I must state in reference to this, that such protests were hardly apt to be transmitted through me, as the pacification of the rear zones was an affair for the Quartermaster General, especially as the Balkan area came under the jurisdiction of the QMG. Therefore by saying that I did not remember such protests, I did not deny that perhaps such protests could have been made after all.

To question 2: I admit that if a Commander in Chief makes a protest to the higher authorities against an ordered measure, he expresses the view that he does not agree with this measure, and that he considers other means for the fulfillment of his tasks more suitable, or regarded his problem as having no solution.

Q: Herr General HEUSINGER, before we come to the next group of questions, I would like to try to clarify one thing: According to LIST's statement and because of the facts that regular and even severe battles took place there, these territories were not pacified territories; I am referring especially to Serbia, and it was not an executive power in the hands of Generals BOENNE or HAARDER,

(page 8 of original)

or of General DANNELMANN as military commanders, but the executive power was in the hands of General LIST, later KUNZE, and then BOENNE, in his capacity of commanding general of the High Command 65. That indicates that it was a question of operations.

Now the next group of questions: Did the Operation Division -- or did an Inspection Division exist within the general staff, whose duty it was to make trips to the front, to transmit the wishes of the chief, to receive criticisms from the field commanders? Did such a division exist?

A: There was no such division. However, the QMG sent certain officers to the front in each particular case - the personnel changed constantly - in order to maintain contact with the front-line authorities, especially in difficult situations. Moreover, in the Balkan campaign, during the operations in April, a special liaison officer was sent from the QMG to the 12th army to keep the QMG informed about the progress of the operations.

Q: Under whose aegis were the people mostly? Did they have to come directly to the Operation Division, or to the chief?

INTERROGATION OF HEUSINGER
CONTINUED

(page 8 of original, cont'd)

- A: They were sent either by the Supreme Commander of the Army, or by the Chief of the General Staff. Their report went partly through the Operation Division, and partly directly to the Chief of the General Staff or C.Qu.I. Reports by telephone were generally made by those concerned directly to the Chief of the General Staff.
- Q: Now, the second question in this group, which is closely connected with the first one: were inspection commissions consisting of one or more officers ever sent to the front to ascertain whether definite orders, the content of which could be regarded as questionable by the commanders, were actually carried out? Do you know whether KEITEL or HITLER had such an organization either through the Army or the SS or the Party, in order that the Supreme Command could be assured that that which had actually been ordered, was not sabotaged at the lower echelons.

(page 9 of original)

- A.: Such measures were employed to a marked degree after HITLER himself assumed Supreme Command over the Army. Besides this, HITLER still had his official SS-channel's, running independently from official Army channels, through which he received reports in a more and more increasing degree, especially about such cases where, in the opinion of the SS-units, the Army Command posts were not working entirely along the same lines as HITLER had imagined. As long as Feldmarschall von BRAUCHITSCH was still Supreme Commander, according to my opinion and as far as I know, such unmilitary measures were not used by the OKH, especially, since the Supreme Commander of the Army was extremely often on trips.
- Q.: There was a similar system, for tactical reasons in LUDENDORFF's time, that is to say for tactical reasons only.
- A.: During LUDENDORFF's time there was the official channel of the General Staff. This official channel of the General Staff has been absolutely abolished in the Handbook for General Staff Officers (See "Roter Esel").
- Q.: Now, do you know what agents, aside from the SS, HITLER employed to keep him informed?
- A.: Neither the Chief of the General Staff nor I found out in many instances where and through whom HITLER received his informations. I only recall that during the Eastern campaign, also through the Chief of the General Staff, on orders of HITLER, generals were dispatched to the front in order to examine, for instance, whether the defence measures of a place designated as fortified were carried out as ordered, or to examine whether the screening of personnel within the unit was really carried out in the manner ordered by HITLER. In such a case the Chief of the General Staff sent in each case any available officers who had no other assignment at the time. I cannot name any officers who were definitely and permanently assigned to this duty.

(page 10 of original)

- Q.: Were there any who traveled more frequently or who were sent more often than others?
- A.: That I can't say.
- Q.: BUEHE was not at the front?
- A.: Very little and, in any case, he does not belong in this chapter. The people concerned here were, e.g., the General of the AOK reconnaissance etc., often also front commanders with no assignment at that time, that is to say those in the Führerreserve who were then especially detailed to such a particular assignment.

(page 10 of original cont'd)

- Q.: But that was not a good system, because the men who was in the Führerreserve could possibly have sympathized more with the men at the front rather than with HITLER ?
- A.: There were positively cases in which officers returned and reported that the assigned tasks at the front could in practice not be carried out with the forces available. I like to remind you, in this connection, that General JOEL was sent to the Caucasus in August 1942.
- Q.: Did they ever use men like SCHUBERT etc. for such assignments ?
- A.: I believe, that HITLER consciously never used such men for these missions, since doing so he would "let the cat too far out of the bag", aside from the fact, that those men in general were permanently used for other assignments.
- Q.: Who was the general of the "Flying Courts" on the Western Front ?
- A.: As far as I remember, it was Major-General HUBNER, but that was after my time. I have heard the name several times during my imprisonment.

Mr. Rapp: All right, that's all for today. We shall talk about my third question to-morrow morning.

I have read the foregoing deposition consisting of 11 pages, in the German language, and declare that it is the full truth to my best knowledge and belief. I have had the opportunity to make alterations and corrections in the above statement. I made this declaration voluntarily without any promise of reward and I was not subjected to any duress or threat whatsoever.

Nürnberg, 6 June 1947.

(signed): ADOLF HEUSINGER .

Before me, Walter H. Rapp, U.S. Civilian, identification number AGO D-416 387 Director, Evidence Division, Office of Chief of Counsel for War Crimes, appeared Adolf HEUSINGER to me known, who in my presence signed the foregoing statement (Eidesstattliche Erklärung) consisting of eleven pages in the German language and swore that the same was true on the 6th of June 1947 in Germany.

Nürnberg, 6th June 1947.

(signed): Walter H. RAPP.

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION.

I, Paul E. Gropp, B. 397 975, hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages and that the above is a true and correct translation of the original document.



Q.: Your name is Adolf Heusinger?

A.: Yes.

Q.: I have interrogated you on 4 June 1947?

A.: Yes.

Q.: I give you today the original and one copy of yesterday's interrogation. Please take them with you and read them and make the corrections which you think are necessary, but do not sign them. If you make some corrections please make them in ink or copy pencil.

A.: Yes.

Q.: Well, before I take up further points today I like to show you a few things concerning the expiation measures. The persons mentioned are of no importance for our today's discussion, in other words, we shall not go into any polemics whether it was Keitel's fault or who ever it was, that is a matter to be decided by the court. I merely want to show you the kind of things which happened, they are the object of my today's interrogation.

(Documents are being submitted).

A.: May I make a remark with reference to this? Conditions in the Balkans have to be taken into consideration too.

Q.: General Heusinger, you surely adhere to the opinion that no matter how conditions were, say on the Balkans, the German Wehrmacht certainly could not have conducted the War in Europe as such on the basis of the resistance offered by the Serbians or the Croatians, in other words, the losses the enemy has inflicted on Germany down there are only a small percentage of the losses on the large fronts

(page 2 of original)

where hundreds of thousands of soldiers were wounded or killed. I don't think that the German Wehrmacht during the five years of operations in the Balkans has had as many casualties as in the one battle of Stalingrad, on the other side, for one wounded man 50 were shot, or 100 for one man killed. There is no country in this world, not even the Chinese, which could stand the proportion of 1 to 50 or 1 to 100 or 1 to 1000, the countries are getting deprived of their war potential. I am convinced that this was not done because the Wehrmacht could not stand these losses but because one could not afford the probability of such a position on the right flank of the Russian campaign and because the number of troops which

(page 22 of original cont'd)

were at disposal in the Southeast sector was insufficient to carry through normal fighting in continuous military operations. Perhaps this was a matter concerning which the Military Commanders themselves did not see quite clear, because if Keitel, after all, writes a letter like this one here, probably in the name of Hitler, it was, in my opinion, not really Hitler - Himmler's factor to beat the enemy down there, to deprive him of his war potential in order to use the members of the Wehrmacht more or less as helpers with regard to these racial principles. I could show you a hundred other orders, viz. all these things here.

(Documents are submitted).

In parenthesis I like to mention two things here, General Heusinger, which, I think, are of importance if we want to look at these things objectively. The German Wehrmacht came to these countries as aggressor, it marched through them, violated the neutrality of these countries, and supported as can be seen from other documents, the Four Years' Plan of Hermann Goering as well as the Labor Commitment of Sauckel later on in 1943/44, and deported a large number of people to Germany Proper for Labor Commitment and exploited the natural products of Greece and Yugoslavia for the German Wehrmacht, even to such an extent, - I want to look at this objectively, too -

(page 3 of original)

that the alleged famine which the German people is suffering today is not to be compared with the famine which existed in Greece and Yugoslavia besides a total inflation etc.

The Foreign Office, the Gestapo, the Security Service and all the other people were of course involved, but without the Wehrmacht, i.e. without the so-called pacification and these terroristic measures, such things as deportation of laborers, spoliation of agriculture and corruption would not have been possible. If a German column is marching from A to B and is attacked on the road, during the five years of occupation by the German Wehrmacht, one could not call this *eo ipso* a treacherous attack; just because some Quisling Government in Yugoslavia or in Greece has made a pro forma peace treaty with the Germans and it is a fact after all that such a Government was neither wanted nor appointed by the people. They were considered treacherous Governments by the Yugoslavs and the Greeks, which had concluded agreements with the Germans for personal advantages. The population did not consider itself bound by these agreements; for them a state of war existed always from the first day the Germans set foot there. If now some General Ralles makes an agreement with the German Government - the man never was elected by his own people and did not hold the majority of votes, I do not have to acknowledge such a Government, as a Croatian or a Greek, but I see in them and in the Germans the common enemy and wherever I meet them

(page 3 of original cont'd)

in the country, I beat this enemy, and that when beating him, when planing is being done, chips will be scattered, that the German Wehrmacht also knew. Of course, that the Allies landed troops there from the air and ammunition, rifles etc., that of course also was contained in the extensive strategical plan of the Allies and that was recognized by Germany too, since Weiche, Kesselring and Loehr were assigned for the defense of the Adriatic sector in order to prevent landing operations, by the enemy which however never took place.

(page 4 of original)

A.: But we were very much afraid of it.

Q.: You were very much afraid of it, you bluffed yourself into it, with other words, by taking the initiative, you expected the counter-attack but the counterattack never came from that side of course, as it was not considered important enough from a strategic point of view to keep thousands of troops there since there would have been no possibility to go straight to the Reich with them, over the Alps etc.

A.: Yes, we were afraid of the personality of Churchill, from the last war.

Q.: Well, Mr. Churchill did not conduct the war, Eisenhower conducted the war.

A.: Yes.

Q.: Now the following must be taken into consideration - first I like to ask you a personal questions: On the basis of the documents which you have seen and on the basis of the fact that you know me since over a year, on the basis of your exact knowledge with regard to the first trial and its results, and on the basis of other documents, I would show you loads of them - there are altogether 370 documents, not 370 pages, there are many thousands of pages, there are 370 documents with different numbers - you surely must be convinced yourself in a certain respect, that the point at issue is to punish the people who have transgressed the limits of the Hague convention, although they even succeeded, as for instance yourself, in creating among their own people and in the General Staff an impression of Christian Leaders, of the tradition of the ancient Prussian Army and other things. I may tell you, when I showed these orders here to Herr List, although he had stated on oath twice before that he did never hurt a hair of anybody, the man nearly fell off his chair and was on the verge of having a heart attack. His reaction was exactly the same as that of Generalfeldmarschall von Manstein in the witnessbox when he was told the story of the West where American and British soldiers were shot or hanged by the hundreds.

(page 5 of original)

You know that I am not telling you stories without showing you the documents, there were hundreds. I think the most terrible thing is the fact that people in your situation simply cannot grasp these things, although, if I reproach you personally, General Heusinger, you in your position as Chief of the Operational Section, who must have had hundreds of such things at least going through your office, you should have recognized what was going on, even if the things were not handled by you, or then a man in your position may not show such surprise, just like some small Nuernberg locksmith who never was a soldier in his life, because after all you were right at the core of the things.

Now comes the fantastic part: Do you feel, General Heusinger, on the basis of the first trial, on the basis of the statements made before the Commission before which you appeared as a witness, by virtue of your two weeks' leave which you have had, on the basis of these documents which I have submitted to you today, a certain loyalty as man towards these people without which Hitler could not have carried out his plans? In other words, if - let us say if Generalfeldmarschall List should now enter this room, would you rise, stand at attention and say: yes, Generalfeldmarschall etc. or if Herr Keitel should come in, it does not matter who, would you feel yourself under obligation towards these people, is this your tradition? Do you consider these people as the persons you have lived for, did you carry out your profession for them, or do you see in them today the frustration of your aims and do you think that they have anything to expect from you as a man and professional officer? Would you ask people such as these to your house, to see you wife or your children, invite them to tea if you had the opportunity?

A.: I am deeply impressed by the documents submitted to me.

(page 6 of original)

Q.: Would you today, if Herr Keitel would enter this room and would tell you that he has no room to sleep, no place to go to tonight, nobody here in Nuernberg wants to have me - I mean, you know what Keitel has done and you know who Keitel was, in other words, do you feel any professional tie or loyalty or common fate with people who obviously have smirched the German Army, their reputation and their tradition by these things before the whole world and for a long time, whether it happened knowingly or unknowingly. Another question: I cannot imagine that people who have the position of a Field Marshal should not know what they are doing, Weicks and List and certain other people were not that old and sclerotic.

A.: You will kindly permit me, not to answer this question.

(page 6 of original cont'd)

Q.: The reason why I wanted to ask you is this: We, at least I, must know today where you stand, your attitude towards these matters and your attitude towards the persons who are responsible for these matters, because you cannot state here today before me that you disapprove of these things, that you no longer consider the persons who have done these things as of your kind and that you are very much disappointed as professional officer, if, feeling ashamed even. I say, yes, General Heusinger, you seem to belong to that group of Germans which at least tries to look the situation in the eye and to make the best of it; I am sorry that there are few such people. Then you come to Court and you know how it was in this commission, and Dr. Latenser or someone else asks you one thing or another and you see all these ridiculous figures sitting there who formerly walked about in their splendor and there I must know whether your attitude to these things changes under the pressure of the circumstances in the Court, getting softer or not quite as firm as the attitude, which you have shown to me today or already a year ago.

(page 7 of original)

A.: Please spare me, if possible in some way another appearance before the Court.

Q.: I do not think, General Heusinger, - I am of the opinion, quite apart from the judicial "Must", that there is something like duty. You could not shun your duty just for personal fear or because you want to spare yourself personal inconveniences or because you are personally of the opinion that you are not feeling as strong on the point as you thought you would feel. I think it is today the duty of every German. There are not very many people who think as you do.

A.: May I say a few words in this connection?

Q.: Please.

A.: An important factor in these proceedings is the fact that I myself am not informed of the conditions in the Balkans, since I was not in the Balkans myself. It is possible that for someone knowing the conditions in the Balkans many things might possibly appear in a different light.

Q.: Well, General Heusinger, do you not think that I too considered this, that you were not on the Balkans? I do not believe that you are fully aware of the nature of your statements as a witness; in other words, so much is certain that you were the chief of the operational section and as such you had a certain knowledge military - technical information and

(page 7 of original cont'd)

knowledge, no matter where the theater of war was and whether you ever had visited the theater of war, that you cannot deny. Let me now put a typical question before you, on which the whole matter depends. Why, you for instance would make a good witness in this case quite apart from the conditions in the Balkans, you would never be asked about them because you were never there.

(page 8 of original)

We are not interested in the opinion of people, in other words, General Heusinger, it is absolutely a matter of indifference to me whether you reject the orders or whether you declare yourself identical with them. It is also all the same to me whether you like List. But there are a few points on which you can testify in this case.

A question: What would you do, General Heusinger, if Herr List should come in or Herr Weichs - they did come in many times already - and you were sitting here in this drawer, you would not have seen them and I would show these men these orders; they would answer me as follows: Mr. Rapp, all these are faked false reports, not a hair was hurt of anybody, except in attempts of escape. These are false reports through out. Each report is made up, a lie from beginning to end all through the period of 4 1/2 years. Now I would put the questions before you as expert, as Chief of the Operational Section:

- 1.) What do you say to the nature of this defense?
- 2.) is an excuse practically possible?
- 3.) in view of the proved existence of the Security

Service, Foreign Office, Four Years' Plan, Rosenberg and the presence of 110% National Socialists such as Neubacher, Neuhaus and other people of the Staff there, do you hold to the opinion that Brauchitsch or Keitel or Hitler did not get anything concerning these things during a period of 4 years, if they had not taken place, and is it at all possible that they might not have taken place, when more and more inhabitants of those countries were driven to join the partisans because of these terroristic measures, in other words, if there had been no terroristic measures the partisan movement never would have been so successful; in other words, what is your attitude, from an objective point of view, as Chief of the Operational Section towards the defense of the defendants, quite apart from the fact that according to my opinion it is unmanly, unsoldierlike and dishonest even to mention such a thing, because the orders of List speak against the assumption that they were camouflaged orders.

Institut für

(page 9 of original)

Now these gentlemen come here, General Heusinger one after the other, so big, they sit down here and tell me that all those are just faked orders and faked reports. Now I ask you as head of the operational department - it is all the same to me whether you were in the Balkans or not - is such a thing possible at all?

You must know whether such a thing was possible in your department, whether one could cheat you, or the chief of staff, or Keitel or Hitler for 4 years or for 3 years concerning these things. What is your opinion about this? Please tell me about your department.

A.: As head of the operational department I was accustomed to consider as true the reports sent to the department.

A checking of these reports from the Balkans, however, was not part of my sphere of activity, but should have been the task of the quartermaster-general.

Q.: Why the task of the quartermaster-general? Was it not the duty of the head of the operational department?

A.: The task of the operational department was the carrying through of front operations. The task of the quartermaster-general was the administration and thus also the protection of the occupied territories. Only in the spring of 1943 - according to my knowledge - an order of the Chief of the General Staff took the repression of revolts in the occupied territories, as far as the East was concerned, out of the sphere of activity of the quartermaster-general and transferred it to the operational department. This, however, did obviously not apply to the so-called OKW theater of operations.

Q.: General Heusinger, this is a matter I do not understand in the same way as you are looking at it. Many of these things occurred in 1941/42 in connection with and as a result of regular combats in the zone of operations, e.g. the entire Adriatic coast, which was occupied by the Italians and in part by German troops, was a zone of operations; the chief executive was first List, then Kunze, then for a short time Felmy, then Lochr, later on Weiche.

(page 10 of original)

At the time the 12th Army was there there were quite a lot of zones of operations and a lot of territories under the command of a Military Commander, and therefore Wagner. But quite a lot of territory must have been under the control of the zone of operations, as it was such a zone, and a lot of such murders and shootings happened in the zone of operations. I should

(page 10 of original cont'd)

like not to deviate too much, from the main point, it is not so important to know who carried out the examination as such and whether this was another matter. What I should like to know is, first, whether it was possible - and you have already answered that - during this entire period, that such cheatings could happen; whether one cannot expect and is bound to assume that a report, a report about facts handed in by a field marshal or a Generaloberst, or if you like by any officer, is true. I am asking you as an expert, do you understand?

A.: I am sorry that I have to state that the field commands tried to evade Hitler's orders - in an increasing number, as the war was going on - if they regarded these orders as impossible and as not corresponding to the situation, by altering the reports. I could observe such cases again and again during the campaign in the East in the years 1943/44. In these years it even occurred repeatedly that chiefs of Army Groups asked me before they made their reports whether these reports were practical in the intended form, in order to reach the goal desired by the Army Group. From a military point of view, in particular from the point of view of the command it was an extremely dangerous and deplorable fact, because a purely objective command was thus rendered more and more difficult. The main reason for this development was the fact that Hitler deviated more and more from the method of issuing orders he had used until then and that he wanted to give the orders in detail himself.

Q.: General Heusinger, do you speak, in the first place of tactical - operational measures as for instance that a certain town had to be taken because Hitler ordered so, the Army Group however was of the opinion that this would cost too much blood, and that in spite of that it was reported that the town had been taken,

(page 11 of original)

or do you speak of that kind of measures which are in a certain respect not of such operational value, but which gave the Supreme Command of the Army (OKH) - the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) the only opportunity to learn at least whether anything was done at all against the rebels in accordance with the meaning of Keitel's order?

A.: My statement referred to tactical measures of the commanders and not to those with political background. I cannot judge the latter as I had only to deal with the former.

(page 11 of original cont'd)

- Q.: Now I want to ask you a subjective question: Do you think that this kind of defense is possible, if so, please will you explain to us how even the ordinary soldier would have been affected by such a conspiracy; this soldier could have possibly been the writer and could have recorded these things, all that could have happened without making the big people conspicuous by gossiping.
2. Why is all that revealed only now in this trial? Why did not other people, which are accused in other trials refer to such excuses which are in my opinion ridiculous?
3. Is it not a fact that the German soldier was instructed to stand up for everything that he had done? If I sign anything with my own name I certainly cannot say that I did it in order to cheat.
- A.: To question 1: I think this possible in individual cases. To question 2: I do not know whether during other investigations the defense used this argument in a similar manner. To question 3: In principle the superior has to stand for what he signs. But considering the kind of Hitler's leadership there were without doubt cases during the war where commanders and commanders - in-chief knowingly signed deliberately colored or even falsified reports in order to avoid the carrying out of impossible orders in the interest of the troops.

Mr. Rapp. Well, this is all for today.

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION
OF INTERROGATION

12 June 1947

I, Dr. Siegfried TAUBER, Civ. A-443 415, hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages, and that the above is a true and correct translation of Interrogation.

