

ZEUGENSCHRIFTTUM

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INTERROGATION REPORT

SOURCE : Major d.R.z.V. Wilhelm Ritter v. SCHRAMM,
Armed Forces Operations Staff, OKW, August
1944 to April 1945.

DATE : 28 September 1945

PLACE : Third Army Intelligence Center

INTERROGATOR : Lt.Col. O.J.Hale.

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C O N T E N T S

- I. Personal Data.
- II. Experiences as a Special Correspondent
- III. Military Publicity and Censorship
- IV. Preparation of the Daily OKW Report
- V. Turning Points in German Public Opinion

DECLASSIFIED-DOD Directive No. 5200.9, 27
September 1958.

I. PERSONAL DATA

Source is a World War veteran, a professional journalist and military publicist. When the Nazis came to power in 1933 he was stricken from the professional journalists' roster because of the book, Radikale Politik, which he published in 1932. His case was finally cleared up and he later joined the NSDAP. In 1937 he became editor of the military periodical Deutsche Infanterie, which was published by the Deutsche Verlag, a subsidiary of the Eher Verlag. The publication was suspended at the beginning of the war. From Sept 1939 to Nov 1940 he served as a censorship officer with Army High Command 14 (AOK 14) and Army High Command 18 (AOK 18) in Poland and France. From June to Nov 1941 he was a member of the War Correspondent Company of the Army Supreme Command in the Ukraine. From June 1941 to Feb 1943 he was liaison officer with the Army for the publication "Unser Heer", when he was reassigned as special military correspondent on the Staff of the Heeresgruppe Süd (GFM v.Manstein). From April to Aug 1944 he held the same post on the Staff of the Commander in the West (von Rundstedt and von Kluge). In Aug 1944 he was assigned to the Armed Forces Operations Staff where, as General Dittmar's assistant, he prepared the daily OKW communique. Source tends to dramatize his views and statements and bitterly criticizes Nazi political and military leadership. It is believed that his statements of facts are reliable. Source is quite intelligent, writes extremely well and is very cooperative.

II. EXPERIENCES AS A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Source states that as a censorship officer with the AOKs he censored the articles prepared by the PK correspondents. Oftentimes they had to rewrite the articles as "Goebbels' Grenadiers" knew nothing about military affairs and for the most part could not write. The "Correspondent Company" (Berichterkompanie) was established by the OKH because Goebbels PK people were hopeless. There was only a small number of these higher level military correspondents. Officially they were assigned to the Ic of the Army Group Commands. Among the experienced military writers were von Schramm, Col. Soldan, and Dr. Schäfer (Army Group Central). Soldan was dismissed by Hitler's orders in 1943 because he wrote an article for the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung praising the German General Staff. Source also states that the German Army publication the "Militär Wochenblatt" was suppressed in the winter of 1942 because it published an article honoring von Seeckt as the creator of the new Wehrmacht.

As special correspondent on von Manstein's staff from March 1943 to April 1944, source had access to the daily situation maps and reports and Manstein's daily reports to Hitler. By an arrangement between Manstein and Rundstedt, source made four trips to the West to lecture on East Front operations before Rundstedt's staff and his divisional commanders. This was the only way the Western Commanders were able to inform themselves, beyond the press reports, of the course of operations on the East Front.

Source regards Manstein as the best brain and outstanding commander in the German Army. Hitler disliked and feared Manstein as he could tolerate no one to whom he did not feel superior. General Scherff, Hitler's military historian, gave source advice not to mention Manstein by name in his dispatches but always to refer to the Army Group South. Manstein's last great strategic success was the planned break through of Russian encircling forces by General Hube's Panzer army and the crossing of the Sereth in March 1944. Manstein, by ordering the assembly and withdrawal of Hube's forces toward the south gave the Russians the impression that the Panzer Army would attempt to break out in that direction. When the Russians made corresponding dispositions, Manstein ordered Hube's army to break out to the west. Shortly after this successful operation Manstein was relieved.