Dr. Siegfried TAUBER
Civ. A-443 415

INTERROGATION

25-69-34

Adolf WEUSINGER on 6 June 1947

by Mr. Repp 10.45 hours

Stenographer: R. Wehler.



Q: Your name is Adolf WEUSINGER?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you looked through the matter?

A: Yes, I have looked it through.

Q: Would you please sign this now?

A: Yes.

Q: What can you tell us about LIST; you don't know him personally, do you?

A: I only know him slightly. In his time he was chief of the training department when I was a young First Lieutenant (Oberleutnant) and in the general staff training department. In 1929/30 I met him again when he led the Polish and French campaign in the capacity of supreme commander of an army. As the army-group stood in such close contact between us and the armies, I had nothing to do with the supreme commanders of the armies. He had the reputation of being a clever and energetic leader but not entirely free from a certain vanity. Later on, when he was in the position of leader in the Balkans and then when he was in command of the army-group in the Caucasus, this judgment was generally confirmed by the few discussions at which I met him. This is what I have to say about LIST.

Q: What can you tell us about WEICHS?

A: As to WEICHS I must say that most officers, included myself, have already wondered for years how this kind of philosopher as we used to call him, could pursue such a career, as in his appearance and in his religious attitude he did not represent at all the type of general required by Hitler. I know that he was very religious and that he acted in his command entirely according to the point of view of the former command i.e. that he refrained from the danger of exaggerating remarks.

(page 2 of original)

and always made the impression of being a gentleman an impression which I too share. I say quite frankly that despite having read the documents, I personally pity the accused from the bottom of my heart.

Q: Maybe he was too weak to assert himself?

A: This is possible.

Q: What can you tell us about ZENDELICHT?

As I only know REINHOLD from being prisoner-of-war, I first made his acquaintance here.

Qut But the name was familiar to you previously, wasn't it?

As I had heard his name previously, but I first learned details about his past and his career here. In my opinion he is an aspiring person but a cold character. I think that the will and the persistent desire to assert himself were often in the foreground with him and that he reconciled this train of ideas very early and very strongly with the ideas of National Socialism.

Qut And what about KUNTZE?

As I only know General Kuntze from the year 1935 and I can only say that I was astonished at his career. I think that he belongs to that category of officers who are essentially over-promoted in their position.

I know SPIDEL from 1931 when he was a young officer of the general staff. At that time he was regarded as clever but also as ambitious.

FRINK: is the second of the accused whom I pity in a certain way. Of course I only know him from the years 1930/32; but I always considered him, first and foremost as a soldier and I must admit frankly that I can hardly imagine that he has knowingly offended against soldierly decency in this way. Maybe he is somewhat weak.

LARI was very ambitious, he wished to achieve a great deal, he frequently worked with all means.

(page 3 of original)

FOERTSCH: extremely clever, intellectual and therefore tempted to meddle with problems which should be really beyond his province as a soldier; a somewhat varied past.

Qut Now another question: It is both a legal and military problem. The Red Ass (Kote Raal) says: The leader alone has the responsibility, I do not mean by that HITLER but the leaders.

As Yes, the commanders.

Qut By this the responsibility of the chief is therefore excluded; for on the other hand it reads, that the chief must always be in touch maintaining happy military and soldierly marriage with his superiors. Legally spoken, the case is clear; i.e. it is written in the Red Ass, that the commander is solely responsible, morally, the chief bears the responsibility exactly in the same way as the superior. Let us take the relation between WEIGER and FOERTSCH. We have documents of FOERTSCH from 1941 on, where FOERTSCH speaks of measures by force. He carried them out under LIST, KUNZE, LOWIE and continued to carry them out under WEIGER. WEIGER was far too decent to try to push something on to somebody else. Once I asked WEIGER whether such and such a thing originated with FOERTSCH. He did not answer this question. So it is very difficult for me to convince the court of that. What the counsel for the defense refers to in the Red Ass, is correct according to the letter of the law but in respect of personality, the situation or, if one speaks of a happy soldierly marriage which should be aimed at,

Q41 then one cannot deny that one relies upon the other, so that the stronger personality asserts itself. If I were to come to you to-day as a chief and say, Generaloberst HUBSCHER, dreadful things have happened in RUSSIA, we must act vigorously, and you replied Mr. Herr, that is out of the question, then I would say, very good, Generaloberst, but if you were to say nothing, or say you must know better than I do.

(page 4 of original)

I only arrived here to-day, then my proposition surely influences your career and your command? What do you say to my argument in this case?

A4 I may say in brief, because this throws light upon the matter, how the matter originated in the Red Ass.

MR. HERR: / That is all for to-day.

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION

Nurnberg, 11 June 1947

I, Kathleen Bramley, No. 20096, herewith certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages and that the above is a true and correct translation of the original document.

KATHLEEN BRAMLEY
20096

-2-
END

Konsequenzen des Adolfs/BUSINGER
am 4.2.1948 von 14.00 bis 14.30 Uhr
Stenografen: Saerbel KRUEGER

- 1.F.: Bitte geben Sie uns Ihren vollen Namen an.
A.: Adolf KARUSINGER.
- 2.F.: Wann sind Sie geboren ?
A.: Am 4. August 1897
- 3.F.: Sind Sie Deutscher ?
A.: Ja.
- 4.F.: Waren Sie jemals in der deutschen Armee ?
A.: Ja, von 1915 bis zum Zusammenbruch 1945.
- 5.F.: Was war Ihr letzter Dienstgrad ?
A.: Generalleutnant.
- 6.F.: Sind Sie noch Kriegsgefangener ?
A.: Nein, ich bin am 30. Juni 1947 aus der Kriegsgefangenschaft entlassen worden.
- 7.F.: Wo haben Sie im 2. Weltkrieg gedient, ?
A.: Im 2. Weltkrieg war ich beim Oberkommando des Heeres in der Operationsabteilung und zwar zunächst in der Operationsabteilung, d.h. 1. Generalstabsoffizier, bis zum Herbst 1940. Anschliessend war ich bis zum 20. Juli 1944 Chef der Operationsabteilung. Anschliessend wurde ich dieser Stellung enthoben und hatte bis Kriegsende keinerlei Verwendung mehr.
- 8.F.: Was haben Sie unmittelbar vor der Zeit getan, zu der Sie zur Operationsabteilung gekommen sind ?
A.: Ich war seit 1932 Generalstabsoffizier und zwar zunächst bis 1934 in Truppenamt, anschliessend bis 1935 Kompaniechef, anschliessend bis 1937 im Truppengeneralstab bei der 11. Division in Allenstein, ab 1934 im OKH.

9.F.: Können Sie uns ganz kurz sagen, was das Truppenamt war, von dem Sie sprachen, in dem Sie 1932-34 tätig waren und welche Aufgaben Sie dort hatten ?

A.: Das Truppenamt war nach dem Jahre 1918 geschaffen worden innerhalb des Reichswehrministeriums und stellte den Vorläufer des später wieder geschaffenen Generalstabs dar. An der Spitze des Truppenamts stand der Chef des Truppenamtes, zu meiner Zeit der damalige General ADAM, später der General BECK. Diese unterstanden unmittelbar dem Chef der Heeresleitung, damals Generaloberst HEYE und General von HAMBURSTEIN und waren gewissermaßen deren engerer Arbeitstab. Das Truppenamt enthielt damals 4 Abteilungen und zwar die 1. Abteilung (T 1), aus der sich später die Operationsabteilung entwickelte, T 2, die Organisationsabteilung, T 3, die Abteilung fremde Heere und T 4, die Ausbildungsabteilung. Ich selbst war seinerzeit in der T 1 und zwar von 1932 bis 1934 und hatte als jungerer Generalstabshauptmann in erster Linie Fragen des Luftschutzes der Truppe im Rahmen der Landesverteidigung zu bearbeiten.

10.F.: Als Sie im Sept. 1937 wieder nach Berlin zurückkamen, bestanden da noch immer diese selben Abteilungen ?

A.: Als ich im Sept. 1937 nach Berlin zurückkehrte, hatte sich die Organisation wesentlich geändert. Mit Einführung der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht war der alte Generalstab wieder geschaffen worden, das Truppenamt hatte diese Bezeichnung erhalten. Die Bezeichnungen T 1-4 bei den einzelnen Abteilungen waren gefallen und statt der ursprünglich nur 4 Abteilungen waren bereits geschaffen bzw. in Bildung 10-12 Abteilungen. Das, was früher T 1 war, hieß jetzt Operationsabteilung, aus T 2 wurde Organisationsabteilung usw.

11.F.: Wer war damals, als Sie nach Berlin kamen, der Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres ?

A.: Der Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres war Generaloberst von FRITSCH, der Chef des Generalstabs war BECK.

12.F.: Wer loeste sie ab ?

A.: Beide sind gegangen zwischen Fruehjahr und Herbst 1938 und wurden ersetzt durch Generaloberst von BRAUCHITSCH und General der Art. HALDER.

13.F.: Wie lange blieb BRAUCHITSCH Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres ?

A.: Bis 18. Dezember 1941. General HALDER als Chef des Generalstabs blieb bis September 1942.

14.F.: Und wer loeste BRAUCHITSCH und HALDER ab ?

A.: BRAUCHITSCH wurde durch HITLER unmittelbar abgelost, der den Befehl selbst im Dezember 1941 uebernahm und Generaloberst von HALDER wurde durch den General der Infanterie ZEITZLER abgelost.

15.F.: Was war die Hauptaufgabe des OKH bei Ausbruch des Krieges am 1. September 1939 ?

A.: Die Hauptaufgabe des OKH war, nach den Befehlen und Weisungen, die von HITLER ueber das OKW gegeben waren, zu handeln und zwar im Osten die Durchfuehrung der militaerischen Operationen gegen Polen, im Westen der Schutz der Grenzen, entsprechend den Defensivweisungen des OKW.

16.F.: Hat das OKH diese Aufgaben waehrend des ganzen Krieges wahrgenommen ?

A.: Diese Aufgaben wurden nachher wesentlich eingeschraenkt. Mit Beginn des Russlandfeldzuges 1941 blieb das OKH als Fuehrungsbehoerde praktisch nur noch beschraenkt auf den Feldzug gegen Russland, waehrend die uebrigen von deutschen Truppen besetzten Gebiete vom OKW uebernommen wurden bzw. schon uebernommen waren und etwaige Operationen in diesen Gebieten vom OKH unmittelbar gefuehrt wurden.

17.F.: Hat es innerhalb des OKH bzw. des OKW irgendwelche bedeutenden Funktionen gegeben, die sich ueberschnitten haben, sodass diese fuer beide gemeinsam von einer Stelle aus gefuehrt wurden ?

A.: Es hat im Laufe des Krieges, namentlich nach der Befehlsuebernahme durch HITLER selbst (als er Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres wurde) mehrfache Ueberschneidungen gegeben, wie z.B. auf dem Gebiet des Generalquartiermeisters insofern, als der Generalquartiermeister eine Doppelunterstellung bekam, naemlich soweit die Aufgaben der OKW-Kriegsschauplaetze beruehrt wurden, wurde er dem OKW unterstellt, soweit die OKH-Kriegsschauplaetze beruehrt wurden, wurde er dem OKH unterstellt. Aehnliche Faelle gab es auch auf anderen Gebieten.

18.F.: Was war die Hauptaufgabe des Generalquartiermeisters und wem unterstand er urspruenglich ?

A.: Der Generalquartiermeister unterstand urspruenglich dem Chef des Generalstabs des Heeres. Im Verlaufe des Krieges ergab sich jedoch die Teilung der Gewalten auf den einzelnen Kriegsschauplaetzen, sodass er nach dem Fortgang des Feldmarschalls von Brauchitsch auf dem Militaerverwaltungsgebiet dem ehemaligen Feldmarschall KEITEL unterstand auf dem Versorgungsgebiet, soweit es sich um OKH-Kriegsschauplaetze handelte, dem Chef des Generalstabs, soweit es sich um OKW-Kriegsschauplaetze handelte, teilweise dem OKW, teilweise dem Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab, sodass die Unterstellung des Generalquartiermeisters eine ausserordentlich vielfache war und er praktisch dem Chef des Generalstabs nach dem Fortgang des Feldmarschalls von BRAUCHITSCH nur noch auf dem Gebiet der Versorgung der Truppe verantwortlich war.

19.F.: Sie sagten uns, dass nach Beginn des Russlandfeldzuges das OKH fuer die Operationen in Russland und das OKW fuer die uebrigen Operationen verantwortlich waren. Wissen Sie, welche Stelle innerhalb des OKW fuer diese anderen Feldzuege operativ verantwortlich war ?

A.: Operativ verantwortlich war hier HITLER gegenueber der Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab, der damalige General der Art. JODL.

20.F.: Unterstand er direkt HITLER ?

A.: Er unterstand formal dem Feldmarschall KEITEL, in der Praxis ist es auf dem Fuehrungsgebiet zu einer unmittelbaren Unterstellung unter HITLER gekommen.

21.F.: Hat es einen Stellvertreter des Chefs des Wehrmachtfuehrungsstabs gegeben ?

A.: Es wurde die Stelle eines Stellvertreters des Chefs des Wehrmachtfuehrungsstabs geschaffen, diese Stelle hatte bis zum Herbst 1944 der General der Art. WARLIMONT.

22.F.: Wann wurde diese Stelle eines stellvertretenden Chefs des Wehrmachtfuehrungsstabs geschaffen oder existierte eine andere Stelle, die lediglich umbenannt wurde ?

A.: Es war praktisch eine Umbenennung der Stelle des Chefs der Abteilung Landesverteidigung.

Vernehmung Prot. 2272

Vernehmung des Generalleutnants Adolf HUBER
am 25. Oktober 1947 von 1630 Uhr bis 1730 Uhr
durch Hr. Fred KUPFER,
Four Military Division (Mr. BLOMBERG),
Stenographin: Hildegard SAH

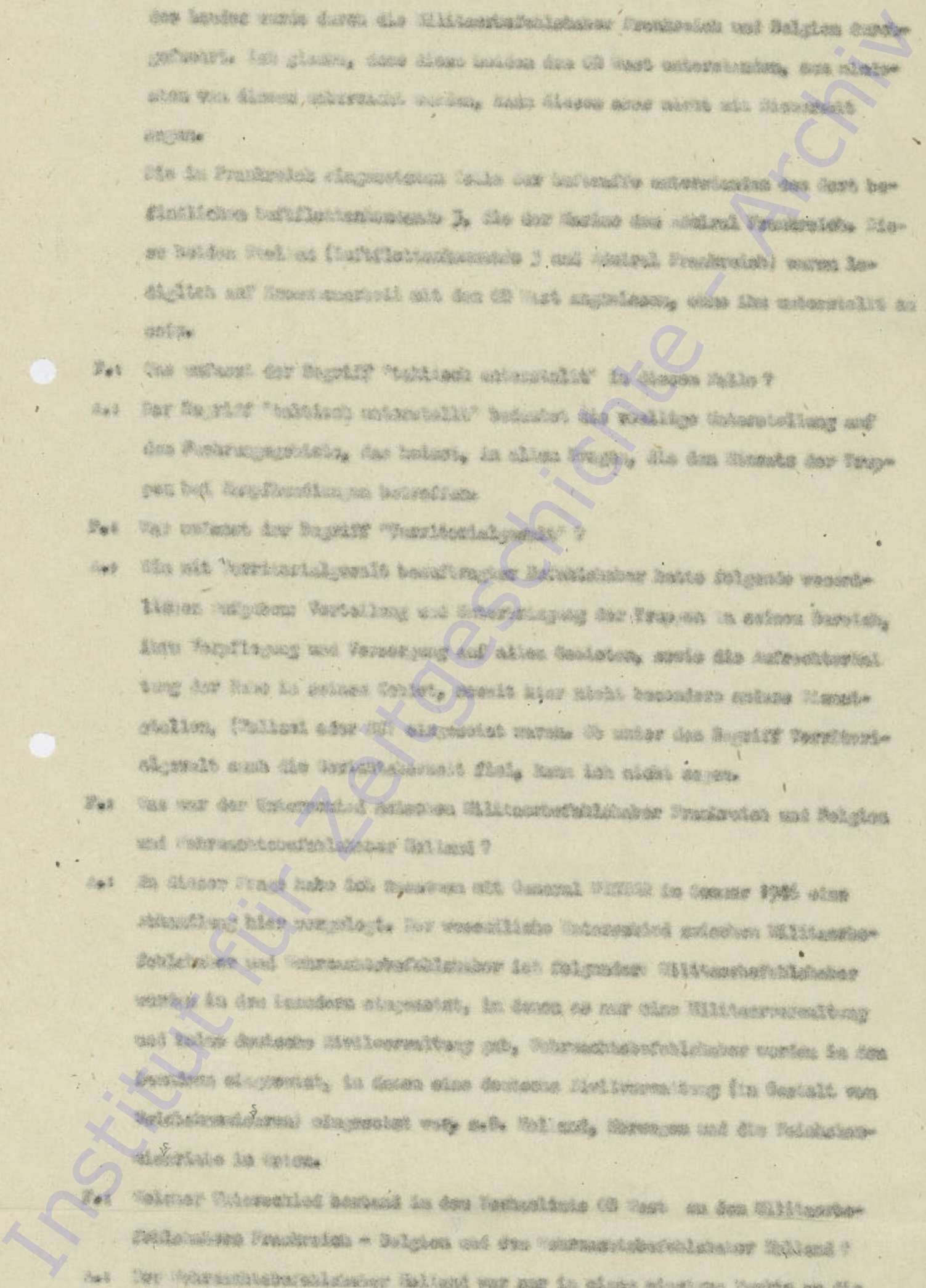
Institut f. Zeitgeschichte
München
ARCHIV
1948/56

- Fr: Wer führte das 33. Corps in der Zeit, als HUBER die 73. Division führte, 1941-1942?
- Ad: General HUBER, gleiche Zeit. Dann kam er unter General August VITTEL, der damals Kommandant der betreffenden Zone war.
- Fr: Von wem wurde HUBER ab, als er das 33. Corps übernahm?
- Ad: Das weiß ich nicht, aber nach dem Krieg kam VITTEL kommandieren, der damals Kommandant war.
- Fr: Als der Frankreichfeldzug im Gange war, hatte die Verwaltung die sogenannte Militärverwaltung.
- Ad: Ja.
- Fr: Diese Militärverwaltung wurde dann abgelöst. Können Sie mir schildern, was danach kam?
- Ad: Die Militärverwaltung in Frankreich ist meines Wissens als solche bestehen geblieben. Wir haben die zur Besetzung Frankreichs, soweit ich weiß, einen Militärbefehlshaber dort gehabt. Allerdings ist, soweit ich weiß, die Militärverwaltung auf bestimmten Gebieten, insbesondere politischen Art, durch das in Frankreich eingesetzte hohes SS- und Polizeiführer übergeordnet worden. An der Spitze der Militärverwaltung stand meines Wissens ein Militärverwaltungschef, der sich unter dem Militärbefehlshaber befand. Der Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich wurde sehr bald nach Beendigung des Frankreichfeldzuges, bereits im Januar 1945 gestrichelt.
- Fr: 1945 wurde auch die Rolle des SS fast gestrichelt. Was waren dessen Funktionen?
- Ad: Ich will versuchen, diese Frage zu beantworten, obwohl meine Fertigkeit dazu mit den Verhältnissen in diesem Lande nicht so ist. Die Aufgabe des SS war vor in erster Linie politischer Natur, das heißt, er hatte alle Vorbereitungen zur Verteidigung des besetzten Gebietes, die Vorbereitungen für die damals beschlossene Landung in England zu treffen. Die Verwaltung

des Landes wurde durch die Militärverordnungen Frankreich und Belgien geregelt. Ich glaube, dass diese beiden den GB weit unterstanden, was nicht aus dem Kontext hervorgeht, denn diese zwei nicht im Hinblick auf...

Sie in Frankreich eingestrichen wurde der betreffende untersteinst der dort her- stehende Auffüllungsstand J, die der Marine der neutralen Staaten. Hier- zu beiden Seiten (Auffüllungsstand J und neutral Frankreich) waren be- stimmte auf dem Gebiet mit dem GB weit angeordnet, was ich unterstellt an- nehme.

- 1.1. Was versteht der Begriff "kolonial unterstellt" in diesem Falle?
- 1.2. Der Begriff "kolonial unterstellt" bedeutet die völlige Unterstellung auf dem Kriegsgelände, das heißt, in allen Dingen, die dem Kommando der Trup- pen bei Kriegsführung betreffen.
- 1.3. Was versteht der Begriff "territorialgewalt"?
- 1.4. Die mit "territorialgewalt" beauftragten Militärs haben folgende verant- wortliche Aufgaben: Verteilung und Überwachung der Truppen in seinem Gebiet, ihre Verfügung und Versetzung auf allen Gebieten, sowie die Aufrechterhal- tung der Ruhe in seinem Gebiet, soweit hier nicht besondere andere Anord- nungen, (Militär oder GB) eingeleitet werden. Es unter den Begriff "territori- algewalt" auch die Befehlsgewalt steht, kann ich nicht sagen.
- 1.5. Was war der Unterschied zwischen Militärverordnungen Frankreich und Belgien und Verordnungen des Reiches?
- 1.6. In dieser Sache habe ich zusammen mit General WITTE in Januar 1945 eine Abklärung hier durchgeführt. Der wesentliche Unterschied zwischen Militärver- ordnungen und Verordnungen des Reiches ist folgender: Militärverordnungen waren in der Regel elementar, in denen es nur eine Militärverwaltung und keine deutsche Zivilverwaltung gab, Verordnungen des Reiches waren in der Regel elementar, in denen eine deutsche Zivilverwaltung (in Gestalt von Reichsbehörden) eingesetzt war, z.B. Holland, Norwegen und die Feindbeset- zungsteile in Polen.
- 1.7. Welcher Unterschied bestand in dem Verhältnis GB West - an den Militärver- ordnungen Frankreich - Belgien und den Verordnungen des Reiches?
- 1.8. Der Reichsverordnungen des Reiches war nur in einem einzigen Punkte an die Weisungen des GB West gebunden nämlich der Vorbereitung der Verteidigung Hollands auf landseitigen Gebieten gegen eine Invasion. Dies hatte der



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Schweizerbundesarmee Holland mit dem OB West seine Pläne nicht zu tun.
Die Militärattachés von Belgien und Frankreich waren in der Lage, dass das
OB West, wenn ich nicht recht erinnere, unterstellt.

- Fr: War die Hauptaufgabe unter die Hand der Truppe aus Frankreich herüberge-
hen und die OB übergeben die Führung der Truppe. Der Generalquartiermeister,
der eigentlich ja eine OB - Stelle ist, wurde Befehl durch, die
weber OB waren. Was fand der Oberst OB - OB statt?
- Ar: Ich kann den genaue Zeitpunkt nicht mehr angeben. Jedoch glaube ich, dass
das OB die Führung in Paris selbst erst nach Beginn der Hauptaufgabe
übernahm, als nicht mehr und nicht herübergeleitet, das OB durch die
Führung in Paris bereits nach Übernahme übernommen wurde.
- Fr: Welche Stelle in OB übernahm die Führung in Paris?
- Ar: Die leitende Führung in Paris übernahm der Kommandant der Hauptaufgabe mit
seiner Quartierabteilung. Die Führung der Truppe wurde übergeben
Militärattaché OB/1 persönlich. Er leitete die Truppe die Durchführung der
notwendigen Schritte zwischen der Leitung & der Kommandanturposten
oder der Hauptquartierabteilung in OB. In Paris entstand die doppelte Unter-
stellung des Generalquartiermeisters. Für die OB - Hauptquartierleiter unter-
stand er dem Ob. d. B., für die OB - Hauptquartierleiter, an denen zunächst
nach der Truppe nach, wurde er seine Befehle von OB. Lediglich auf den Ge-
biet der Versorgung der Truppe und des Nachschubs für die Truppe blieb er
zunächst für die OB, wie die OB - Hauptquartierleiter des Ob. d. B., bzw.
nach einem Antrag des Ob. d. B. unterstellt.

Vernehmung des Generalleutnant Adolf HEBINGER
am 30. Oktober 1947 von 930 bis 1000 Uhr
durch: Mr. Fred Kaufman
Fuer: Military Division (Mr. Niederman)
Stenografin: Elise Feer



F.: Haben Sie den Bericht ausgearbeitet ?

A.: Ja, hier ist er.

F.: Unterschreiben Sie bitte den Bericht, dann muss ich Sie darauf
vereidigen.

A.: Zeuge unterschreibt die Erklärung.

F.: Stehen Sie bitte auf, erheben Sie Ihre rechte Hand und sprechen
Sie mir nach:

Ich schwöre bei Gott dem Allmächtigen und Allwissenden, dass
diese Erklärung auf Wahrheit beruht, so wahr mir Gott helfe.

A.: Zeuge spricht die Eidesformel nach. -

Übrigens möchte ich darauf hinweisen, dass Ende 1945, Anfang
1946 von den Generalen BRÄUCHTIGER, MARBYER, HALDORF, KARLIMONT
und WESTPHAL eine Denkschrift ueber die Gesamtentwicklung des
Heeres seit 1918 fuer die Bayrischen Gerichtsbehörden angefertigt
wurde und sich bei den hiesigen Akten befinden musste. Eine Foto-
kopie dieser Denkschrift habe ich in Neustadt gesehen.

Adolf HUBSCHER

Muerberg, den 30.10.1947.

Betr.: Verschiedene Fragen.

Ich muss betonen, dass es mir nach nunmehr 6 Jahren bei Beantwortung der gestellten Fragen nicht immer moeglich ist zu unterscheiden, was ich damals gewusst, und was ich erst in den 2 1/2 Jahren nach dem Zusammenbruch gehoert habe. Ich kann daher Irrtuemer nicht ganz ausschliessen.

1.) Kommissarbefehl:

Seine Entstehung kenne ich im einzelnen nicht. Ich weiss aber, dass der Befehl mir, neben anderen Gruenden, vom Standpunkt der Fuehrung, die ich zu bearbeiten hatte, deswegen unsinnig erschien, weil er die Haechigkeit des russischen Widerstandes erheblich verstaerken musste. Auch von Seiten der Heeresgruppen wurden die gleichen Bedenken bald zur Sprache gebracht. Bezueglich der Durchfuehrung des Befehls an der Front erinnere ich mich, dass vielfach von Sabotage des Befehls gesprochen wurde. Erst spaeter, ich glaube im Fruhjahr 1943, wurde er, meines Wissens offiziell, ausser Kraft gesetzt, da er im Gegensatz zu einer Propagandaaktion zum Ueberlaufen russischer Soldaten stand.

2.) Aufhebung der Gerichtsbarkeit im Osten:

Ausser der Tatsache, dass dieser Befehl von Hitler aus tiefem Misstrauen gegen die Wehrmachtjustiz in scharfem Gegensatz zu der Auffassung des Ob.d.H. gegeben wurde und bei letzterem schwerste Bedenken ausloeste, kann ich Einzelheiten nicht angeben. Das Fuehrungsgebiet wurde durch ihn nicht beruehrt.

3.) S.D.-Einsatzgruppen:

Es war mir bekannt, dass besondere Formationen im Ostfeldzug von Hitler zur Erfuellung politischer Sonderaufgaben eingesetzt wurden. Diese Aufgaben wollte Hitler bewusst dem Heere nicht uebertragen. Die Sonderformationen wurden daher meines Wissens den Kommandostellen des Heeres auch nur wirtschaftlich unterstellt und erhielten ihre Sonderauftraege unmittelbar von den SS-Dienststellen. Ob und inwieweit die Heereskommandostellen davon erfahren, kann ich nicht sagen. Die ganze

Frage lag im Arbeitsbereich des Generalquartiermeisters und des Generals z.b.V. - Das erschreckende Ausmass der Judenliquidationen ist mir - meiner ganzen Erinnerung nach - erst nach 1945 bekannt geworden.

4.) Bandenbehandlung:

Als ich mich von Seiten der Operationsabteilung ab Ende 1942 mehr mit der Bandenbekämpfung im Osten zu befassen hatte, wurde bei Aktionen gegen die Banden immer dringender die Frage nach der Zahl der Gefangenen gestellt, weil diese zur Arbeit herangezogen werden sollten. Vorher war die Tendenz wohl eine andere gewesen und richtete sich auch gegen Bandenhelfer und Agenten gerichtet haben. Einzelheiten mussten aus der Bandenkampfvorschrift zu ersehen sein. -

Von der Heranziehung der Bevölkerung zu Schanzarbeiten glaube ich wohl gehört zu haben. Wo sie im einzelnen stattgefunden hat, weiss ich nicht mehr. Allzu frontnaher Einsatz erscheint mir deshalb fraglich, weil man sie jedem möglichen russischen Zugriff oder Einfluss entziehen musste.

5.) Sauckel-Aktion:

Ich weiss, dass die sogenannte Sauckel-Aktion die Erfassung von Arbeitskräften fuer die deutsche Wirtschaft bezweckte. Ueber dabei angewandte Zwangsmethoden kann ich mich nicht erinnern, etwas gehört zu haben. Die ganze Aktion gehoerte nicht zu meinem Arbeitsgebiet.

6.) Kriegsgefangene :

Ich entsinne mich, dass 1941 beim Generalquartiermeister erhebliche Schwierigkeiten bei der Erfassung, Versorgung und dem Abtransport der ueber alles erwarteten hohen Zahlen an Kriegsgefangenen entstanden. Diese sollten sich zum Teil infolge laengerer Einkesselung bereits bei der Gefangennahme in erschreckend heruntergekommenen koerperlicher Verfassung befunden haben. Wenn grossere Zahlen dem Hungertode zum Opfer gefallen sind, so glaube ich mich andererseits zu erinnern, dass seitens des Generalquartiermeisters alles versucht wurde, der Schwierigkeiten Herr zu werden. Auch wurde sehr bald die Forderung auf Erhaltung dieser Arbeitskraefte erhoben. - Viele Kriegsgefangene blieben als Hilfwillige (Hiwis) bei unserer Gruppe und wurden auf Grund ihrer Bereitschaft von ihr vor allem in den ruckwaertigen Diensten verwendet.

Die uebrigen sind meines Wissens in der Heimat oder den rueckwaertigen
Gebieten zur Arbeit eingesetzt. Inwieweit und ob hierbei gegen inter-
nationale Abmachungen verstoessen wurde, entzieht sich meiner Kenntnis.

Nuernberg, den 30.10.1947.

gez. Adolf HERSINGER

Before me, Fred KAUFMAN, an US-Civilian, AGO identification number
A 441649, Chief, Interrogation Branch, Evidence Division, Office
of Chief of Counsel for War Crimes, appeared Adolf HERSINGER, to me
known, who in my presence, signed the foregoing statement (Erklaerung)
consisting of three (3) pages in the original in the German language
and swore that the same was true on the 30th day of October 1947 in
Nuremberg/Germany.

gez. Fred KAUFMAN

25-69-49

~~SECRET~~ RESTRICTED Heusinger

By authority of
a 'downgrading'
Committee.
12/28/45

HISTORICAL INTERROGATION COMMISSION
WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF, MID
HISTORICAL BRANCH, MID

Source : Genlt. Adolf HEUSINGER, Chief Operations Division,
German Army General Staff.
Date : 10-11 September 1945
Place : USFET - MISC
Interviewers : Brig. Gen. R. C. Brock; Lt. Col. O. J. Hale

Institut für Zeitgeschichte ARCHIV	
Akr. 4637/71	Best.
Rep.	Kel.

Personal Date : Source was appointed Chief of the Operations Division of the General Staff, OKH, after the Western Campaign in 1940 and filled this post until 20 July 1944. He suffered second-degree injuries in the attentat at the Führer Hq, but nevertheless was arrested by the Gestapo under suspicion of being one of the plotters. Removed from his post and held for investigation he was finally allowed to return to his home in Thuringia where he remained under surveillance until he escaped to the American forces and surrendered. Source is very intelligent, has both a broad and detailed knowledge of the strategy and operations on the East Front and is very cooperative.

C O N T E N T S

- I. Balkan Campaign - 1941
- II. Hitler's Reasons for Attacking Russia
- III. Estimate of Russian Strength and Weakness
- IV. The Campaign of 1941 in Russia
- V. The General Staff Plan for 1942
- VI. The Catastrophe of Stalingrad
- VII. General Staff Study of Middle East Campaign
- VIII. Manpower and Organizational Difficulties
- IX. Developments on the East Front - 1943
- X. Developments on the East Front - 1944
- XI. Hitler as Supreme Commander
- XII. Reasons for Rejection of Gas Warfare

I. BALKAN CAMPAIGN - 1941

QUESTION: Did the campaign in the Balkans affect the timetable of German operations against Russia?

HEUSINGER: Only slightly. If Italy had not involved herself in serious difficulties in Greece, Germany could not have gone into the Balkans. The Danube as a transport line was adequately secured by Germany's political arrangements with the Danubian states. Moreover, the General Staff was of the opinion that England would not undertake another operation similar to that of Saloniki in the first World War. The original plan to assist Italy called only for the movement of seven divisions from Rumania through Bulgaria to attack Greece. When Yugoslavia suddenly repudiated the recently concluded Pact with Germany and went over to the Allied side, the General Staff had no plans for such a campaign. The entire operation was improvised as events developed. Source stated that as Chief of the Operations Division, this was the easiest of all their campaigns because they did not have to work out detailed plans but handled it entirely by telephone, or brief orders according to the current situation. At the end of the Greek campaign only five divisions were left as an occupation force in Crete, and on the Greek mainland.

Originally the Russian campaign was scheduled for the middle of May. It was delayed until 1 June because of the unusually heavy rains. Hitler then ordered the delay until 22 June until the German forces were returned from

Restricted 25-69 -50

Greece. The timetable for the Russian offensive was only secondarily influenced by the Balkan campaign. The principal reason for the delay was the ground conditions for the German armored units.

II. HITLER'S REASONS FOR ATTACKING RUSSIA

QUESTION: To what degree did the following considerations operate in Hitler's decision to attack Russia: Need for Russian resources; his anti-Bolshevist feeling; fear of a future Russian attack?

HEUSINGER: Hitler's military-political reasons were as follows, in the order of their importance: 1) He believed that Russia would eventually join England and the United States when the two Western powers were ready for an invasion of the Continent, possibly in 1943. Germany would then face the dreaded two-front war (Zweifrontenkrieg). To avoid a two-front war they must strike at Russia before Russia became stronger and the coalition crystallized. Hitler placed great emphasis on the activity of Anthony Eden in trying to win Russia to England's side. 2) Hitler believed that Russia was not prepared to resist to the extent of her military resources and the attack should be made before the Russian army had recovered from the Winter War in Finland and before the reorganization measures instituted immediately thereafter were completed. 3) Hitler was motivated by the desire for the resources of the Ukraine, particularly the grain, iron ore, and coal. 4) Hitler's anti-Bolshevist ideology was also a factor. 5) Hitler reasoned, further, that if Russia were decisively defeated England's last hope on the Continent would be gone and she would then make peace.

Source states that it was the opinion of the Operations Division that Stalin would not under any conceivable circumstances have attacked Germany until Britain and the United States had a firm foothold on the Continent.

QUESTION: What position did Hitler's military advisers and the General Staff take?

HEUSINGER: Hitler made the decision to attack against the objections of his military advisers. The General Staff had serious doubts and these found expression, but it cannot be said that they seriously opposed Hitler. They were still under the impression created by the 1940 campaign in France when the General Staff had been wrong and Hitler right. A great many of the highest military leaders had grave doubts about the entire action. Among them were Field Marshal Brauchitsch, Gen. Halder, Von Leeb and Rundstedt. Col. Gen. Beck, ousted as Chief of Staff in 1938, endeavored to exert his influence, but was in no position to do so. Those who supported Hitler's decision were those who always agreed with him - particularly Keitel and Jodl - and the so-called "Party Generals," such as Von Reichenau and Schubert. In all matters where there were differences of opinion between Hitler and the military authorities it was extremely difficult for the latter to prevail. In oral reporting, Hitler would simplify the issue in his own interest or insist upon the political necessity of an action. If a written memorandum were presented and he found one sentence that displeased him he would reject the whole argument. Commanders who persisted in their objections were removed. Of 18 Field Marshals appointed during the war - excluding Luftwaffe - only 3 remained in service at the end.

III. ESTIMATE OF RUSSIAN STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

QUESTION: How many divisions did Germany have stationed in the East between 1939 and June 1941?

HEUSINGER: In June 1940 from 8 to 10 divisions as occupation troops in Poland. Very few troops in East Prussia. By transfer from the West, beginning in January 1941, the number rose to 140 divisions. The first deployment areas

(Aufmarschraum) were West Prussia, Wartheland, Silesia and Pomerania; the second deployment areas on the frontier were East Prussia, Warsaw, Tarnov. Despite Hitler, the General Staff did not accept the statement that the Russians were moving in troops and mobilizing on the frontier. There were some security divisions moved in and some large airfields under construction. As German forces moved into the Tarnopol area they encountered Russian trains loaded with grain for delivery to Germany.

QUESTION: How many divisions did Germany employ in the initial attack?

HEUSINGER: One hundred and forty combat divisions and approximately 15 security divisions (Sicherungsdivisionen). In 1942-43 we had approximately 180 divisions. The Russians employed initially about 200 divisions but we estimated the strength in 1942-43 at between 600 and 700 divisions of about 8,000 men each. We began the Russian campaign with only 10 to 15 divisions in the Army reserve (Heeresleitung) whereas we had 48 divisions in reserve during the French campaign.

QUESTION: What was the General Staff opinion of the strength and weakness of the Russian forces?

HEUSINGER: First the infantry. We estimated it to be good, the men steady and brave, excellent in the use of terrain, better in defense than in the attack. They were also steady, almost fatalistic under air attack. Those expectations were confirmed. As weaknesses may be mentioned: helplessness when the COs were killed, lack of self-reliance, inferior NCOs. Toward the end of the war the infantry was even poorer because the abler men were drained off for the armored units. The infantry weapons were good, simple and practical in their design. Likewise uniforms and equipment.

Second, the Panzer arm. We expected tactical employment of tanks with infantry rather than operative employment in large self-contained armored units. This expectation was confirmed. Only one large tank unit was encountered in the first campaign. Out of this contact came the great tank battle of Rososnyii in which the Russians lost between 200 and 250 tanks. Part of their losses was owing to exhaustion of their fuel supply. The Russian tanks were estimated as inferior to the German tanks, as was also their communications equipment and the training of the crews. All this changed with the appearance of the T34 in October or November 1941. It was equal to and in some respects superior to the German tanks. It was not until 1944, at the breakthrough against the Army Group Center (Heeresgruppe Mitte) that the Russians really used their armor as self-contained operative units with independent missions and objectives.

Third, Russian artillery. We anticipated only normal effectiveness in materiel and employment. Perhaps relatively strong but not highly developed technically in ranging and firing. We expected it to be used in infantry support. These judgments proved correct. By 1944, however, the Russians made great strides in employment of artillery and notably in a tactical sense - in rapid fire, massed fire and in ranging and control. Both horse-drawn and self-propelled artillery were good.

Fourth, the air arm. We expected little and this was borne out in the campaigns. Russian aircraft and pilot training were inferior to German. The Russians gave little trouble in the air. We moved our supply columns at will. Beginning in 1943 Russian pursuit planes and pilots improved. Together with the bomber-fighters they became a factor in operations. In 1944 German intelligence (IG) thought that the Russians were beginning to concern themselves with a heavy bomber program because of the successes of the Allies in the West against German industrial targets.

Fifth, troop leadership. We anticipated that from the higher commands down to divisional level the leadership would not be of the highest caliber. This was confirmed in action. They lacked imagination and flexibility in mobile warfare, lost control of their units and failed in coordination at the higher levels. The purge of the officer's corps in 1937-38 was in part responsible and this was foreseen by us. With experience, the younger commanders developed with surprising rapidity. We considered Zhukov and Vassilevsky the best, followed closely by Timoshenko. At divisional, regimental and battalion level the officers were not equal to their responsibilities. They lacked independent judgment, flexibility, and coolness. They did not improve during the war. Company platoon leaders were brave and had good combat morale but lacked training and experience. They were also hampered by the political commissars. When the latter lost their authority and better training for the company officers was provided they improved considerably. The NCOs were poor. When the officer fell the men were entirely without leadership.

QUESTION: What did the General Staff expect from the Russian transport system?

HEUSINGER: Here the estimate was wrong. We expected the railway transport to break down in about 6 weeks. This expectation was based in part upon observations made at the time of the Russian occupation of the Polish territory and on general study of the Russian transportation system. We failed to take into account Russian improvisation, the lower supply requirements of the Russian soldier, the quality of their less highly developed equipment, and their absolute ruthlessness in employing what they had. For example, on double-tracked lines they ran trains side by side in the direction of the front. They double-decked their troop cars so they could carry 90 men instead of 45, although the men could not stand up but could only sit or recline in the cars.

QUESTION: On what elements or factors of superiority did the General Staff count on victory over Russian forces?

HEUSINGER: We counted, first, on the experience and superior training of German troops; second, on the superiority of German troop leadership and direction; and third, on the superiority and effectiveness of the Luftwaffe and the Panzer arm. This estimate was substantiated in the 1941 campaign.

After 1941 these advantages were cancelled and lost because of the enormous operative space, the setting of unobtainable objectives and insufficient forces and material in proportion to the tasks set for the Wehrmacht. This is illustrated by the fact that in 1942-43 on the long Eastern front, in the stable sectors, the front held by a German division averaged 23 kilometers, while a Russian division in a stable defensive front held only 5 kilometers. On the offensive a Russian division operated in a front sector of only two and a half kilometers.

QUESTION: Did the German leaders count on bad morale among the Russian troops or perhaps treason among some of the Russian commanders?

HEUSINGER: It was not a firm expectation. Hitler hoped that the Soviet system would collapse following the first serious defeats or that opposition to Stalin would develop within Russia. The General Staff had similar hopes but not definite expectations. In 1941 many Russian deserters came over and in the great encirclements the Russian soldiers gave up easily even when the German ring was thin and it would have been possible for the Russians to break out. This was the fault of their leadership. A political action in the direction of quasi-independence for the areas occupied by German forces was a possibility and the military authorities favored it but Hitler and the Party were against it. Leaders in these areas were also lacking.

Restricted 25-69-53

IV. THE CAMPAIGN OF 1941 IN RUSSIA

QUESTION: Was the resistance of the Russian populace in the occupied areas foreseen and were measures taken in advance?

HEUSINGER: Insurgent activity was expected, hence the security divisions organized in the spring of 1941 for occupation duties. That it would develop to the proportions that it did was not anticipated. To secure the rear areas of the Army groups (Heeresgruppengebieten) on the East Front required from 12 to 15 divisions.

QUESTION: What kind of a victory did the Germans expect to win over the Russians and with whom did they expect to make peace?

HEUSINGER: The end was not clearly envisaged. But there is good reason to believe that Hitler expected, with the destruction of Russian military power, the state would fall apart into its component political and ethnic units. Militarily they would be helpless and with these regional governments he would make peace. The Ukraine to the Don would become a German dependency. Hitler spoke of driving resisting Russian elements back into Asia and destroying the Ural industries. What remained of Russia in Asia would not be dangerous.

QUESTION: How successful was German intelligence in the Russian campaign?