II. MILITARY PUBLICITY AND CENSORSHIP

QUESTION : Were you the author of the biographical sketch of von Manstein that appeared in "Das Reich" in March 1944 ?

v. SCHRAMM: No, I did not write it. The correspondent Freiherr von Imhof, who was with Manstein in the Crimean Campaign, was the author. He was writing on the conquest of Sevastopol, at the time. The article created an unfavorable impression in the Führer HQ and contributed to Manstein's fall in April 1944. The article was interpreted as an attempt to influence public opinion.

QUESTION : How were the battle designations, which appeared at intervals in the German press, originated ? Is there anything special to be noted about them?

v. SCHRAMM: The press had instructions to adhere strictly to the battle designations of the daily OKW report. They were proposed by the competent authority in the theater of operations and approved by Col. Gen. Jodl. There were also the battle designations that were entered in the soldier's Wehrpass. These were published at intervals in the Army Regulations Journal (Heeresverordnungsblatt). The fixing of the dates and the naming of the battles were the work of Major d.R. Rieker in the Army Administration Office of the General Staff, OKH.

QUESTION : Approximately, on 29 July 1944 the daily OKW report appeared with a supplement in which Comdrs and Divisions were cited. Why was the procedure changed and who decided whether a Comdr or Division should be cited ?

v. SCHRAMM: Naturally citation in the OKW report was a highly prized honor. The whole matter got entirely out of hand as every comdr and unit wanted and expected the honor. In the end every Comdr and every unit that stood its ground, was cited. To prevent a complete devaluation of the OKW citation and to prevent the lengthening of the OKW report (it became nevertheless longer and longer!) a new ruling was issued. According to the new regulation only outstanding achievements in a specific situation or action could be so honored. Over the citations for units requested by the Supreme Comdrs of the branches of the Wehrmacht, Col.Gen.Jodl made the final decision. Requests for the citation of Waffen-SS units and Comdrs were granted almost without exception.

QUESTION : What branch or office prepared the biographical sketches of Comdrs receiving the Ritterkrouz ?

v. SCHRAMM: Each of the three branches of the Wehrmacht assigned a number of officers to prepare the sketches on the basis of materials received from their respective personnel offices. Maj.Dr.Rieker of the Army Administration Division, OKH, was in charge of this work for the Army. The biographies were reviewed and revised by a special branch in the Wehrmacht Propaganda Office, OKW, in Berlin, and then released for publication. There was much criticism of the cut-and-dried form and the style of these biographical sketches.

QUESTION : Were there important turning points in the censorship imposed on military writers and correspondents ?

v. SCHRAMM : The censorship regulations were currently expanded during the war and filled an entire book, which was classified "secret". In retrospect the following developments are outstanding :

1. During the Russian campaign it was forbidden to mention the Supreme Comdrs and Generals in operational dispatches without the special permission of the Führer HQ. Likewise the publication of photographs of Army Comdrs and Generals required special permission. It was clear that publicity and popularity for the Generals was distrusted by Hitler and must be prevented. Only in Rommel's case was an exception made.

2. Stalingrad was likewise a turning point. Higher authority began to show the greatest sensitivity toward all military writing and publicity. In Feb 1943, General d. Art.z.b.V. Müller held a conference at the OKW in Berlin at which he announced new regulations from the Führer HQ in matters of military publicity. In all military writing the following subjects were banned:

a) The singling out or praising of Col.Gen.Seeckt as the "father" of the new Wehrmacht. (Hitler claimed this honor entirely for himself) For having offended in this respect the Militärwochenblatt was suspended forthwith.

b) The mentioning of Generals and soldiers in public print when they had not been specifically mentioned in the OKW report.

c) Any kind of reporting of the activity of the General Staff.

d) The discussion of all church and religious questions.

e) Criticism or disparagement of the offspring of unmarried mothers.

3. Another development was the intervention of the Reichsführer SS Himmler in military publicity. At his instigation the Special Correspondent of the Army Group Center, Dr.Schäfer (editor-in-chief of the Kölnische Zeitung) was removed because he gave a series of lectures before higher headquarters officers on Charles XII of Sweden.

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QUESTION : What would you say were the main trends in the directives pertaining to military publicity ?

- v. SCHRAMM: 1. All statements were to be avoided which would afford the enemy information about the German situation.
2. Editors and correspondents must adhere closely to the OKW report and always write in agreement with it.
3. No predictions and no surmises as to future German intentions were permitted.
4. No units or names could be mentioned not previously mentioned in the OKW reports.
5. All publicity was to be factual and must above all portray the achievements of the troops.
6. Any suggestion of criticism of the Supreme Command must be avoided.
7. In press dispatches the honor of the German Wehrmacht and respect for the German soldier must be preserved.

IV PREPARATION OF THE DAILY OKW REPORT

QUESTION : Will you describe in detail the preparation of the daily OKW report ?

v. SCHRAMM: With regard to the OKW report, in general, the following should be said:

1. The OKW report was exclusively the responsibility of the Armed Forces Operations Staff and its Chief, General Jodl.
2. In the time when I was drafting the report (Oct 44 to April 45) neither Hitler nor Goebbels and the Propaganda Ministry exerted any influence over it.
3. Col. Gen. Jodl firmly insisted that the report follow closely the incoming dispatches and that it be written in wholly acceptable military language.
4. At the beginning of my duty I received strict instructions to eliminate all cheap expressions such as "successful withdrawal" etc. (see chart page 6)

V. TURNING POINTS IN GERMAN PUBLIC OPINION.

QUESTION : As you observed developments in Germany and at the front what events would you single out as turning points in German public opinion ?

v. SCHRAMM: From my observations during the war I think the following were the most important turning points:

1. In a positive sense :
 - a. The rapid conclusion of the Polish Campaign.
 - b. The inactivity on the Western Front in the winter 1939-40.
 - c. The success of German troops in Norway.
 - d. The rapid and complete success in the Western Campaign. It contradicted and shamed all skeptics, including the Generals, the General Staff and the old front veterans. It was then easy for the Party propaganda to present Hitler as the "greatest genius of the ages".
 - e. The rapid conquest of the Balkans and the conquest of Crete without the aid of sea power. This gave support to the statement : "Nothing is impossible for the German soldier".
 - f. Rommel's victories in Africa. This seemed to confirm the belief that the German soldier was superior to the British.
 - g. The encirclement battles (Kesselschlachten) in the East in 1941 with their millions of prisoners and enormous booty of war.
2. In a negative sense :
 - a. The loss of the winter battle before Moscow, in 1941, which was seen as the first hand writing on the wall.
 - b. The declaration of war upon the United States. It was received with great skepticism.

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- c. The catastrophe at Stalingrad. It shook for the first time the public's firm belief in Hitler's infallibility. The opposition of the General Staff again made its appearance.
- d. The mis-carriage of the summer offensive (1943) on the East Front and the resulting loss of the Ukraine.
- e. The Allied invasion and the loss of France, occurring simultaneously with catastrophe on the East Front. This was felt as the decisive turning point in the entire war.
- f. The attempt on Hitler's life revealed that a part of the General Staff officers regarded Hitler's leadership as catastrophic.
- g. The failure of the German Ardennes Offensive.
- h. The invasion of Germany proper by enemy forces from the East and West. At that moment public confidence in the leadership collapsed completely. Thereafter only the appearance of positive morale was maintained by artificial means.