HEUSINGER: Better after the beginning of the campaign than before. Radio monitoring yielded the most valuable intelligence for Russian troop movements and dispositions. Up to 1944 the Russians imposed no restrictions upon the use of their radio equipment at the front. We were always well informed as to movements. Second, interrogation of PWs yielded valuable information. Contrary to our expectations Russian PWs were quite well informed. By screening the great number of prisoners that were taken it was possible to get valuable information from volunteer informers. Third, in 1943 we were able to break the Russian Field Post number system and this laid the Russian Army organization wide open to us. Fourth, agents were dropped by parachute and sent through the lines, but this was the least productive method of collecting intelligence. Many of the agents were caught immediately and the reports of those who were not apprehended were of minor value, so good was Russian security.

As for Russian intelligence of Germany, we had the impression that they were not well informed on our front operations and movements, better informed on developments in the rear areas, and fully informed on developments in Germany because of agents among the Russian workers.

QUESTION: Were any important tactical lessons learned and in consequence doctrines modified as a result of combat experience on the East Front?

HEUSINGER: None. On the contrary our tactical doctrines proved themselves. If only we could have held to our basic doctrines. When we departed from them it was forced by necessity as when we had to use tanks to stiffen and support the infantry in heavy defensive fighting instead of being able to keep our tank units together for counter attack operations. In the employment of armor we had to depart of necessity from the Guderian doctrine, but the doctrine remained valid as the performance of your own armored forces in the West clearly proved.

QUESTION: Why did the 1941 plan for the defeat of Russia fail?

HEUSINGER: From miscalculation of Russian strength and pursuit of secondary instead of the primary objective. The drives north and south were made at the expense of the center where it was more reasonable to assume that a decision could have been achieved. When the attack upon Moscow was finally launched in October it was too late and a decision was not reached.

V. THE GENERAL STAFF PLAN FOR 1942

QUESTION: How did the General Staff view the situation in the winter of 1941-42 and what was the plan for 1942?

HEUSINGER: It was obvious that considerable elements of the Russian armies were still intact. The General Staff objective for 1942 remained the same: To defeat and destroy the Russian forces. Two possibilities for the main effort presented themselves: First, a new offensive against Moscow; second, a major drive into southern Russia which would force the Russians to defend their most vital resources in that area - coal, iron, and oil. In each case the objective was to bring the Russian forces into a decisive engagement. The General Staff preferred the first major objective for two reasons. First, it was thought that the Russians would throw in everything to defend the political capital; second, the capture of Moscow would cut the last north-south railway line in Russia, thus practically dividing the country and the front into two zones. Hitler, however, insisted upon the alternative major effort - the campaign in the South. He held that the Denez iron and coal and Stalingrad industry were more important than Moscow. He thought also the Russians would commit their forces to its defense.

QUESTION: What was Hitler's objective after Stalingrad?

HEUSINGER: A drive north in the area west of the Volga to take Moscow from the rear. The General Staff position was that it was fantastic unless the area was completely cleared of enemy forces so that the armored forces alone could make the drive. This was again conditional upon the supply of fuel from the Maikop field.

QUESTION: Were there other objectives in 1942?

HEUSINGER: The second objective was the establishment of contact with the Finnish army in the north by the encirclement and isolation of Leningrad. The neutralization of Leningrad was also highly desirable because as the refuge of the Russian fleet and U-boats our submarine training program in the Baltic was subject to disruption. The Russians, we estimated, had about 80 submarines in the Baltic of which approximately 40 were in service at any one time. The neutralization of Leningrad and land contact with Finland were the secondary objectives of the 1942 campaign.

QUESTION: And to what do you attribute the failure to achieve the main objective?

HEUSINGER: The Russians did not commit their forces in the South but withdrew and concentrated to the north of our long left flank. In the north they did not stand until we reached Stalingrad. In the Caucasus they withdrew until we reached the Terek where German forces were stopped by stubborn resistance. It was also a mistake to have extended one long arm toward Stalingrad and another toward the Caucasus. Stalingrad should have been taken first then the move toward the Caucasus. The forces sent against the latter objective were inadequate for the task assigned. The ten infantry divisions that were given the mission to conquer the Black Sea coast to Batum could not cross the mountains; the five Panzer divisions that drove to the Terek could not complete their mission of conquering the main pass over the Caucasus leading to Batum.

VI. THE STALINGRAD CATASTROPHE

QUESTION: What was the General Staff position with regard to the Battle of Stalingrad?

HEUSINGER: Let me sketch the action in broad outline bringing in the General Staff at the appropriate points. In September 1942 Halder was removed as Chief

of the Army General Staff and replaced by Zeitzler. General Halder repeated to me exactly what Hitler said to him at the time of his retirement. Briefly, Hitler said that Halder did not share fully National Socialist beliefs and faith in final victory. Therefore, he did not have full confidence in him and wished to replace him.

The Russian forces, which in the main avoided battle during the summer of 1942 - our capture of PWs and materiel were disappointingly small compared to 1941 - made their stand at Stalingrad. The Russian command continued to pour troops in for the defense of the city, which with the hardest fighting we only partially conquered. Then the Russians attacked west of Stalingrad in the sector held by the Rumanian forces. The Rumanians fought well but they were inferior to the Russians. One Rumanian and one German Panzer division were ordered to counterattack to clear up the penetration. It failed. Half of the tanks, which had been immobilized in the fields for some time could not be used because field mice had nested in them and destroyed the insulation on the electrical wiring. The Russian encirclement of the Stalingrad army was completed in early November. At that time Zeitzler endeavored for three days to secure Hitler's approval of an order to Paulus to withdraw from Stalingrad and break out of the encirclement to the west. Hitler refused on the grounds that 1) the propaganda effect of the loss of Stalingrad would be shattering; 2) the Caucasus army would be brought into great peril; 3) the Stalingrad forces, although surrounded, could be supplied by air. (Note: Source was not present at the conference when this point was discussed, but Zeitzler told him that Goring had given this assurance.) At this time I prepared a study for a counter-offensive from the West to relieve the Paulus army and restore the situation in Stalingrad. Conclusion of the study was that such a counter-offensive from the west would require 25 divisions and could not be launched before March 1943. The alternative was to order the 6th Army to withdraw and break out of the encirclement to the West. Hitler remained obdurate and Paulus was not given the order.

In December two Panzer divisions under General Hoth pushed from the south to within 60 kilometers of Stalingrad. The gap between the two forces was only 20 kilometers. Again Zeitzler asked Hitler for an order to break out and again Hitler refused on the ground that Paulus' forces could not establish contact with Hoth.

Meanwhile, the main German front was pushed westward and by the middle of December conditions in the encircled area were becoming desperate. The Luftwaffe failed in the matter of supply. We estimated that a minimum of 300 tons of supplies daily were required. This figure was only reached on one day, the average transport being from 80 to 200 tons.

It should be noted that General Seydlitz, commanding the LI Corps in Paulus' Army prepared a memorandum for the Commander, early in November, urging him to give an order to withdraw and break out of the trap without formal orders from the Fuehrer Hq. Paulus' position was that because of radio connections he was never out of touch with the Supreme Command and therefore could not give such a command on his own responsibility. Manstein, who took command of the Army Group Don in November 1942 was first of the opinion that a withdrawal was not necessary. In December he hoped to fight Paulus free by the Hoth thrust from the North. By the middle of December he thought the order should be given but could not overcome Hitler's objections.

Altogether we lost at Stalingrad elements of 18-20 divisions totaling 255,000 men of whom it was estimated that 140,000 were taken prisoner.

QUESTION: Did the General Staff expect such a powerful Russian counterattack in the winter of 1942-43?

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HEUSINGER: It was not anticipated in such strength. The situation to the north of our long Stalingrad line was not clear to German intelligence. I do not believe the Russians themselves anticipated such great success.

QUESTION: What would you say was the most important result of the Stalingrad catastrophe?

HEUSINGER: Stalingrad was the turning point in the war, politically and militarily. It was then that objective military authorities came to the conclusion that Germany must escape from the two-front war. It was on this ground that opposition to Hitler's leadership developed. It was felt that political action in the direction of peace with either the Western powers or Russia should be taken. General von Treskow was one of the first to discuss the situation frankly with his associates. It was felt that Russia was the greater danger to Germany and Europe. Therefore peace should be made with the Western powers on their own terms with full guarantees for the future. They could hold out against Russia. It was further realized that Hitler would never agree to such a move, moreover, the NS regime would be unacceptable to Britain and the United States. Both would have to go. From these ideas came eventually the Futsch of 20 July 1944.

QUESTION: Was the Eastern point of view - with Russia against the West - represented in these discussions?

HEUSINGER: Not strongly represented in the OKW and OKH but by the Seydlitz group in Russia. They appreciated the situation and Seydlitz perhaps wanted to play the role which General Yorck had played at Taganrog. He was an able man and an idealist. But the solution advocated in the "Freies Deutschland" was not acceptable to the group at home.

QUESTION: And what was the most important military result of Stalingrad at the strategical level?

HEUSINGER: From Stalingrad dates the continuous effort of the General Staff to shorten the Eastern Front. It was a basic military necessity. Our losses were heavy. The Italian expeditionary force - which was not equal to the rigors of warfare in Russia - was withdrawn and the Rumanian divisions were either lost or disorganized. The supply problem on the southern front was always critical. In the winter of 1942-43 I met daily with Generals Gierke and Wagner to fix priorities for the one available railroad supplying this front.

VII. GENERAL STAFF STUDY OF MIDDLE EAST CAMPAIGN

QUESTION: Were there far-reaching plans for action in the middle East if the Stalingrad and Caucasus campaigns had been successful?

HEUSINGER: There were no strategic plans but a study was made by Major Pistorius in my division in the spring of 1942. Extensive and reliable data was lacking but the problem set was the possibility of a drive from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf with three objectives: 1) to occupy the Persian oil area; 2) to exert political pressure on Turkey; 3) and if possible to link up with Rommel in Egypt at the Suez Canal. The conclusions of the study were: 1) Owing to climatic conditions it would only be possible at certain seasons of the year. 2) Because of the supply problem only three Panzer corps (6 divisions) could be employed. Oil could come from Maikop but food and munitions would have to be sent across the sea to Batum and also over Turkish and Iraq railways. 3) The last but basic condition was that Russia be defeated and the German army be free in this direction. If all these conditions existed the campaign could be undertaken with prospects of success. These were the limits of General Staff studies. No studies were made of a drive to India and a link-up with the Japanese. The idea was too fantastic and outside the field of military science.

VIII. MANPOWER AND ORGANIZATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

QUESTION: A German press announcement on 21 June 1942 stated that German losses on the East Front in the first year were 271,000 killed and 65,000 missing. Are these figures substantially correct? And what was the proportion of wounded?

HEUSINGER: I think they are approximately correct. Of course our losses increased with Stalingrad. Thereafter in 1943-44 our average monthly losses on the East Front were 150,000 killed, missing and wounded. Our replacement rate was only 100,000 per month, so we had a constant manpower loss of 50,000 per month. I do not recall the number of wounded during the first year of the Russian campaign, but the General Staff usually estimated five wounded for one killed. Hence the General Staff's constant concern to shorten the line of the Eastern Front.

The dwindling manpower reserve created serious organizational difficulties and disputes. This was one of the most hotly debated questions of military policy in the German Wehrmacht. Should the increment of new recruits and soldiers recovered from wounds be used as replacements to maintain the active divisions or should they be used to organize new divisions? The General Staff always took the point of view that new recruits should be fed into the old divisions to keep them up to strength. New men benefitted from the experience of their comrades and their commanders. Further, new divisions and new commanders have to make all the mistakes of the older units before they are battle-wise. The General Staff view did not prevail. Hitler insisted on using available manpower to organize new divisions. His reasons were that new men, trained together and with new leaders have more esprit and are not burdened with the tradition and spirit of the old unit. The Waffen-SS was particularly favored. Hitler saw in these his only reliable units. They fought well, one must admit that, but owing to the commanders and the lack of experience their losses in men and materiel were always much higher than in regular army units.

After Stalingrad it was decided to take 250,000 men from the Luftwaffe for the ground forces. The General Staff proposed to retrain these men and use them as replacements for active divisions. Göring was opposed and Hitler supported him. Source was present when Göring said: "I cannot have my Luftwaffe men in Army uniforms." As a result twenty Luftwaffe Field Divisions (Luftwaffenfelddivisionen) were organized. Their training was not the best and the commanders and staffs were not too well qualified. These units fought well in positional warfare but in actions where mobility was required they were cut to pieces. Thus we wasted manpower instead of conserving it.

In all these matters Zeitzler shared and represented the views of the General Staff but he could not move Hitler and Göring. Many divisions had to be dissolved after their first heavy engagements.

Hitler was fascinated by numbers. He reckoned in numbers of divisions and not in their strength or quality. In this connection the high series numbers used in designating German divisions was a camouflage measure in imitation of the Russian practice.

IX. DEVELOPMENTS ON THE EAST FRONT - 1943

QUESTION: What was the General Staff estimate of the situation on the East Front immediately after Stalingrad?

HEUSINGER: First, that the Russian High Command would endeavor to exploit its successes on the southern front. The major blow would come there in an attempted breakthrough aimed at rolling up the Manstein forces against the Black Sea. This was correct. The Russian effort took the form of a wide

right wing drive toward the lower Dnepr. Second, against the Army Group Center attacks would be made but not as strong as in the south. Third, against the Army Group North an offensive would be launched to relieve Leningrad. In the main these forecasts were correct. But Hitler said that the Russians were too weak to launch a strong offensive.

The General Staff plan to counter the anticipated Russian blow in the south was the Orel-Kursk offensive. Hitler agreed to the plan. It was known that the main Russian forces were assembling in this area for the take-off. But the latest date for the beginning of the German operation set by the General Staff was 10 June. As the attack was delayed beyond the time when success could be expected, the General Staff wished to call it off. Hitler, however, insisted on carrying out the plan although action did not begin until 5 July. After 10 June the General Staff proposed to hold the forces north and south of the Orel-Kursk salient and strike the Russians in the flanks as they pushed out of this great assembly area. At that time we knew accurately what the Russians had on the front and a fair idea of their immediate reserves, but we did not know what they had in depth.

The plan failed of its objectives. Russian strength had been built up. Our tank formations here encountered, for the first time, the Russian Panzer defense which depended upon the self-propelled anti-tank guns, deployed as a barrier, instead of tank traps. In movement the anti-tank guns followed the tanks in the breakthrough then peeled off on the sides to form a defensive screen for the flanks of the armored column. It thus became more difficult to execute flanking attacks to pinch off an armored spearhead.

By the summer of 1943 Russian materiel and tactics had shown a marked improvement and of course the materiel had increased enormously in quantity. Russian infantry was no better tactically, but owing to military successes the morale was higher and the troops were bolder.

From Stalingrad on as our resources declined it was a constant struggle between the General Staff, which wanted to pull the entire eastern line back to form a shorter front, and Hitler who positively refused to accept the advice of the Chief of the Army General Staff. In the spring of 1943 I proposed to Zeitzler a planned withdrawal to a line from Riga to Odessa. Such a shortened front could have been held. Every withdrawal on the East front was forced and improvised except one. The withdrawal of the Army Group Center from Vyazma to the line Vitebsk-Orsha-Gomel was proposed by the General Staff and ordered by Hitler. But that was the only one. Moreover, Hitler would not permit the preparation of fortified defense lines in the areas to the rear of the front because, he said, if commanders and men knew that defense positions were behind them they would fall back rather than stand firm. All the reports of German fortified lines with resounding names, on the East Front were pure propaganda. There were no fortifications on the Don, the Dnepr, or the Vistula. Hitler ordered the construction of positions on the west bank of the Dnepr in Aug 1943 but they were not prepared when our troops made the crossing.

The exploitation of the Krusk-Orel thrust carried the Russian forces to Kiev on the Dnepr. The Russian crossing to the west bank and the establishment of bridgeheads was a surprise. Further south, as the Russians sought to roll up the front against the Black Sea, the German forces were in great danger. The General Staff wanted to pull the southern wing back to the Dnepr but Hitler insisted on holding the Nikopol bridgehead until we were forced hastily to withdraw. It was the same with the evacuation of the Crimea. It was proposed in good time by the General Staff, but rejected. It was proposed a second time to evacuate and again rejected by Hitler. He argued that if we evacuated the Crimea we would lose control of the Black Sea, and Turkey would come into the war. The Chief of the Army General Staff argued that if we delayed until driven out we would lose the Crimea, Turkey would come into the

Restricted 25-69-59

war anyway, and in addition we would suffer heavy military losses. In the Crimea we saved only remnants of the 7 Rumanian and 6 German divisions. Exactly the same pattern of action and argument unrolled when the General Staff recommended a planned withdrawal from Leningrad to Narva on the northern front and subsequently from Narva to the Riga Dwina line. When we were drained of military manpower to defend the frontiers of Germany we had 400,000 men in Finland and Norway, which, had measures been taken in time, could have been withdrawn and made use of. And the war ended with a large force pocketed in Courland which could have been brought into the homeland. Thus Hitler operated with political and economic motives but lived in military illusions.

X. DEVELOPMENTS ON THE EAST FRONT - 1944

QUESTION: Did any appreciable number of German troops break out of the Cherkassy encirclement in Feb 1944 or was that Dr. Goebbels' propaganda?

HEUSINGER: Elements of six divisions were trapped here. They were not withdrawn in time because Hitler hoped to hold the area as a bridgehead for a counterattack toward Kiev - a pure illusion. When the order to break out was given it was too late. Seventy-five percent of the personnel did get through but every piece of equipment except hand weapons was lost. The units were smashed and unemployable without reorganization.

QUESTION: What was the outstanding development on the East Front in 1944?

HEUSINGER: The course of events was much the same as in 1943. The same problems - manpower, materiel and strategy; the General Staff proposing shortening of the front and Hitler opposing.

Most important of the reverses was, of course, the breakthrough against the Army Group Center and the Russian advance to the Vistula. The breakthrough came in June. Later, after the attentat of 20 July, it was whispered about in the Party and hinted in the press that the disaster to the Army Group Center was caused by the treason of the Commanders. This is absolutely false. The real causes were: 1) a front of 400 kilometers with 23 kilometers per division and only two divisions in reserve - the "Feldherrnhalle" and the "20th Pz. Division." 2) The Russians made better tactical use of their artillery and armor than in any previous attack. 3) They concentrated their air strength to smash at our transport lines; there was no treason by the commanders. The General Staff had proposed, in the spring of 1944, to pull both Army Groups North and Center back to shorter and more defensible lines, but Hitler would not agree.

A major factor in the breakthrough was the concentration of German forces on the southern front. The General Staff concluded in the spring of 1944 that the main Russian effort would come in the south because of Russia's Balkan interests. The bulk of her armored forces were concentrated on this sector. This was well known to us. We had to take countermeasures and concentrate our major strength to meet the anticipated offensive. The action on the front began with a preliminary drive against the Army Group Center. The Russians found it softer than they expected, broke through, and pushed on to the Vistula. Two weeks later came the expected offensive in the south. Our forces were inadequate and the push into the Balkans succeeded. Bulgaria and Rumania went out of the war and the juncture with Marshal Tito's forces was effected at Belgrade.

XI. HITLER AS SUPREME COMMANDER

In the course of interrogation source made a number of comments on Hitler as Supreme Commander, which can best be brought together in one section although

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25-69-60

the original sequence of the remarks is not here reproduced.

Source stated that to General Staff reports showing statistically the military impossibility of maintaining a certain position or achieving a desired objective, Hitler always had one stock answer: Numbers did not count; everything depended upon "determination and faith."

In the campaigns in 1942 considerable latitude was given the Army Group Commanders in executing the plans for achieving their assigned objectives. After Stalingrad not even minor operational decisions could be made by commanders without the approval of Hitler. Not a single division could be moved into or out of the front without the concurrence of the HQ. Army and Group commanders would say to source why not send a corporal out to command, we have no freedom of decision, no responsibility, and only receive and pass on orders.

Evaluating Hitler's qualities as a Supreme Commander, source remarked that "He directed 200 divisions as he would a company."

According to source, Zeitzler did not hesitate to oppose Hitler on military questions and always made a strong presentation of the Army General Staff views. If there was something of unusual importance which he wanted to put through, but which was opposed by Hitler, Zeitzler would not present it at the situation conference but would secure an interview - usually at 22 hours - and have it out with the Fuehrer then. Gen. SCHERFF was usually the only other person present at these discussions. In the long run Hitler would only tolerate "yes men."

There was one commander whom he feared and distrusted because he recognized his great gifts and because the professional army leaders regarded him as the ablest of all German soldiers - that was v. MANSTEIN. He would have been the Army's choice for Commander-in-Chief.

XII. REASONS FOR REJECTION OF GAS WARFARE

QUESTION: What was the view in German military circles of the use of gas in warfare?

HEUSINGER: The use of gas was rejected for five reasons: 1) We were only able to equip front-line troops with good gas defense equipment. Only old-stype equipment was available for the other forces. 2) To use gas when the enemy has air superiority would be catastrophic for the civilian population. 3) Gas munitions had to be thrust far back in the production scheduling in view of our other requirements. 4) In mobile operations gas creates difficult tactical situations. 5) Our experiences in gas warfare in the World War did not recommend it as a weapon.

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SOURCE : Genlt. Adolf HEUSINGER, Chief Operations Division,
German Army General Staff.

DATE : 12 September 1945

PLACE : USFET - MISC

INTERVIEWERS : Brig. Gen. R. C. Brock, Lt. Col. O. J. Hale

Institut für Zeitgeschichte ARCHIV	
Akz. 4637/71	Besl.
Rep.	Kat.

Personal Data : From 1937 to 1939 source was Gruppenleiter of the 1st section of the Truppenamt (T-1), which later became the Operations Division of the Army General Staff. Source served at that time under Gen. von Greiffenberg whom he succeeded as Chief of the Division in 1940.

C O N T E N T S

- I. Spanish Civil War
- II. Pre-war Military Policies
- III. Planning of the Western Campaign
- IV. Campaign in Belgium and France
- V. Planning of the Russian Campaign

I. SPANISH CIVIL WAR

QUESTION: Did the German Wehrmacht derive any valuable lessons from participation in the Spanish Civil War?

HEUSINGER: Tactically and strategically we learned nothing. The General Staff was not directly concerned. Experts from the Air Ministry and the Ordnance Office went to Spain to test and observe the performance of their materiel. The Russians did the same. The Air Force doubtless acquired valuable tactical experience, but the ground forces little. The German volunteer legion had a staff but it was mainly concerned with administration. It was not a command staff. General Warlimont was the first chief and he was succeeded by Gen. Sperrle and finally Gen. Richthofen. They may have advised Franco unofficially in operational matters, but I have no knowledge of that.

The materiel which was sent to Spain for testing was doubtless shipped by sea either camouflaged as ordinary freight or sent in pieces and reassembled there.

II. PRE-WAR MILITARY POLICIES

QUESTION: Did the Belgian declaration of neutrality in 1938 have any effect upon German military planning?

HEUSINGER: I do not recall the declaration. The declaration of the Belgian king in 1939, after the outbreak of the war, that Belgium would defend her neutrality against any aggressor did not affect operational plans as the directives for the campaign in the West were based from the beginning on the occupation of Holland and the march through Belgium. It may well be, but it is not a matter of knowledge to me, that Hitler thought that when Britain and France undertook offensive operations they would move into Belgium. Furthermore, this was supported, in part, by the then disposition of Belgian forces, which were concentrated on the German frontier while the Franco-Belgian border was relatively speaking unguarded.

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25-69 -62

QUESTION: To what extent were German tactical doctrines kept secret before 1939?

HEUSINGER: Only the usual classification for combat and troop training manuals was maintained. Such materials must have been in the hands of the military attaches. Since these manuals had to be distributed to the troops for training purposes it would have been impossible to keep them secret.

QUESTION: In 1939 how long a war did the General Staff estimate that Germany could conduct?

HEUSINGER: Naturally, that depended upon the number and strength of our opponents. In 1939 we estimated one year. The OKW envisaged a long war with the greatest doubt and apprehension. One heard repeatedly the warning "For God's sake no long war" (Um Gotteswillen nur keinen langen Krieg). In 1939 Hitler assured v. Brauchitsch that England and France would not declare war when Germany moved against Poland. The General Staff expected a war of two or three months duration. After France and England declared war the opinion was that it would last a long time but no definite time was predicted. Both Brauchitsch and the Chief of the General Staff had grave doubts as to Germany's ability to conduct a prolonged struggle.

In the general planning it was estimated that we would require a four month's reserve of armaments and munitions to carry through the period of conversion to war production. At the outbreak of the war, however, we had only a two months' reserve. This gap was bridged during the inactive period of the war between the Polish and Western campaigns.

QUESTION: Did technical difficulties delay the development and equipment of the Wehrmacht before 1939? Were there serious failures of German tanks during the march into Austria?

HEUSINGER: There were many difficulties in arming and training the new Wehrmacht. The tempo was forced by the political authorities. We lacked trained officers and NCOs. Design and development were hurried through and weapons put into mass production without the careful testing customary in the German army. The result was numerous failures when they were placed in the hands of troops. The old model 81 infantry rifle was tested and altered over a period of 7 years before it was issued to the troops. In the rearmament period everything was done in a tremendous hurry. Armament producers were often delayed in their deliveries by shortages of necessary machine tools and lack of skilled production personnel.

There were many tank failures in the march into Austria. At that time we only had the Mark I and II tanks which we called "tin-boxes" (Blechkasten). There were few Mark IIIs and Mark IV did not exist. These tanks were very primitive and there were countless breakdowns.

QUESTION: How did the General Staff view the possibility of a French attack in 1938 at the time of the Sudeten crisis?

HEUSINGER: The General Staff was of the opinion that a French attack in the West would have broken through as our fortifications were not complete, now were they in 1939 when the French could have broken through although at heavier cost. The West Wall was only completed from Trier south to the Rhine in 1939. Northward it was incomplete and without any depth. After 1940 construction ceased. To a certain extent the West Wall was a bluff like the Atlantic Wall. With regard to the latter it was impossible to fortify the entire coast and every military man must have concluded that a landing and a penetration of five kilometers would end all difficulties as far as fortifications were concerned.

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25-69-63

III. PLANNING OF THE WESTERN CAMPAIGN

QUESTION: Who were the outstanding strategical planners in the German General Staff before 1939? Was there anyone who could be compared with von Schlieffen?

HEUSINGER: No, there was no v. Schlieffen. In professional circles the following were the most highly regarded: Beck, Halder, Manstein Heinrich Stülpnagel (shot on 20 July), Fritsch, and Brauchitsch. Also Rundstedt although he was not as active in the War Ministry. General Beck was undoubtedly the greatest spirit in the General Staff. However, he was always of the opinion that war would be a catastrophe and in this opinion he found a great friend in Gen. Gamelin. In the General Staff we always said that General Halder and General Manstein had received "the necessary two drops of the wisdom of Solomon". In the top level of the General Staff, von Manstein was regarded as the ablest and most original planner. That is also my opinion. However, there was no von Schlieffen.

QUESTION: Who really originated the plan for the 1940 campaign in the West?

HEUSINGER: The first plan for an offensive campaign was formulated in November 1939. In substance it was a repetition of the 1914 v. Schlieffen plan. As the start of the campaign was delayed, doubts arose as to the achievement of any surprise with this plan. The basic idea of the new plan -- the breakthrough at the Ardennes, crossing of the Meuse and the trapping of British, French, and Belgian forces in the north by pushing the tank forces through to the channel -- came to several minds at once. And in justice it should be said that one of these was Hitler's. However, Gen. v. Manstein, then Chief of Staff to Marshal Rundstedt, deserves the greater credit. He worked out the plan and proposed its adoption. The order was given to the Operations Division in Feb 1940 to replan the campaign along the proposed lines. From Feb 1940 to May 1940 the plan was subject to the sharpest criticism. Among the critics was General Guderian, who described the plan as a "crime against Panzers". General Halder deserves the credit for defending the plan against all critics and insisting upon its execution. General Bock was also opposed to it and appealed to the Chief of the General Staff. Halder said once that he would stick to the plan if the chances of succeeding were only ten per cent.

QUESTION: Why did Hitler take all the credit for planning the campaign in his Reichstag speech after the armistice with France?

HEUSINGER: Hitler was opposed to popularity for any of his generals or military leaders. Hitler did not want another Hindenburg. This was a considered policy, I believe.

QUESTION: If France and England had declared war on Germany in 1938, did the General Staff think Russia would join them?

HEUSINGER: No, up to and including the Anschluss with Austria it was felt that the moves in foreign policy were German national questions based on legitimate claims. Even Gen. Beck supported the Anschluss. There was no division of opinion among the General Staff until the Sudeten crisis and the occupation of Prague. The danger was then clear and opposition to the policy of adventure developed.

QUESTION: Did the conclusion of the Russian non-aggression pact result in any changes in the plans for the Polish campaign?

HEUSINGER: Not at all. There was no time to change the plans.

62

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75-69 -69

IV. CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM

QUESTION: From the standpoint of German operations did the capitulation of the Belgian Army in June 1940 have an important effect upon the fate of the Dunkirk pocket?

HEUSINGER: It was, of course, a welcome relief to the German forces, which otherwise would have been prevented from exerting direct pressure upon the pocket from the north and the east. The British were of course already cut off from contact with the French on the south. Their evacuation might have been less difficult had the Belgian held on the flank, but for the latter the situation was hopeless. They could not have broken out and their surrender would have been forced in two or three days.

QUESTION: Was resistance on the Belgian frontier in 1940 greater than had been expected?

HEUSINGER: It was about what we had anticipated. North of Liege resistance was heavier - more determined. But elsewhere about as expected.

QUESTION: How were General Weygandt's defense measures, before the resumption of the German attack southward, regarded by the General Staff?

HEUSINGER: We were definitely surprised at what he accomplished in so short a time. He devised and instituted at many critical points an anti-tank defense tactic which proved quite effective. Woodlots, villages and farm buildings were established as anti-tank strong points and these served as a chessboard defense in depth that gave our tank forces trouble. The 14th Panzer Corps was caught and held for two days in such a defense system. In the course of the war the development of successful defense against Panzer forces followed this principle.

Strategically he took measures which Gamelin had failed to take when he brought all available troops out of the Maginot line and moved them to the left wing to meet the weight of the German attack over the Seine. Operationally this was the correct move which Gamelin had not made.

QUESTION: How well informed was the German High Command on the state of British defenses after Dunkirk?

HEUSINGER: Very well informed. All equipment of the expeditionary force was lost and we knew that there were few reserves of men and materiel in the homeland. Never in modern times has Britain been in a more critical situation. Only a man like Winston Churchill could have brought the country through such a crisis. We had no plans for an invasion and no equipment and specially trained forces with which to undertake the invasion. Hence the delay, the hesitation and finally Hitler's decision not to risk it. Whether we should have risked it is of course now only a matter of historical interest. Admiral Wagner with whom I have discussed this question recently and who was then Chief of naval operations is of the opinion that it would have failed. I think it could have been done. Militarily, this was for us one of the lost opportunities of the war.

With regard to the air attack in August and September -- the Battle of Britain -- I can only speak from the standpoint of the Army. It was not thought possible to conquer Britain from the air. The objective was to destroy British air power and gain control of the air. This failed. English aircraft were greater in number than estimated or Britain's production was higher than estimated. By the middle of September it was obvious that the attack against London would not be decisive. Our losses in aircraft from improved flak and other defense measures became too high in proportion to results achieved. The air attacks were then switched to new objectives --

the production and armament plans became the targets with a view to knocking out or delaying British rearmament. But in my opinion these were only substitute objectives fixed after the failure to achieve the first main objective -- to destroy the British air power and gain control of the air over London and the South coast.

V. PLANNING OF THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

QUESTION: When did the Operations Division receive the order to prepare plans for the Russian campaign?

HEUSINGER: In December 1940. There were previous discussions and preliminary studies outside our Division but the detailed study and planning began in December.

QUESTION: Did General Marcks have anything to do with the planning?

HEUSINGER: General Marcks, who was a General Staff Officer, commanded a division in the Western Campaign but was without an assignment in the autumn of 1940. While the Army High Command was at Fontainebleau, General Halder assigned General Marcks to make a study -- not a detailed plan -- of a campaign against Russia. In its main features it did not differ greatly from the final plan prepared by the Operations Divisions. General Hilpert also made a study which was examined and evaluated in the Operations Division. General Hilpert proposed a massing of force on the German right in Rumania, placing the main effort in a wide encircling movement toward Moscow with limited advance and holding operations on the left and center. The plan was rejected because the railroad lines and connections through Rumania would not carry the necessary volume of traffic.

Hitler's directive for the planning of the campaign fixed the objectives so rigidly that in effect it determined the main features of the plan. These objectives were: 1) Conquer and occupy the Ukraine as quickly as possible. 2) establish contact with Finland at the earliest possible moment. These objectives dictated the simultaneous right and left blows of the German forces, which was the outstanding feature of the final plan of the campaign. Different objectives, or a less rigid directive, would have resulted probably in a different plan.

QUESTION: Did Hitler or the General Staff expect a Russian winter campaign in 1941? Were any preparations made?

HEUSINGER: The original timetable called for the launching of the campaign in May, with the objectives to be reached in five months, that is in October. But the campaign did not begin until late June bringing the terminal date into November. Originally, Hitler, the C in C, and the Chief of the General Staff agreed that wherever they stood in November they would close down operations. However, they gambled with the weather which in the late autumn was favorable, just as it was to Napoleon in 1812, and kept saying "we can risk it". Then came the bitter weather and the German armies started to retreat.

As far as winter preparations were concerned, measures had been taken by the supply services, but they were inadequate. Clothing was prepared for a hard German winter, but it was inadequate for a severe Russian winter. The transport failed because German locomotives were not equipped for extremely low temperatures. Moreover the Russians in their retreat destroyed all the water tanks and this created enormous difficulties in train operations. The campaign should have been halted earlier and necessary measures taken to hold the positions already taken. When the German armies began to retreat Hitler dismissed Brauchitsch and personally took command. He always maintained thereafter that he personally saved the German Army from the fate that had overtaken Napoleon's forces in the retreat from Moscow.

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WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF
HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-2

Heusinger
By authority of
War Department
Communications
10/26/45

HISTORICAL INTERROGATION REPORT

Return to
Historical Branch Di
Room 5 B 241

SOURCE : Genlt. Adolf HEUSINGER
Oberst von BONIN
DATE : 18 September 1945
PLACE : USFET - MISC
INTERVIEWERS : Brig.Gen. R.C.Brock, Lt.Col.O.J. Hale

Institut für Zeitgeschichte ARCHIV	
Akz. 4637/71	Best.
Rep.	Kat.

Personal Data: Genlt. Heusinger was Chief of the Operations Division, Army General Staff, from September 1940 to 20 July 1944. His successor was Col. von Bonin who prior to appointment to this post had served with combat forces in Russia, North Africa and Italy. He was dismissed from his post and thrown into a concentration camp in January 1945 as a result of indiscreet remarks made during monitored telephone conversations.

C O N T E N T S

- I. Operations on the East Front, 1944 - 1945
- II. Guderian as Army Chief of Staff

I. OPERATIONS ON THE EAST FRONT, 1944-1945

QUESTION: Approximately what proportion of German forces on the East Front in 1944 were stationed on the southern sector?

HEUSINGER: About 65 per cent of the forces were stationed on the front from Kovel, which was the dividing point between the Central and Southern sectors, south to the Black Sea. On the northern sector, including Army Groups Center and North, about 35 per cent. Of the armored forces 80 per cent were in the south and 20 per cent in the north. This disposition of forces was made to meet the main concentration of the Russian forces on the East Front.

QUESTION: Why were German forces left in Courland instead of withdrawing them for the defense of the homeland?

HEUSINGER: On several occasions in 1943-44 the Army General Staff proposed to withdraw the Army Group North to a shorter line. According to General Zeitzler, Hitler advanced the following

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reasons for not withdrawing: 1) the political effect on Finland; 2) loss of naval control in the Baltic; 3) protection of the shale oil deposits near Narva.

Von BONIN: Later, after 20 July 1944, it was just the same. Guderian wanted to pull these forces back and establish a stronger defense line but Hitler would not agree. It is true that our forces in Courland pinned down 200 Russian divisions in the autumn and winter 1944. Hitler could point to this fact in justification of his later refusals to withdraw. However, at that time the Russians could have left only containing forces and thrown their full strength against East Prussia, which would have been disastrous for us. Hitler also spoke, quite unrealistically, of holding the Baltic enclave as a political bargaining card at the end of the war.

The Russians apparently felt that their military prestige required the liquidation of this enclave as they kept up their heavy attacks. Because of ground conditions they were unable to use their Panzer forces effectively. Our positions were fairly strong although we had only field fortifications - no concrete positions. At the beginning of the struggle we had 30 divisions in the area, including 3 Panzer divisions and our artillery was relatively strong. Altogether this sector was more strongly held than other sectors on the East Front. When a breakthrough by these forces and a withdrawal along the coast to Koenigsberg was proposed, Hitler could not come to a decision. Toward the end it became impossible to evacuate the forces by sea.

QUESTION: Was the Army General Staff surprised by the Russian attack and breakthrough from the Vistula to the Oder in January 1945?

Von BONIN: We were aware of Russian preparations down to the last detail. The Russians had been massing strength since the autumn of 1944. Beginning in October 1944 the General Staff proposed the building up of an operational reserve of tank forces to meet the expected blow. But the units assembled as a reserve were drained away for the Ardennes offensive and the Hungarian front. Thirteen divisions, with attached units, went into the Ardennes campaign and in the fall of 1944 ten divisions were taken from this front and sent to Hungary. Had it not been for these withdrawals stiffer opposition would have been possible. We knew a catastrophe was in the making. When the Russians launched their attack from the Baranov bridgehead toward Upper Silesia in January 1945 the German forces in the area were too weak to put up a successful defense.

QUESTION: Were the defense works built by the civilian population under the direction of the Gauleiters of any value to the German Army?

Von BONIN: These field fortifications in East Prussia and in the Krakau area were well constructed and would have been valuable, but Hitler always refused to allow the troops to withdraw to these prepared positions in time. Russian tank forces would breakthrough our front lines and when they reached the fortified positions they would be unoccupied or held by second rate troops or Volksturm units, which were of no value whatsoever. The order to prepare fortifications on the Oder was not given until 1 January 1945.

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II. GUDERIAN AS ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF

QUESTION : How would you describe the relations between Hitler and Guderian after the latter became Chief of the Army General Staff ?

Von BONIN: Hitler was ill for two or three weeks after the 20 July attentat. During that time Guderian made his own decisions. Hitler was at first disposed to accept his advice. Then, gradually, he took everything into his own hands again and the Chief of the Army General Staff became just another adviser. I am convinced that from August 1944, Hitler was mentally ill. When a proposal was made he couldn't come to a decision. He would say that he required 24 hours for consideration. Then the decision would be postponed for two weeks. His orders became more and more erratic and it was always the same story "too late".

Nothing illustrates his mental condition better than the assignment of an Army Group Command to Himmler in the spring of 1945, first on the upper Rhine and then in Pomerania. The attempt at a counteroffensive against the Russian Oder bridedhead under the direction of Himmler and his SS chief of staff was fantastic. General Guderian sent General Wenck, who succeed me as chief of the Operations Division, to assist the Commander, but he met with an automobile accident and the operation never really began. It was only a forlorn hope anyway.

QUESTION : What was the average time required to move an armored division from the East Front to the west in the autumn of 1944 ?

Von BONIN: It required about four days from the time the first element was loaded until it arrived at its destination. An infantry division required between three and four days.

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Heusinger

WAR DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
WAR DEPARTMENT SPECIAL STAFF
HISTORICAL DIVISION

HISTORICAL REPORT

SOURCE : Generalleutnant Adolf HEUSINGER, Chief of the Operations Division, German Army General Staff (OKH)
PLACE : MISC -- USFET
DATE : October 1945
PREPARED BY : Lt. Col. O.J.Hale

Institut für Zeitgeschichte AT 0114	
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STRATEGIC TURNING POINTS IN GERMAN OPERATIONS
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Note: The following study of the turning points in the German strategic conduct of the war was written by Genlt. Adolf Heusinger, who served as Chief of the Operations Division of the Army General Staff from September 1940 to July 1944. Source served on the German General Staff under Field Marshal General Manstein, General Otto von Stulpnagel, and General Hans von Greiffenberg, whom he succeeded as Chief of the Operations Division in September 1940.

CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
- II. Strategic Turning Points
 - 1. A Triple Turning Point: Dunkirk
 - 2. A Danish Gift: Italy's Entry into the War
 - 3. The Fear of Decision: Abandonment of the Invasion of England
 - 4. The Mediterranean: Military Theater of Half Measures
 - 5. Return to a Two-Front War: The Attack upon Russia
 - 6. The Time Factor Becomes Decisive: Declaration of War on the United States
 - 7. The Fateful Year -- 1943
 - a. Loss of the Initiative: Stalingrad and U-Boat War
 - b. The Army Bleeds to Death: Operational Principles, 1943-45
 - c. The Collapse in Three Dimensions: Turning Point
- III. Conclusion

In the following "Study" I shall endeavor to present some of the most important decisions of the German Supreme Command, and their related occurrences, which in my opinion had decisive strategic consequences or basically affected the total military outcome of the war.

I shall endeavor to portray how in particular circumstances military developments might have shaped up differently had other decisions been made. In doing this I am conscious of serious difficulties. It is impossible to prove that the course of events would have been exactly that which I have indicated had different decisions been taken. But it is beyond contradiction that the decisions which were made produced unfavorable results. The observations here presented are therefore to be regarded as a "study" rather than a "critique." Moreover, they are not presented as prescriptions for a military victory, but only as suggestions.

This study is consciously limited to purely military problems. Similar political turning points during the war could be selected and illuminated, but they must be left to a political writer. All operational decisions, that is decisions taken by individual commanders during the course of the many campaigns of this war are also left out of account when they had no influence upon the total conduct of the war.

Of special significance, on the other hand, is the determination as to whether the strategic turning points under discussion, in their decisive influence on the subsequent overall conduct of the war, were recognized as such at the time the decisions were made; or whether their decisive strategic consequences were only recognized later. In other words, which strategic decisions were made with full knowledge of their importance, and which decisions, on the contrary, were only later recognized as having produced the gravest consequences.

Source materials or maps are not available. I therefore must rely upon my memory and avoid details and statistics, limiting myself to the broad outlines of the problem.

II. STRATEGIC TURNING POINTS

1. A Triple Turning Point: "Dunkirk."

For the German conduct of the war a triple strategic turning point is associated with the name of Dunkirk:

a. At the end of May 1940 the English Army was encircled and compressed into the small area around Dunkirk. The German Panzer units stood south of the city ready to strike the final blow to disrupt English troop transport preparations. Hitler then issued personally the order to hold up the attack of the Panzer forces. He issued this order against all representations of his military advisers, because on the basis of his World War experience in Flanders he regarded the area as unsuitable for tanks. In view of the further campaign in France he wished to avoid heavy tank losses and he believed that the Luftwaffe could prevent the loading and transport of the English forces.

The result of this order was the escape of strong elements of the British Army although they suffered heavy losses in men and materiel.

2-69 - 77

However, Britain saved at that time her experienced units and thus preserved the basic elements which served as the foundation of her new army. Without these forces, that is with the total loss of her continental force, the rapid preparation of a new British Army would perhaps not have been possible, at least not in such a short time. (An official view from authoritative English quarters on this question is not known to me.) Had England's continental army not been saved the most favorable conditions for an invasion of Britain would have existed. Moreover, it is possible that, given the circumstances, England would have come to terms with Germany after the subsequent defeat of France, assuming of course acceptable political proposals by Germany.

These possible consequences of Hitler's order were fully appreciated at the time the decision was made. It was also made in full consciousness of its bearing upon the possible outcome of the struggle. Thus this purely tactical decision had the greatest strategical effects. Perhaps a decisive opportunity was passed up!

b. In still another connection Dunkirk presents itself as a strategic turning point. The strategic objective of the first phase of the Western Campaign, as set forth in the operational plan of January 1940, called for a bold offensive drive from the region of the Eifel along the line of the Serre-Somme and the cutting off and destruction of all the French, British and Belgian forces north of this line. If this operation succeeded, then in the second phase the French forces remaining south of this line would be destroyed. This second phase followed naturally in consequence of the successful conclusion of the first part of the general plan. As far as I know, in the deliberations on the second phase of the campaign, the possibility of assuming the defensive against the remaining French forces in order to proceed immediately to strike at England, in order to deliver the death blow, was not discussed. It was not recognized that at this moment we were faced with a strategic decision of the first order, that is, whether the main military effort was to be directed against England or against France.

That a direct attack upon England could not be made before the autumn of 1940, after intensive preparation by the Navy, and also that it might be wholly impossible in view of the fact that the British and French fleets remained intact, did not play the decisive role in the consideration of this question. It is also noteworthy that this strategic turning point does not appear to have been given any consideration, even not to have been recognized. It is also significant that in the winter of 1939-40 no preparations had been made for an invasion and that the necessity, sooner or later, for such an operation against the principal enemy was not even taken into account. Dunkirk fell and the British withdrew to their island. The German Army did not pursue its enemy. Thus Dunkirk passed unrecognized as one of the most important strategic turning points in the war.

c. In still a third direction Dunkirk possessed a strategic significance of the highest importance. If for Germany the first two possessed negative significance, the third is wholly positive: the effect upon the campaign in Norway. At the very moment when the battle of Dunkirk was raging, the small Narvik force under General Dietl, pressed back to the Swedish border, was waging a losing battle against the superior enemy force which had landed in the Narvik area. As far as I know, Dietl already had authority to withdraw if necessary to Swedish territory and give up this struggle. At exactly this moment, under the pressure of events at Dunkirk, Britain withdrew her Narvik expedition. Dietl was saved and Narvik remained in German hands. Had this long range effect of Dunkirk not developed, so undoubtedly all of Norway would have fallen into British hands. The consequences of such an event for Finland and in general for the later campaign against Russia would have been almost incalculable.

Thus in these three directions Dunkirk stands as one of the strategic turning points of the greatest importance in the evolution of the war.

2. A Danish Gift: Italy's Entry into the War.

Without being urged by Germany, Italy entered the war during the last days of the campaign against France. In several respects her entry into the conflict became for Germany a "Danish Gift." Politically this placed a heavy burden upon Germany's relations to France. Viewed from the economic standpoint, critical difficulties arose owing to Italy's shortages in oil and coal. Militarily, Italy did not fulfill her tasks, to which her armed forces were not equal. But above all Italy's entry into the war had decisive strategic consequences. Germany became involved thereby in the Mediterranean problem. The theater of operations was also considerably expanded. This extension of the war to the Mediterranean need not have been in itself disadvantageous. On the contrary, it offered important opportunities for the prosecution of the war against England. But on the other hand it produced for Germany the danger of dispersal of her military effort. The German High Command did not exploit the possibilities of the situation but fell victim to the danger of the dispersal of her power.

How events would have developed if Italy had remained neutral, -- whether she could have maintained her neutrality for any length of time -- it is difficult to say. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the consequences of Italy's entry into the war were for Germany unfortunate and disadvantageous. This extension of the struggle must be recognized as one of the strategic turning points of the Second World War.

3. The Fear of Decision: Abandonment of the Invasion of England

After the French campaign and after the failure of the hope of bringing the war with England to a conclusion along political lines, the German High Command faced anew the question of how to strike at the main enemy, Britain. On the basis of experience in the first World War it was feared that the U-boat war alone would not be decisive. Therefore, the decision was made first to attack England from the air and then to launch an invasion by land and sea in the event that the Luftwaffe could not force England to make peace. The necessary preparations were then ordered. Nothing was prepared in advance. All these preparations turned out to be difficult and time consuming. The air attack upon England began in the middle of August 1940; the invasion should have begun not later than the middle of September.

After much discussion and debate Hitler could not come to a decision. The risk appeared to him to be too great. The Navy and the Luftwaffe could not guarantee the absolute protection of the flanks of the invading force against the British fleet. The technical outfitting of the invasion fleet was improvised and therefore primitive. Plans and preparations had been too long delayed. The danger of a serious reverse loomed large, although it was hoped that once on land British resistance would be quickly overcome. Thus in this situation the German High Command consciously abandoned the plan of a direct attack upon the principal enemy, giving Britain the necessary time to recover from the serious blow that had been dealt her on the Continent.

Had there existed at that time the courage and daring to take the undeniably grave risk, there would have ensued for Britain, in the event of German success, a situation from which could have emerged a relatively early termination of the war. Likewise in the event of a failure a situation would have resulted in which both opponents might have recognized that they could not expect to overcome the other and as a result they might have sought a compromise arrangement.

By refusing the decision Hitler sacrificed the possibility of an early conclusion of the war and avoided the risk attendant upon exploiting a decisive strategic opportunity.

25-69 - 73

4. The Mediterranean: Military Theater of Half Measures - Gibraltar, Egypt, Suez.

After the decision not to launch a direct attack upon England was made there began the search for the vulnerable points of the Empire and its overseas lines of communication with a view to the expansion of the U-boat campaign. The area of the Mediterranean offered many opportunities. Here ran one of the life lines of the Empire. The cutting of this line would undoubtedly have created great difficulties for Britain's conduct of the war. After Italy's entry into the conflict this life line was within immediate striking distance. The German High Command cautiously approached this problem.

The first step was the preparation for the seizure of Gibraltar in the winter of 1940-41. Again Hitler feared to execute the plan, particularly in view of the food situation in Spain which would have made necessary considerable imports from Germany. Here again a critical strategic blow was planned but not carried out and therefore an important opportunity was lost.

The second step was the dispatch of weak German forces to Libya in the winter of 1940-41. These were far too weak to have achieved anything decisive. Considerations for Italian pride and for Mussolini's position prohibited inconsiderate intervention. Then and later it was always half measures that were taken, which of necessity could not produce success.

Moreover, in the third, most important and decisive step -- the shifting of the entire center of gravity of the war to the Mediterranean in April 1941 -- the German High Command was not able fully to exploit the opportunity. Drawn into the Balkan campaign as a result of Italy's unexpected attack upon Greece, and by fate drawn in the right strategic direction, the German High Command failed to arrive at the correct solution. With the conquest of Greece and Crete, Germany had practically all of the northern shores of the Mediterranean in her grasp, and in Libya she possessed a springboard toward Egypt. In my opinion, by using these bases the prospects of driving Britain out of the Mediterranean and thus winning a favorable initial position for a later advance toward the Persian Gulf, were favorable despite all the difficulties involved. This assumes, to be sure, that the entire military power of Germany could have been determinedly and uncompromisingly committed to the Mediterranean theater and the strategic center of gravity transferred to that area. I shall not go into the political effects of such an action upon Turkey, and perhaps also upon Russia, whose political interest might have been directed toward the Persian Gulf. The military line of attack would have been Gibraltar-Malta-Egypt and the Suez Canal. Despite this shifting of the center of gravity the strength of the German Army would have remained adequate for the defense of the Eastern frontier against Russia in the event that it was not possible to hold her politically on Germany's side. The consequences of such a strategy could scarcely be overemphasized. I believe that it could have been decisive for the outcome of the war.

Hitler did not choose to follow this road. The idea that Russia must be defeated first was so firmly held that he rejected the opportunities afforded by the Mediterranean Theater. The road to England's defeat led, in his opinion, more surely by way of Moscow than through Gibraltar and Suez. Therefore only half measures were taken at all stages in the Mediterranean campaign. It became in effect the military theater of half measures and contributed essentially to the dispersal of our military power. The strategic possibilities of the Mediterranean in the war against England remained unexploited.

25-69-74

5. Return to a Two-Front War: The Attack upon Russia.

Of all the strategic turning points in this war the one productive of the most serious consequences was the attack upon Russia in June 1941, for it practically determined the outcome of the war.

The grounds that led to this decision must therefore be briefly sketched. Among the most important are the following: Hitler believed that Russia was determined to attack Germany, certainly at the latest when England and presumably also the United States were ready to invade Europe. In his opinion this threat of a two-front war must be anticipated by a preventive war against Russia. At the same time he wished to remove forever the threat of the East against Europe. The opportunity appeared to him to be especially favorable as Germany possessed at the time a modern well-equipped army, recently tested in battle, while Russia's armament appeared to be still in the process of development. Moreover, he maintained that a Russian defeat would constitute a decisive blow against England, since Russia was the last "continental sword" upon which England could base her hopes.

In addition to these reasons there were ideological and economic grounds. However, decisive for the estimate of this problem is the question as to whether the first two assumptions were valid. I believe that Russia would have hesitated a long time before attacking the German Wehrmacht, which had been victorious thus far in all its campaigns. Certainly she would only have attacked in the event of a completely successful invasion by the Western powers. Whether a successful invasion could have been made without the blood letting experienced by the German Army on the Eastern Front is a debatable question.

I believe further that a decisive German success in the Mediterranean theater as indicated above, would not only have postponed an invasion by the Western powers for a considerable time, but also that by skillful political handling Russia could have been brought in on the winnings and kept estranged from England.

That a decisive defeat of Russia would have been at the time a serious blow to England is admitted but the road to this goal led more easily over Suez than over Moscow.

In any event it is beyond dispute that Hitler's basic decision to attack Russia constituted the strategic turning point of the war, a turning point, which in my opinion could have been avoided by a less artificial estimate of the situation and its future possibilities of development. For in fact the two-front war was created by this decision.

6. The Time Factor Becomes Decisive: Declaration of War on the United States.

In December 1941 Germany declared war on the United States. With this event a new factor influencing the future development of military events came into the foreground: the time factor. If Russia was not decisively defeated before the enormous reserves of American manpower and materials could be thrown into the scales, and if the U-boat war could not be quickly intensified so that even the American ship building program could not bring the necessary help, then a favorable outcome of the war for Germany could scarcely be reckoned upon. The time factor worked definitely for the enemy. Henceforth, it was under this heavy and pressing consideration that all measures and decisions had to be taken by the German high command. Everything depended upon retaining the initiative against Russia and dealing her a death blow in 1942. At the same time the U-boat successes must be exploited by every means. For Germany the war became a race for time. Such was the strategic result of the declaration of war upon the United States.

7. The Fateful Year -- 1943

a. Loss of the Initiative: Stalingrad and U-boat war.

With the tragedy of Stalingrad, in January 1943, ended the attempt to defeat Russia. Shortly thereafter a turning point in the U-boat war, to Germany's disadvantage, also appeared. At this time the initiative was lost on both land and sea. It was not possible, given the strategic circumstances, to regain the initiative before the final defeat. All attempts in this direction failed.

The turning point in the war had come. Germany was forced to abandon the offensive and assume the defensive. Thus disappeared, in the race to win time, practically all of Germany's prospects. There remained the question whether she could hold out defensively until perhaps a new turning point could be reached in the war by the development of new means of warfare.

The loss of Paulus' army at Stalingrad and the turn in the U-boat war in the period from January to April 1943 signified the great strategic turning point from offense to defense. The German High Command appreciated this turning point with all its fateful significance. Political consequences were not however drawn from this turn of events, as far as my knowledge goes.

b. The Army Bleeds to Death: Operational Principles, 1943 - 45.

The precedence of tactics over operational considerations was established as a leading principle for the High Command in the East beginning with the turn of the year 1942-43. After the last attempt, in July 1943, to regain the initiative, Hitler established as a principle for the conduct of the war in the East the defense step by step of every inch of ground and stubborn defense even of hopeless positions. The methods adopted at Stalingrad, despite their disastrous consequences, were adopted as principles for the entire Eastern Front. Hitler rejected every suggestion of falling back to a shortened battle line, as well as any suggestion to regain operational opportunities through the adoption of mobile defense tactics. He insisted upon a rigid defense.

His reasons were as follows: The idea that even a voluntary retreat would undermine the morale of the troops, and a fear that if mobile tactics were adopted the battle line would too quickly approach the German frontiers. To the foregoing must be added the hope that the Russians would be bled white and the belief that a shortened front would not be any easier to hold, since the enemy would be enabled to concentrate his forces in a smaller area. In many instances, economic and propaganda considerations also played a decisive part. The consequences of this strategy were simply disastrous for the German army. One encirclement followed another, and there were tremendous losses of men and materiel. The nucleus of the German Army was destroyed in the East between 1943 and June 1944, and thus the ultimate collapse was prepared. If greater economy had been exercised in the Eastern theater, and if the German forces had fallen back, before it was too late, to a new battle line thoroughly prepared in advance, allowing the enemy to break his head against this line, there presumably would have been available in the Western theater a larger force as a defense against the invasion. The resultant consequences for subsequent developments in the war might well have been far-reaching.

For the other fronts as well as for the Eastern theater the principle was established that nothing should be given up voluntarily, and that nowhere any part of the front was to be shortened to conserve forces, in short: to defend everything and -- lose everything!

25-69-76

In this way the principles of strategy adopted in 1943 prevented Germany from regaining the initiative in anything like a decisive manner. German armed forces were scattered over battlefronts of unheard length, which they were no longer strong enough to hold. These principles of strategic command were responsible for the collapse of the German defense.

c. The Collapse in Three Dimensions: Turning Point in the Air War.

During the same time interval, the latter part of 1943, there occurred also the turning point in the war in the air. I do not feel called upon to inquire into the reasons for this development. The fact remains that since the autumn of 1943 the German Luftwaffe was no longer able completely to carry out its mission with the result that employment of the Anglo-American air force actually did exert the decisive influence anticipated by the Italian General Douhet before the outbreak of the war.

The consequences consisted above all in an increasing paralysis of transportation, a steady decrease of armament output, and thus a gradual choking down of the German war machine. The effect upon ground operations consisted above all in the fact that it became impossible to effect troop movements in daytime, with resulting complications in the advance planning of operations.

These developments produced results which decisively influenced the outcome of the war.

One is therefore justified in describing the year 1943 as the year that decided the outcome of the war. - All the preconditions of the subsequent collapse appeared in that year. In 1944-45 was harvested the crop of misfortunes that was sown in 1943.

III. CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis is not intended "to accuse or demonstrate superior knowledge," but merely to "ascertain and examine." And yet severe criticism is implied in its statements.

In the last analysis, Hitler's leadership, considered from a military standpoint, was wrecked upon the "English problem." Land power was pitted against sea power. The German Supreme Command failed to discover ways and means of solving this problem. However, this is not the first time that has happened in history.

All military leadership in the course of a war will come, consciously or unconsciously, upon certain strategic turning points. Leading figures in the enemy countries, found themselves confronted with turning points of this nature. And, like the German Supreme Command, which in many instances made unfortunate and mistaken decisions (as well as many correct decisions), against the advice of military experts, it would also be possible to discover on the opposing side many instances of false decisions fraught with fateful consequences. No leadership is free from error; and what really matters in the course of a war is which of the two opponents makes the fewer blunders, and which political leadership refrains from confronting its own armed forces with such hardly soluble problems, as did the political leadership in Germany.

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WAR DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL COMMISSION
WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL STAFF, G-2
HISTORICAL BRANCH

Heusinger
Plan to C.R.M. 20677
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HISTORICAL REPORT

SUBJECT : Adolf Hitler as Military Commander
DATE : 2 November 1945
PLACE : MISC - USFET
PREPARED BY : Lt.Col. O.J.Hale

Institut für Zeitgeschichte ARCHIV	
Akz. 4637/71	Best.
Rep.	Kat.

Ad. Klaus
Heusinger

INTRODUCTION : The following critique and estimate of Adolf Hitler's qualifications and performance as a military commander was prepared by Generalleutnant Adolf HEUSINGER, Chief of the Operations Division of the German Army General Staff (OKH) from Sept 1940 to 20 July 1944.

"ADOLF HITLER AS MILITARY COMMANDER"
By Gen.Lt. Adolf Heusinger

C O N T E N T S

- I. Introduction
- II. Hitler's Personal and Military Characteristics
 - 1. The man
 - 2. The Military Commander
- III. Hitler as Commander of the East Front up to July 1944
 - 1. His Influence upon Operations
 - 2. His Illusions
 - 3. His Relations to the Army Group Commanders
 - 4. Summary

My judgment of Hitler as a personality and military commander is derived from: 1) numerous statements by the Chiefs of the General Staff Halder and Zeitzler; 2) from Hitler's orders and directives; 3) from Hitler's situation conferences and discussions which I frequently attended as an auditor from 1943 to the summer of 1944. No claims are made to completeness; I can only make a contribution to the total picture of this man, soberly presented, sine iye et studio.

II. HITLER'S PERSONAL AND MILITARY CHARACTERISTICS

1. The Man.

Hitler grew up in modest circumstances with a very limited background. He was a self-taught and a self-made-man in all fields. Many of his characteristics find their final explanation in this fact, especially his depreciation of all strictly professional ability, his mistrust of persons coming from social circles with established traditions, and his concern for personal recognition by these very circles.

Seldom has nature united sharper contradictions in the breast of one man. Hitler was both a man of intellect and will, but at the same time possessed a weak artistic nature. He was a realist as well as an idealist, rising sometimes to illusionistic levels. He was an enemy of the Christian religion, yet felt himself bound to a higher power, almost losing himself in a certain mysticism. Added to all this was an astounding gift as a speaker, with almost suggestive power over his hearers. An examination of these manifold qualities yield the following picture:

A sharp analytical mind with strong mathematical inclinations and an exceptional memory, were united with a ruthless and oftentimes brutal will. Hitler could reduce all problems to an obviously simple denominator and he believed that the impossible could be achieved by mere willpower. Because of this the ground of reality disappeared more and more from under his feet. The idealist in him won more and more the upper hand over realistic thought, rising to illusionism and even to phantasy. Then he could surrender himself to unrealistic hopes and disregard, partly consciously and partly unconsciously, the hard realities of a situation.

In the pursuit of his ends he was unbelievably determined and unyielding to the point of obstinacy, and in his choice of means unscrupulous. The end justified the means. Concealed behind this external hardness was also a soft disposition, which he apparently suppressed and which seldom found expression except when the artistic side of his nature manifested itself. In connection with all this he was fundamentally religious, but not in a Christian sense, and believed in a higher power whose operation he saw, for example, in the failure of the attempts upon his life.

Decisive for his entire career, however, was his extraordinary oratorical gifts with which he silenced all his opponents and exerted upon his listeners an almost suggestive power. If he could not gain his ends by these means then he used force, for opposition in the long run was just as unbearable for him as was the presence of persons in his immediate circle to whom he did not feel superior. He could never develop the broadmindedness to tolerate such personalities.

Thus were both good and dangerous qualities united to an extraordinary degree in this one personality. The latter qualities, however, won more and more the upper hand.

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2) The Military Commander.

25-69 - 71

Hitler had gradually groped his way into the duties of a military commander. He doubtless read a great deal about Frederick the Great, Napoleon and Moltke and thereby had acquired some knowledge of military doctrines, without however really having thoroughly mastered them. He also lacked the professional military education necessary to grasp the deeper relationships. In his knowledge of military science he therefore always remained on the superficial surface.

He unquestionably possessed strategic gifts, which sometimes rose to intuition. But he lacked the military subject tools for the evaluation of the actual possibilities. He therefore set larger operational objectives, which could not be achieved but to which he nevertheless adhered with all tenacity. In such cases he believed he could carry out his plans by energy and determination; and toward his military advisers he showed mistrust when they warned him against recognized and oftentimes propagandistic underestimation of the enemy. In such instances he would give way to illusions and to considerable overvaluation of willpower and determination.

In his strategical planning he was generally extraordinarily bold, but on the other hand he could become timid and overly cautious in the course of the operation as soon as he began to perceive dangers or the approach of a crisis. Oftentimes he risked everything, oftentimes he would risk nothing. Generally, he was persistent in holding to his decisions, but at other times uncertain and unpredictable.

Since he regarded himself as the only competent military leader, and this belief was increasingly strengthened by propaganda, he wanted to do everything himself. He had little confidence in the ability of the Generals and positively an inner aversion toward the General Staff. Sober calculation and objective estimation, particularly of the enemy's potential and other imponderables, in which the General Staff had been trained, led in his opinion to loss of spirit, lack of daring and underestimation of one's own willpower, even to a defeatist attitude.

He therefore departed more and more from the old tried and tested system of command and issued all orders himself down to the smallest detail. In this way he undermined the will to decide and the sense of responsibility in the Army to an almost unbelievable degree. His increasing ignorance of conditions at the front resulted from a tactical standpoint in the loss of the yardstick which is essential for the assignment of objectives for the troops on the fighting front. Moreover, brutal intervention did not change matters but only widened the breach between the High Command and the troops.

Thus in his military as in his human qualities Hitler combined undeniable gifts with dangerous propensities. And here too the latter increasingly outweighed the former.

III. HITLER AS EAST FRONT COMMANDER UP TO JULY 1944

1. His Influence on Operations - 1941.

The operational plans against Russia were strongly influenced by Hitler. His demands for the rapid conquest of the Ukraine on economic grounds as well as the rapid exclusion of the Russians from the Baltic because of the U-Boat training and because of Finland, forced the strategic conduct of the campaign along certain fixed lines. He personally worked the plan over completely but approved it in its essential form as presented by the Commander in Chief of the Army.

One of the first great strategic decisions was made in August 1941 against the judgment of the C-in-C of the Army.

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The front stood approximately on the line Dneper-Smolensk -- 25-6920 eastward to Lake Peipus. The Army Groups on the two wings were held up, the center could more easily advance and was on the point of striking the final blow at the mass of the Russian Army and perhaps with that splitting the entire Russian front into two parts. At that moment Hitler ordered the transfer of strong forces from the center to the flank's in order to bring these forward in accord with the original plan. He therefore violated, for economic and political objectives, the established military principle that the primary objective should be the defeat of the main force of the enemy.

The second strategic decision posed the question of attacking Moscow or halting operations in November before the beginning of winter. Fully conscious of the risk Hitler decided, in agreement with the Army Group Center, to undertake the attack on Moscow.

Another decision, more tactical but with far-reaching strategical consequences was the holding of the Panzer forces in front of Leningrad against all advice. Hitler would not risk the possible heavy losses and thereby threw away the chance of overwhelming the then weak defenses of Leningrad. The similarity of the situation with Dunkirk is striking.

East Front 1942.

In its basic features the plan for the summer offensive originated with Hitler. The conquest of the Caucasus oil fields, the cutting off of Russia from her oil source, the expectation of encountering and defeating large Russian forces -- these were the principal features of the offensive. The opinion of the Chief of the General Staff that one could best strike the main Russian forces on either side of Moscow was rejected by Hitler on the above-mentioned economic grounds.

Despite the impression that the Russians were avoiding a decisive engagement, the decision to continue the offensive toward Stalingrad and the Caucasus resulted from Hitler's reflections, and in general the Chief of the General Staff concurred. Hitler did not believe that the Russians were avoiding battle but rather concluded that they were incapable of resistance and that the only thing to do was to drive forward at all costs.

This illusion led to the tragedy of Stalingrad, which was clearly the result of Hitler's basic decision. For propaganda reasons he would not give up the grip on the Volga, since Goering promised to supply the forces by air with 300 tons of supplies daily, and since he himself believed the 6th Army could be relieved. The Chief of the General Staff fought desperately against this decision and repeatedly proposed that the 6th Army break out of the ring because the possibility of supplying it from the air seemed to him as improbable as its relief. Necessary forces for relieving Stalingrad were simply not available and before March 1943 such a large relief action could not be considered. By this time the 6th Army would be destroyed. The assertion subsequently advanced that the Caucasus Army would have been lost if the Stalingrad Army had not pinned down such strong Russian forces, simply will not hold. The bulk of the Caucasus force was withdrawn to the Crimea. Hitler's unrealistic hopes and illusions created the tragedy of Stalingrad.

East Front 1943-1944.

The idea of regaining the initiative, which had been lost in the winter of 1942-43, by launching an offensive in the summer of 1943 and at the same time disrupting the Russian preparations for an anticipated attack, occurred simultaneously to Hitler and the Chief of the General Staff. The area around Kursk presented itself as the obvious place for the operation. With regard to the date for beginning the operation, the Chief of the General Staff fixed the middle of June as the latest possible time, since there-

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after Russian preparations for attacking would; from all indications, be too far advanced for us to hope with our forces to achieve complete success. However, the preparations, as a result of shortage in Panzer supply, were not completed by the middle of June. That the offensive should be launched on 5 July, despite the warning of the Chief of the General Staff, was Hitler's decision, although it was taken in agreement with the two participating Army Groups. It represented an enormous risk and hazard and did not lead to success.

In the period following -- from the summer of 1943 to the summer of 1944 -- the strategic problem on the East Front remained unchanged. The enemy had decisively won the initiative; he was continually on the offensive, we were completely on the defensive. The question was: Should the defense be conducted rigidly and inflexibly with every position, regardless of danger, bitterly contested? Or was it to be conducted flexibly, with planned withdrawals from threatened salients, shortening of the front and husbanding of reserves for counterattacks? Hitler represented the first standpoint and persisted in it to the very end. The Chief of the General Staff was of the absolute opposite opinion and at all times thereafter fought to make his opinions prevail, but without success.

The grounds for Hitler's conception were, above all, the conviction that by determined defense of such front salients (Frontausbuchtungen) strong enemy forces were pinned down, that every voluntary surrender of territory brought the Russians with undiminished strength nearer to the German homeland, and that every withdrawal impaired the morale of German troops. To these considerations were added, in certain cases, economic and political considerations. The views of the Chief of the General Staff were based upon the perception that our forces were simply inadequate to hold this extensive irregular front, that we became immobile and thus lost divisions after division, that we did not bind the enemy but on the contrary the enemy chained us, and that finally, a planned withdrawal need not endanger troop morale.

The most striking operations conducted according to Hitler's idea of a rigid defense were, until July 1944, the following:

- Defense of the Demjansk salient
- Defense of the Denez bend
- Defense of the Dnepr bend including the Nikopol bridgehead
- Defense of the Crimea
- Defense of the line Polozk-Narva by the Army Group North
- Defense of the Vitebsk salient
- Defense of the Tscherkassy salient

In addition to the specified general grounds for this defensive strategy must be added special considerations in certain instances: In the Denez and Dnepr bends and the defense of the line Polozk-Narva, economic justification was also advanced, e.g. iron ore, coal and oil shale. For the Nikopol bridgehead and the Tscherkassy bend the mistaken hope was held that attacks could later be launched toward the Crimea and Kiev respectively. For the defense of the Crimea and the refusal to withdraw the Army Group North political considerations were advanced -- e.g. effect upon Turkey and Finland, and in the latter case also the security of U-Boat training in the Baltic.

The results of all these operations were the greatest losses in men and materiel, in consequence of the retreats forced by the Russians, which were ordered only at the last minute and generally too late. One can say without exaggeration that as a result of Hitler's strategic conduct of the war on the East Front, from Nov 1942 to the summer of 1944, the core of the German Army was destroyed.

2. Hitler's Illusions.

The greatest and most decisive illusion was, from 1941 to

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1944, the false estimation of the opponent. Before the beginning of the campaign, Hitler together with the majority of the leaders, substantially underestimated Russia's military economic and political potentialities. An impenetrable veil hung over the Eastern region. As one drove into the area one was especially surprised by the military determination, the economic potential and the political stability of the regime. The dream of a victorious conclusion of the war in the East disintegrated after 1941.

During 1942 Hitler persisted in the illusion that the Russians were at the end of their strength.

In 1943-44 he still expected that the enemy would bleed to death; he would not believe the figures on Russian tank production or the estimates on manpower potential, and he closed his eyes to the relative high quality of the Russian formations. This conscious or unconscious underestimation of the opponent was Hitler's most dangerous illusion. Year in and year out the Chief of the General Staff fought in vain against it.

To these must be added further illusions concerning his own potentialities. Outstanding in this connection were:

1. the continuation of the offensive against Moscow in November 1941 despite the approach of the Russian winter and the considerable difficulties in supply.
2. The belief that Leningrad would capitulate in the winter of 1941 from lack of food and therefore need not be attacked.
3. The belief that his own forces were strong enough in 1942 for simultaneous offensives against the Caucasus and the Volga. Here, as on many other occasions, objectives, space and power were not in proper operative harmony.
4. The hope that Stalingrad could be held and relieved, although sober calculation showed the impossibility of doing either.
5. The expectation in 1942-43 that the East Front, with all its salients and irregularities, could withstand the Russian assaults, despite the spreading of German forces on the front to 30 km per division.
6. The opinion that newly organized divisions (Luftwaffenfelddivisions) were better than older units and that the SS formations performed better than the Army units.
7. The expectation that counter-offensives would be possible from the Nikopol bridgehead toward the Crimea, from the Tscherkassy salient toward Kiev, and from Polozk toward Minsk.

All of these illusions produced the direst results. Apparently the repetition of bitter lessons, resulting from his illusions, made no impression. In all events Hitler drew no conclusions from them.

III. HITLER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ARMY GROUP COMMANDERS.

Hitler's estimate of the Army Group Commanders varied widely. In general, he preferred energetic, uncomplicated and simple personalities, or those commanders who subordinated themselves without question to his ideas. To the first type belonged, among others, Field Marshal von Kuchler, Busch, Model, Von Weichs, Colonel Generals Lindemann and Friessner, and to the latter Field Marshal von Reichenau and Schoerner. Hitler worked less agreeably with Commanders who sought to develop and advance their own ideas, or who were more "intellectually" inclined and possessed of a deeper strategic understanding and a more basic strategical training. Outstanding in this respect were Field Marshals von Bock, Von Leeb, Von Kleist, List, Von Kluge and General Woehler. These he trusted only with reservations; they often appeared to him to lack energy and to be too burdened with their knowledge. A special position was occupied by Field Marshals von Rundstedt and Von Manstein. The first was especially appreciated

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by Hitler for his competence and because he limited himself strictly to the military field, and altho sharply criticized politically, nevertheless maintained complete reserve. Hitler recognized Von Manstein as the ablest strategical commander; therefore, perhaps, feared him as a "rival" and deeply distrusted him politically. Hitler placed the greatest restrictions upon Von Manstein's freedom of action in the command of his Army Group. An article appearing in Das Reich in 1943, which gave a striking description of Von Manstein, particularly excited Hitler's mistrust.

Military developments between 1941 and 1944 led to the dismissal of the older generation of High Commanders whose knowledge and ability were at an especially high level, and their replacement by a new group whose entire art of command was more agreeable to Hitler, who obeyed better, and who appeared politically more reliable.

IV. SUMMARY

At the beginning of the war, as long as Field Marshal von Brauchitsch was in office, Hitler wisely limited himself to issuing general directives for strategic operations, leaving it to experienced professional men to execute them. With the disappearance of Von Brauchitsch he unwisely assumed personal command on the East Front and thereby entered a field for which he lacked the necessary professional training. To an ever greater extent he also intervened in the tactical command until more and more he lost all perspective for the larger problems.

-----END-----

Vertraulich

Hoffmann

Benützungsbefugnis: Selbsterhebung v. Gen. Heusinger

Niederschrift einer Befragung von General a.D. Adolf Heusinger in dessen Wohnung (5 Köln, Beyenthalgürtel 33 a) durch Dr. Peter C. Hoffmann (7 Stuttgart-Degerloch, Roßhastr. 4) am 6. August 1964 von 15.30 bis 16.30 Uhr.

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Akz. 4524/71	Blatt 25
Rep.	Kat.

General Heusinger war im Juli 1944 Chef der Operationsabteilung im Generalstab des Heeres und seit Anfang Juni außerdem stellv. Chef. des Generalstabes des Heeres.

Über die Persönlichkeiten des Widerstandes gegen Hitler äußerte General Heusinger: Die besonders tätigen Männer im militärischen Bereich waren Trescow, Stauffenberg, Olbricht, Wagner und Fellgiebel. Fellgiebel war von 1939 an in absolutem Gegensatz zu Hitler; er äußerte sich immer scharf kritisch, ebenso wie Wagner und Stülpnagel, zu welchen er in enger Verbindung stand. General Fellgiebel war durchaus krisen- und nervenfest und völlig in der Lage, eine kritische Situation, wie die des 20. 7. 44, ohne Verlust seiner Entschlußkraft durchzustehen. Stülpnagel war von Natur nicht hart, ist aber in Paris in überraschender Weise über sich selbst hinausgewachsen.

Zu der General Heusinger vorgelegten Puttkamerschen Skizze äußerte General Heusinger: Im allgemeinen sei die Skizze durchaus zutreffend, jedoch könne er für Einzelheiten nicht bürgen.

Die zwischen dem OKH und dem FHQu verkehrende Bahn pflegte an der Südost-ecke des FHQu "Wolfsschanze" zu halten. In den wenigen Tagen vor dem 20. 7. 44, während welcher das FHQu in der "Wolfsschanze" war, fand die mittägliche Lagebesprechung immer in einer leichtgebauten Baracke innerhalb eines Sondersperrkreises, in welchem sich auch der von Hitler damals

bewohnte Bunker befand, statt. Ungefähr Anfang Juli 1944 war das FHQu wieder von Berchtesgaden nach Rastenburg verlegt worden; Bauarbeiten fanden auch noch im Juli 1944 im FHQu "Wolfsschanze" statt.

Sicherheitsbestimmungen: Vor dem 20. 7. 44 fanden keine Durchsuchungen der Personen statt, welche ins FHQu kamen. Jedermann hätte ohne weiteres eine Pistole oder dergleichen in der Tasche bei sich tragen können. Ausweise waren zum Betreten der verschiedenen Sperrkreise erforderlich, aber bekannte Persönlichkeiten brauchten sie nie oder selten vorzuzeigen. Die Bewachung Hitlers war so unauffällig, daß General H. sich nicht an Einzelheiten erinnert.

Stauffenberg: Stauffenberg dürfte wohl am oder um den 15.7.44 schon einmal zu einer Lagebesprechung in der "Wolfsschanze" gewesen sein.

Bei der Lagebesprechung am 20. 7. 44 stand General H. während seines Vortrages über die Lage an der Ostfront rechts neben Hitler, neben General H. standen noch Brandt und neben diesem Korten. Links neben Hitler stand Keitel neben diesem Jodl.

Tresckow hätte General H. eigentlich vorwarnen wollen, damit dieser unter einem Vorwand von der Lagebesprechung fernbleibe; Tresckow hatte aber selbst anscheinend keine Vorwarnung erhalten.

Stauffenberg betrat das Besprechungszimmer während des Vortrages von General H., stellte seine Aktentasche rechts neben den rechten Sockel des Lagetisches. Oberst i.G. Brandt hat die Tasche wohl nicht von ihrem Platz weggestellt, sondern sie nur mit dem Fuß etwas weiter unter den Tisch geschoben. Stauffenberg konnte seine Tasche kaum links neben den rechten Tischsockel stellen; dazu hätte er sich praktisch zwischen Heusinger und Hitler drängen müssen. Er flüsterte dann Oberst Brandt etwas zu und ging hinaus. Bald darauf erfolgte die bekannte Explosion, die General H. ja auch in seinem Buche Befehl im Widerstreit beschrieben hat.

Es wäre ungerecht, den Verschwörern heute Vorwürfe wegen der mangelhaften Vorbereitung von Attentat und Staatsstreich zu machen. Vielmehr ist es ein Wunder, daß die Vorbereitungen nicht schon viel früher an Licht gekommen sind, daß also die Verschwörer nicht schon Freiheit und Leben verloren haben, ehe sie auch nur Gelegenheit zu Ausführung ihrer Pläne gefunden hatten. Auch Unvorsichtigkeit kann man ihnen im allgemeinen nicht vorwerfen; besonders Tresckow war immer ganz außerordentlich vorsichtig. Bei seinen Versuchen zur Gewinnung neuer Mitglieder der Verschwörung pflegte Tresckow erst davon zu sprechen, daß es doch besser wäre, wenn Hitler den Befehl über die Ostfront abgäbe. Wenn er hiermit auf Widerspruch stieß, ging er nicht weiter; fand er Gehör, so sprach er vom Oberbefehl über das gesamte Heer, usw.

Während der Untersuchungen der Gestapo verloren viele dieser Verhafteten die Nerven und gaben zu, was sie wußten. Sehr oft appellierte die Gestapo mit Erfolg an das "Ehrgefühl" der Offiziere, um die Wahrheit aus ihnen herauszubringen. Auch Tricks aller Art waren beliebt und oft erfolgreich. xkx

Ich bestätige die Richtigkeit obiger von mir gegenüber Dr. Hoffmann gemachter Äußerungen und erkläre mich mit ihrer Verwendung für wissenschaftliche Zwecke einverstanden.

Köln, den



(Adolf Heusinger)

General a.D.

Verlesung des Befehls vom 7.10.41, Sondereinsatz des SD.

Zeuge: "Ich kann mich an diesen Befehl nicht entsinnen."

Zeuge Heusinger

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Akt. 444/71	Bst. 2569
Rep. /	Kot.

A) zur Person

Heusinger Adolf, Angestellter, geb. 4.8.97, verm., eveng.
Nicht verwandt und nicht verschwägert mit dem Betroffenen.

B) zur Sache

Ich war von 37 bis 40 Ia der Operationsabteilung. Vom Herbst 40 bis 20.7.44 Chef der Operationsabteilung. Später unterstand ich dem Chef des Generalstabes unmittelbar. (Der Vorsitzende übergibt dem Zeugen eine Skizze.) Das sind die Befehlsverhältnisse bis zum Abgang des Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres. Die Befehlsverhältnisse nach Abgang des ObdH sind auf der anderen Skizze.

Die Gliederung des Feldheeres an der Front war so: von unten angefangen, die Division zusammengefasst zu gewissen Korpsverbänden, diese zusammengefasst zu Armeen, diese wieder zusammengefasst zu Heeresgruppen, unterstellt dem ObdH, später Hitler. Das Gefechtsgebiet, das rückwärtige Heeresgebiet und die Reichskommissariate wurden später aufgestellt. Die Aufstellung dieser Stellen war natürlich vorbereitet und es war die Absicht Hitlers, diese so schnell wie möglich reinzuschieben in die Kampfgelände. Der Grund für diese Massnahme war, weil Hitler dem Heer nicht traute. (Ostpolitik.) Das rückwärtige Heeresgebiet war ein Teil des Gebietes, das die Heeresgruppen hatten. Für das rückwärtige Heeresgebiet waren besondere Befehlshaber eingesetzt. Diese hatten in gewisser Weise eine Doppelstellung. Was die Verwaltung anlangte, so unterstanden sie dem Quartiermeister. Bei Besprechungen, die speziell die Verwaltung dieser Gebiete zum Thema hatten, war ich nicht anwesend, weil ich als Chef der Operationsabteilung damit nichts zu tun hatte. Es fanden regelmässige Lagebesprechungen statt, an denen die verantwortlichen Führer des Heeres teilnahmen. Fallweise liess sich Hitler oft den ObdH kommen, um mit ihm allein irgendwelche Fragen zu besprechen. - Der ObdH hatte im November 39 einen Zusammenstoss mit Hitler und war anschliessend fast 3 Monate nicht mehr bei Hitler. Ursprünglich war das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht gedacht, das sich mit den grossen Richtlinien zu befassen hatte. Die Anweisungen kamen an die Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, der Kriegsmarine, der Luftwaffe. Sie wurden geändert dadurch, dass Hitler selbst in zunehmender Masse eingriff. (Polenfeldzug.) Im Frankreichfeldzug begann die Sache gut zu laufen, weil Hitler persönlich nicht eingriff. (Der Zeuge führt verschiedene Beispiele während der Schlacht bei Dünkirchen, im Norwegen-Feldzug u.a. an.)

Brauchitsch hat sich sicher mit dem Gedanken getragen, Hitler umzustimmen. Was wäre aber die Folge gewesen. Hitler hätte sicher nicht eingesehen, dass seine Ansicht falsch war. Der betr. Mann wäre abgesetzt worden und ein anderer hätte seine Stelle eingenommen. Jeder Schritt, der damals unternommen worden wäre, hätte die Situation nur noch verschärft. - Wenn Halder im Jahre 41 oder 42 sich aus Hitler den Kram hingeworfen hätte, wäre ein Nachfolger an seine Stelle gekommen, der sicher nicht über die entsprechenden militärischen Führungsqualitäten verfügt hätte. Das Verbleiben Halders ist in erster Linie dem Gedanken entsprungen, als Schildhalter zu dienen. Ein anderer Gesichtspunkt wäre mit einzurechnen, nämlich die Frage des Verantwortungsbewusstseins gegenüber dem unterstellten Truppenverband.

Der Kommissar- und Gerichtsbarkeit-Befehl ist mir bekannt geworden, nachdem sie beide fertig waren.

Ich weiss, dass diese Befehle auf erheblichen Widerstand gestossen sind und dass wohl auch der ObdH versucht hat, diese Befehle zu mildern oder dagegen vorzugehen. Die Entwicklung ging so weit, dass die Befehle draussen weitgehend sabotiert wurden. Es war aufgefallen, dass diese Befehle geradezu die russische Widerstandskraft steigerten. Ich glaube 49 entschloss sich Hitler, diesen Befehl wieder aufzuheben. Ich glaube, dass die Russen im Laufe der Zeit Kenntnis von diesen Massnahmen bekamen. Aus den Kesseln sind Tausende von Russen wieder entkommen durch die Lücken, die bestanden. Wenn der Kessel ausgeräumt, also durchgekämpft war, waren die Zahlen der Gefangenen nicht so gross, wie man hätte erwarten können. Wir nannten das damals eine "Flüster-Propaganda" der Russen. Die Kommissare legten vor ihrer Gefangennahme ihre Schulterstücke u.a. ab, damit sie nicht mehr zu erkennen waren. Diese Dinge gingen an sich nicht über meinen Tisch; zuständig war für diese Dinge eigentlich der General z.b.V., der sich mit diesen Dingen zu befassen hatte. Wir hörten von diesen Dingen durch Erzählungen. Die Russen erfuhren meiner Ansicht nach durch ihre Kameraden, die bei uns wieder ausgekniffen waren. Ich glaube, es gab da viel mehr Kanäle, als wir ahnten. Die Russen hatten ausserdem ein sehr gutes Nachrichten-Netz. Dieser Befehl hatte jedenfalls tiefste Entrüstung hervorgerufen und Halder hat wiederholt auf den Unsinn dieses Befehles hingewiesen. - Ich war bei den reinen Führungsbesprechungen vor Abgang des ObdH jeden Morgen dabei und trug dort die Lage vor. Die Tagesmeldungen bzw. Lagemeldungen auf dem Ia-Gebiet wurden mir selbstverständlich im Original vorgelegt. Ich musste sie ja eingehend durcharbeiten. Die Meldungen auf dem Ic-Gebiet habe ich nicht bekommen. Als Chef der Operationsabteilung habe ich ja nur das zu hören bekommen, was auf diesem Gebiet lag. Ich weiss z.B., dass während des Balkanfeldzuges Meldungen an die Abteilung gelangten, wo von Beseitigung von Partisanen darin stand. Ob während des Russlandfeldzuges diese Meldungen im einzelnen auch an mich gelangt sind, kann ich nicht mehr mit Sicherheit sagen. Bei Besprechungen mit Hitler hatte ich verschiedentlich teilzunehmen. Diese Besprechungen verliefen völlig unberechenbar. Ein Schema konnte man bei Hitler nicht aufstellen. Gerade wenn man eine ruhige Besprechung erwartete, trat das Gegenteil ein oder umgekehrt. Ab Dezember 41 waren wir dabei, um zur Verfügung zu sein, da ja der Chef des Generalstabes allein nicht alles verantworten konnte. Der Chef hielt seine Vorträge so, wie wir es gelernt hatten: nüchtern, sachlich und eingehend fundiert durch entsprechende Unterlagen. Er gebrauchte immer die Form, dass er die Gefahren aufzeigte, auf der anderen Seite die Vorteile zur Geltung brachte, die man erreichen konnte. Bei Abwicklung dieses für und wider kam er dann zu dem und dem Entschluss. Das wollte Hitler nicht hören. In sehr vielen Fällen war es so, dass der Chef Hitler klar machen musste, dass der Gedanke völlig undurchführbar war. Dann kam der Kampf zwischen Halder und Hitler, bei dem es sehr schwer war, Hitler von seinem Entschluss abzubringen; dies wird auch sehr wenigen gelungen sein. General Engel war als 2. Adjutant Hitlers nicht regelmässig bei den Besprechungen dabei. Wiederholt und öfter hat er teilgenommen. Es gab auch Fälle, wo der Chef versuchte, mit genau derselben Wortstärke wie Hitler seinen Standpunkt klar zu machen; allerdings immer mit negativem Erfolg. Vor allem sprach Halder immer mit Nachdruck und vor allem aus einem heissen Herzen für die Truppe. Ich selbst habe einmal gehört, wie Halder zu Hitler sprach: "Nur weil sie den Dickkopf haben und nicht nachgeben wollen ..."

Rundstedt beantragte die Zurücknahme der Truppe im Südabschnitt. Hitler lehnte diesen Vorschlag ab. Daraufhin schrieb R. ein Telegramm: "Ich habe Ihren Befehl erhalten. Ich kann den Befehl nicht durchführen. Wenn Sie darauf bestehen, bitte ich um meine Ablösung." Einige Stunden darauf war R. abgelöst und nun kam Reichenau, der

genau 24 Stunden später von Hitler diesen Vorschlag von Rundstedt genehmigt bekam. Im November 41 trug sich v. Brauchitsch schon mit dem Gedanken, abzugehen, da er gesundheitlich überanstrengt war. Ob das möglich war oder nicht, hing sehr von den Persönlichkeiten ab. Hitler hatte einen Befehl gegeben, dass niemand zurücktreten kann. Ich will hierzu ein kleines Beispiel anführen. Zeitler hat im März 44 an Hitler geschrieben, dass er die Verantwortung nicht mehr übernehmen könne und um die Erhebung seines Postens bäte. Hitler hat diesen Brief zerrissen und bemerkt, dass er allein über solche Wünsche zu entscheiden habe.

Das Verhältnis Hitlers zum OKH wurde schlechter. Nach dem Ausscheiden von Halder hatte Hitler nunmehr völlig die Führung an der Ostfront an sich gerissen.

Während der Schlacht von Dünkirchen hat Halder mit allen Mitteln versucht, die Befehle Hitlers nicht zur Durchführung kommen zu lassen. Es ist nicht zu leugnen, dass Hitler über operative Fähigkeiten verfügte. Allerdings fehlte ihm jeder Begriff von Raum, Zeit und Leuten.

Die Offensive im Sommer 42 wurde entgegen der Auffassung des OKH durchgeführt. Hitler hatte sich diesen Gedanken fest vorgenommen und glaubte immer an den russischen Zusammenbruch. (Ausschaltung des Generalstabschef's. September 41 stand Hitler auf dem Standpunkt, dass der Feldzug praktisch gewonnen wäre.)

Zwischendurch wurde der Zeuge P ü n d e r vernommen:

a) zur Person

Oberdirektor Pünder Hermann, geb. 1.4.88, kath., verheiratet, wohnhaft: Frankfurt. Nicht verwandt u. nicht verschwägert m.d.Betr.

b) zur Sache

Ich kenne Herrn Halder seit 15 Jahren. 32 wurde ich als Regierungspräsident strafversetzt nach Münster. Trotz dieses Umstandes hatte ich sofort das Empfinden, dass Halder, vielleicht gerade angesichts dieser Umstände, zu mir in ein besonders enges Verhältnis trat. Diese enge Verbindung haben wir Jahre hindurch aufrechterhalten. 33 weigerte ich mich, in die Partei einzutreten. Auf meinen Antrag wurde ich in den endgültigen Ruhestand versetzt. In den ersten Monaten der Nazizeit war gerade Halder auf das tiefste entrüstet über die Eingangs-Aktion des Nazi-Regimes. Im Mai 33 trat ich in den Ruhestand. Ich blieb als Privatmann in Münster. Halder und ich blieben in Verbindung; auch als Halder versetzt wurde, ich glaube nach Bayern. Halder stellte bewusst klar heraus, wie er innerlich zum Nat.Soz. stand. Ich bin ein anerkannt Verfolgter des Naziregimes. Selbstverständlich war es für mich in diesem Falle, dass ich hier erscheinen würde, um meine Meinung zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Halder und ich haben uns sehr viel politisch unterhalten. Ich entsinne mich eines Gespräches über den Fahneneid. Ein Offizier sagte, er sei gebunden an den Fahneneid. Halder sagte, er sei Christ und habe Gott zum Zeugen. - In Verbindung mit dem 30.6.34 wurden in Münster Leute verhaftet und sollten erschossen werden. Darunter waren auch sehr enge Verwandte und gute Bekannte von mir und Halder. Ich habe persönlich erlebt, dass Halder sich sofort mit Berlin in Verbindung gesetzt hat und verlangte, dass dieser Mord an seinem Freund Cowell unterbleibe. Dass Halder sich für seinen Freund einsetzte, war natürlich ein "rotes Tuch" für die SA und SS. Mir ist bekannt, dass Halder anschliessend nach Berlin zu Fritsch fuhr und schärfsten Protest einlegte.

Cowell

Dass ich persönlich in schärfster Weise dem Nat.Soz. gegenüberstand, ist klar und über diese Dinge habe ich mit Halder häufig gesprochen. Pläne über die Beseitigung Hitlers hatten sich bei

den damaligen Gesprächen noch nicht so herauskristallisiert. Ich glaube nicht, dass wir schon 34 oder 35 über konkrete Pläne gesprochen haben. Dass etwas geändert werden musste, darüber waren wir uns klar. Die Grundeinstellung war ganz klar, sonst sässe ich heute bestimmt nicht hier, wenn ich darüber jemals Zweifel gehabt hätte. Ich war politisch so suspekt, dass die Verbindung zwischen Halder und mir für ihn eine Gefahr bedeutete. Ich möchte so weit gehen, um zu sagen, dass Halder den Verkehr mit mir gesucht hat. Es gab eine Gruppe, darunter auch Jakob Kaiser, die auf einen gewaltsamen Umsturz eingestellt waren. Ich weiss, dass es Gruppen gegeben hat, die innerlich genau so eingestellt waren, sie hielten diesen Weg allerdings für falsch. Halder war der Ansicht, dass an einer offiziellen Revolte der Welt nichts liegen konnte. Nachher wären sehr viel "kluge Leute" aufgestanden, die gesagt hätten, was wäre wohl, wenn Hitler am Leben geblieben wäre. Man dachte vielmehr daran, dass die Reichsregierung verhaftet werden sollte oder durch Verbindung mit dem Ausland ein Verfahren gemacht werden sollte. Es wäre falsch zu sagen, dass der ein Feigling ist, der nicht auf den Mord hinsteuert. - Als Halder von Münster wegging, bleiben wir weiter in Kontakt und wussten immer voneinander. Ich weiss genau, dass er nicht andersdenkend geworden ist. Von Oster u.a. hörte ich, dass er nach wie vor gegnerisch eingestellt war. Halder und ich sind zusammen befreit worden in den Dolomiten Ende Mai 1945. Wäre das nicht der Fall gewesen, wären wir wohl beide nicht mehr unter den Lebenden. Wir wanderten durch mehrere KZ's und waren nachher noch eine Schar von ungefähr 100 internierten Leuten, die noch für besondere Zwecke aufgespart wurden.

Der Zeuge wurde nicht vereidigt!

Fortsetzung der Zeugenaussage von H e u s i n g e r.

Der Gang der Operationspläne war folgender:

Zunächst äusserte Hitler sich über das Ziel, wo er eine Operation beabsichtigte und gab dazu eine entsprechende Weisung, für die einzelnen Wehrmachtsteile, die wesentliche Aufgaben im Rahmen der Operation zu erfüllen hatten. Dann wurde innerhalb des Oberkommandos des Heeres, der Kriegsmarine und der Luftwaffe auf Grund der Weisung die eigentliche Operationsweisung bearbeitet für das Heer. Die Bearbeitung war nach den Richtlinien in der Hand des Generalstabes, an der Spitze des Generalstabes der Operationsabteilung. Diese liess sich die notwendigen Unterlagen geben, bearbeitete einen Entwurf und legte ihn dann dem Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres vor. Hitler bekam Kenntnis davon in grossen Zügen. Später mussten sie Hitler wieder vorgelegt werden und wurden von ihm dann durchgearbeitet, korrigiert und die Ausführung befohlen, wenn es so weit war. Es war also so, dass der Generalstabschef Gehilfe war oder der erste Berater des Oberbefehlshabers. Im ersten Weltkrieg hat die Mitverantwortung bestanden. Wenn ein Generalstabschef nicht einverstanden war mit einem Vorschlag, so hatte er diese Auffassung aktenkundig zu machen, oder hatte die Konsequenz zu tragen für die Massnahmen, die durchgeführt wurden. Diese grundsätzliche Auffassung ist von Hitler 36/37 geändert. Hitler argumentierte: Das Führerprinzip lässt es nicht zu, dass eine Verantwortung geteilt wird auf 2 Schultern. Es gibt nur einen Befehlshaber. Der Chef des Generalstabes ist lediglich Berater und Gehilfe und trägt nicht die Verantwortung. Die Einführung der Stellung des Chef des Generalstabs ist seit Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts. Bei der milit. Führung muss vereint sein die Weisheit des Alters mit dem Feuer der Jugend. Man glaubte eine Lösung gefunden zu haben, wenn man dem Chef des Generalstabes einen jüngeren Generalstabsoffizier zur Seite stellte. Die Belastung, die ein Oberbefehlshaber hat, ist so ungeheuerlich und umfassend, dass es

für einen Menschen zu viel ist, alles zu verantworten und durchzuführen. Die Aufgabe des ihm zur Seite gestellten war es, ihm alle nicht zu entscheidenden Dinge fern zu halten. Die andere Form war, dass an die Spitze von Armeen Fürstlichkeiten gestellt wurden, die ihrer Ausbildung nach einem sehr hohen Kommando nicht voll gewachsen waren und sein konnten. Es wurde die Stellung eines Chefs geschaffen und der leitenden Persönlichkeit zur Seite gestellt, so dass er entsprechend beraten wurde, um den schwierigen Aufgaben eines grossen Truppenverbandes gerecht zu werden. (Die monarchistische Form.)

Die Begründungen, die Hitler gab, lagen praktisch in Grundkonzeption der Führung des Stabes überhaupt. Es ist Beck nicht gelungen, diese Sache abzuwenden, weil er damit an dem Grundprinzip rührte, wie es durch Hitler eingeführt wurde. Beck war garnicht mal so unglücklich darüber, dass die Mitverantwortung aufgehoben wurde, die für ihn tödlich sein konnte und werden musste.

Vielleicht hat es in der ganzen Geschichte noch keine Situation gegeben, die für ein Offizierkorps schwerer war, der das Offizierkorps seit 1933 gegenüberstand. Das deutsche Offizierkorps war aufgewachsen in einer Tradition. Dieses sah sich einer Situation gegenüber, der es einfach nicht gewachsen war. Es trat ein Mann an die Spitze, der von Hindenburg eingesetzt wurde. Er verstand es nun mit Methoden vorzugehen, denen das Off.Korps nicht gewachsen war. Fritsch, Beck u.a., die nicht hinter dem Berge gehalten haben mit ihrer Meinung, sie waren gebunden, weil Hitler sagte, ihr seht ja den Erfolg. Auch das Ausland hat mit Hitler weiterverhandelt.

In Zeiten der Not wird die Staatsführung zu einem bestimmten Bereich einem militärisch Unterstellten gegeben. Er ist für alles, was vorkommt, verantwortlich. Er konnte alle Anordnungen treffen, um den Notstand zu beseitigen. Hitler stand auf dem Standpunkt, Generale verstehen nichts von Politik, von Wirtschaft, sie haben nur die Truppe zu führen. Für alle anderen Aufgaben sind andere Leute da, Hitler griff noch zu einem anderen Mittel, die Reichskommissariate von hinten. 44 verlangte Zeitzler von Hitler, dass die Kommissariate abgesetzt werden. Hitler lehnte das ab. Innerhalb des Reiches war es so, dass die Entscheidungen weitgehend in der Hand der Reichsverteidigungskommissare gelegt waren (polit. Parteiführer u.a.m.) Die betr. Männer waren für diese Aufgaben ja in keiner Weise vorgebildet. - Ich habe nie eine politische Unterrichtung erfahren. Damals kann es sich auch nicht um OQu IV gehandelt haben, sondern um Gen.z.b.V. Was Engel gemeint hat, weiss ich nicht. Ich persönlich habe keine polit. Unterrichtung interner Natur bekommen. Aussenpolitische Unterrichtung erfuhr ich offiziell auch nicht; nur bei Ausserungen von Hitler habe ich davon gehört.

Über die Frage der Beseitigung von Hitler ist folgendes zu sagen: Wenn man von Seiten der oberen militärischen Führung zu einem gewaltsamen Schritt sich entschieden hätte, musste man sich darüber klar sein, dass man etwas tat, mit dem man in Volke nur in wenigen Kreisen Widerhall finden würde. Man musste bei einer gewaltsamen Lösung damit rechnen, dass es mit Verrat bezeichnet wurde. Gegenüber der Wehrmacht musste man sich darüber im klaren sein, dass bei Luftwaffe und Kriegsmarine der gleiche Glaube an die Führung durch Hitler bestand, und auch beim Heer. Mir wurde nach dem 20.7.44 gesagt: seid ihr wahnsinnig geworden. Dies wäre der Krieg gegen alle geworden. Es kam noch ein weiterer Punkt dazu. Zum Gehorsam ist ganz besonders die Wehrmacht erzogen. Eine Wehrmacht, die mit der Gehorsamspflicht in Konflikt kommt, wird brüchig. Es ist sehr viel verlangt, so wie die Situation war, die nach einer Lösung schrie.

Bis 20.7.44 hatten die Männer, die sich mit diesem Problem beschäftigten, gerungen und sagten sich, schlimmer kann es nun nicht mehr werden, jetzt ist der letzte Moment, um zu verhindern, dass Deutschland verloren ist.

Meine Laufbahn ist mit dem 20.7.44 beendet; es folgte Gestapo und spätere Freilassung, aber keine Wiederverwendung mehr.

Die Kenntnisse, die wir über die russische Wehrmacht und die Stärke der Rüstung hatten, waren sehr mangelhaft. Es lag ein starker Schleier vor dem russ. Staatsgebiet. Als wir militärische Erfolge hatten (Gefangene) setzte sich bei Hitler die Auffassung fest, dass wir keine russ. Verbände mehr zu zerschlagen hätten. Wir durften nicht mehr das Wort "Division" gebrauchen, sondern nur noch "Haufen". Es kam dann aber die Überraschung dazu, dass die russ. Industrie sehr viel grösser war, als man erwartet hatte. Hitler lehnte es ab, dass bei einem Vortrag der Chef gehört wurde. Er wollte nur den Oberbefehlshaber hören.

Der Zeuge wurde zu Beginn der Verh. vereidigt!

DR. PHILIPP SCHUBERT

München, 1.5.46.

Herrn Rechtsanwalt Dr. L a t e r n e r
Nürnberg, Fürtherstrasse 178

Zur Klärung der politischen Einstellung des ehem. Generalobersten Halder gebe ich Ihnen als seinem Verteidiger folgende eidesstattliche Erklärung:

1. Zur Person: Ich bin Zahnarzt und war Major d. Res. und Adj. der Münchener Ersatz Div. von 39-Ende des Krieges. Ich habe niemals der Partei oder einer ihrer Gliederungen angehört. Über meine Person u. Tätigkeit während des Krieges können Auskunft erteilen: der Polizeipräsident München, sowie der Referent der Bay. Freiheitsbewegung im Kultusministerium München.

2. Zur Sache: Gegen Ende des Jahres 1942 brachte mich mein Freund Deiniger (von dem sie bereits ein Schreiben in Händen haben dürften) mit dem ehem. bay. Gesandten u. Minister Sperr zusammen, da er wusste, dass ich mich seit langen mit ähnlichen Plänen befasste. Sperr benötigte entsprechenden Einblick in die Wehrmacht, vor allem in die milit. Lage im Wehrkreis VII. In wiederholten Besprechungen, die teils in meiner, teils in Sperrs Wohnung stattfanden, wurden die verschiedenen Möglichkeiten durchgesprochen, die den Sturz des Nazi-Regimes zum Ziele hatten. Zunächst wurde von mir als Vorarbeit die Umbesetzung aller Kommandeurstellen der Div. durch verlässige Offiziere übernommen; als nächstes war ein geeigneter milit. Führer zu gewinnen. In Betracht kamen die Gen. Obersten Adam u. Halder, die beide sich zurückgezogen hatten u. die ich persönlich sogut kannte, um an sie herantreten zu können. Sperr gab Halder den Vorzug, den er von früher kannte u. der damals der erfolgreichste u. im Lande bekannteste bayer. Militär war. Ich selbst kenne Halder von der Reichswehr her und hatte als Div. Adj. öfter Gelegenheit ihn zu treffen. Als Tarnung nahm ich die Betreuung des in Aschau wohnenden Halder mit Kraftwagen etc. durch die Div. Dadurch war es auch möglich, sein Personal mit den zuverlässigsten Leuten des Div. Stabes zu besetzen. In wiederholten Aussprachen gab Halder seine nazifeindliche Einstellung u. besonders seinen Hass gegen Hitler klar zu erkennen, berichtete über seine Verbindungen, die er mit Berlin unterhielt, machte mich mit ~~seiner~~ seinem dortigen Vertrauensmann Oberst Rohowsky bekannt und war auch mit dem Vorschlag mit Sperr zusammen zu kommen einverstanden. Diese Zusammenkunft fand Anfang Okt. 43 in meiner Wohnung

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NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE
COMITE MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD

PERMANENT CHAIRMAN

PRESIDENT PERMANENT

WASHINGTON

General Adolf Heusinger

Room 2-3
The Pentagon

12a H. April 1946

Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. Aschsbauer,

Auf laengerem Umweg erhielt ich Ihren Brief vom 25. Maers, in dem Sie reich um eine Stellungnahme zu der Person und zu dem Verhalten des General a. D. Reinecke bitten. Um bei letzterem anzufangen, so kann ich zu dem Verhalten von General Reinecke nach dem 20. Juli aus eigener Erfahrung nichts aussagen, da ich selbst in dieser Zeit in Gestapo-Haft gewesen bin und ueber die Taetigkeit des General Reinecke damals nichts gehoert habe. Meine Kenntnis ueber sein Verhalten in dieser Zeit stammt erst aus den Jahren nach Kriegsende und basiert auf vielen Gespraechen mit Offizieren, die ihn selbst erlebt haben. Ich glaube jedoch, dass eine Wiedergabe des Grundtenor dieser Gespraeche aus zweiter Hand keine nennenswerte Bedeutung fuer den Fall "Reinecke" vor dem Verwaltungsgericht haben wuerde.

Zu der Person von General Reinecke koennte ich sagen, dass auch er zweifelsohne ein Opfer der gegebenen politischen Situation gewesen ist. Ich will damit sagen, dass er sich zweifellos nicht in die Stelle, in die man ihn berufen hatte, gedrueckt hat, dass er auf der anderen Seite aber nicht stark genug war, um sich dieser Aufgabe zu entziehen. Ihm darueber nachtraeglich einen entscheidenden Vorwurf zu machen, wie es bei vielen anderen auch geschahen ist, heisst die Grundsatze von Verantwortung und Gewissen aufzuheben. Ich habe den General Reinecke immer fuer einen sehr anstaendigen Offizier gehalten, der ohne sein Verschulden verstrickt wurde in die letzten Fragen des Widerstandes oder des Gehorsams.

Ich vermag nicht zu uebereiben, ob eine derartige, doch nur sehr allgemein gehaltene Aeusserung meinerseits dem General helfen koennte, ich weiss aber einen anderen irischen General (Westhoff), der unter Reinecke laenge gearbeitet hat und, soweit ich mich nach Gespraechen mit ihm erinnere, ein sehr positives Urteil ueber ihn auch nach dem Krieg hatte und sicherlich mancherlei zu der von Ihnen angeschatteten Frage beitragen koennte. Ich kenne die Adresse von Westhoff nicht, er lebt aber - falls er noch unter den Lebenden weilt - in Schleswig-Holstein, und ich koennte mir vorstellen, dass seine Anschrift neeherer festzustellen waere.

Mit vorzaeglicher Hochachtung bin ich
Ihr sehr ergebener

A. Heusinger