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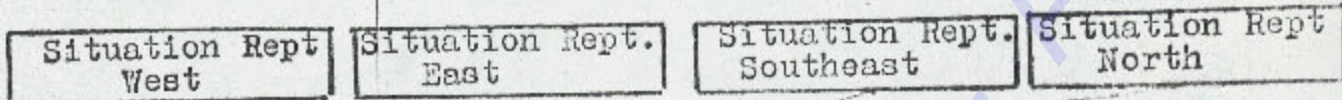
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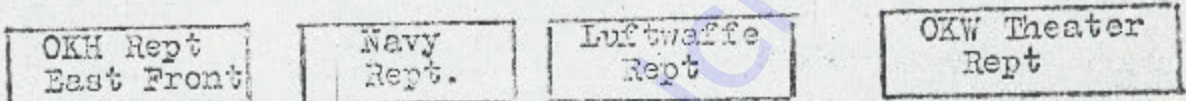
PREPARATION OF THE OKW REPORT
(Oct 44 - Apr 45)

1. Preliminary Work: Evening after 20:00 hrs.



1. Preliminary Draft:
Rept. of OKW Theaters

2. General Editing : Morning between 09:00 and 11:00



11:00 Consolidation of all Reports by Maj. v. Schramm
11:30 - 12:00 Submission of first draft to Gen. v. Wedel for editing and amendment
12:00 Transmittal of the draft to Reich Press Chief and Propa- ganda Ministry.
13:00 Submission of corrected draft to Col. Gen. Jodl by Maj. v. Schramm
13:30 Release of the final amended draft of the OKW report by Col. Gen. Jodl ----- Transmittal to Press and Radio

Note: The preliminary report from the OKW theaters was revised and amended on the basis of later incoming dispatches.

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Tel. 08051-2109

den 3. September 64

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Telefunkt. v. Ritter v. Sch.

Herrn
Dr. H. Krausnick
Generalsekretär des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte
8 München 27
Möhlstrasse 26

Institut für Zeitgeschichte	
Eingep. am: 9. Sep. 1964	
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Betr. Nachlass Grosscourth

U Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. Krausnick,

Den Nachlass Grosscourth, den Sie mir freundlicherweise überlassen haben, habe ich inzwischen durchgearbeitet. Von den sieben Denkschriften, die der englische bzw. amerikanische Bearbeiter Generaloberst Beck zuschreibt, sind nach Überprüfung einwandfrei von Beck:

- a) Zur Kriegslage nach Abschluss des polnischen Feldzugs
- b) Das deutsche Friedensangebot v. 6.10.39 und der mögliche weitere Kriegsverlauf
- c) Zwischenpause nach dem Misserfolg des deutschen Friedensangebots
- d) Eine Wendung im bisherigen Krieg?
- e) Die russische Frage für Deutschland, eine Skizze
- g) Betrachtung über die deutsche Lage um die Jahreswende 1939/40

Bei diesen Schriftstücken sind sichere Hinweise auf die Autorschaft Becks:

- 1. Der Vergleich mit den "Studien" Becks hinsichtlich Stil, Methode des Aufbaus, Übereinstimmung in bestimmten Redwendungen
- 2. Der Hinweis auf Clausewitz, der für Beck charakteristisch ist. Das Zitat auf S. 17 Clausewitz: Vom Kriege, 8. Buch, 6. Kapitel B ist auch der Studie "Strategie" (A.a.O. S. 69) vorangestellt.
- 3. Der Hinweis auf die Ansprache Becks zum 125 jährigen Jubiläum der Kriegsakademie auf S. 43

Nicht so sicher ist die alleinige Autorschaft Becks, der Denkschrift "Das drohende Unheil" (S. 72-85) Hier glaube ich an eine Mitarbeit Goerdelers, weil hier nicht nur eine "Lagebeurteilung" vorliegt, sondern bereits entschieden politische Stellung genommen

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v.Schramm II

wird. Solche Zusammenarbeit, wie sie den Generalstabsgepflogenheiten entsprach, lässt sich einwandfrei bei dem mir z. Zt. vorliegenden Teilnachlass Goerdelers feststellen.

Die Denkschrift "Die Bedeutung des russisch-finnischen Zusammenstosses für die gegenwärtige Lage Deutschlands" möchte ich aufgrund der Diktion G o e r d e l e r allein zuschreiben.

&

Nun habe ich eine grosse Bitte : Wie Sie ja von Herrn Teske wissen, bereite ich eine grosse Monographie Becks vor. Zuvor soll aber noch im Köhler-Verlag ein II. Band der "Studien" / von mir herausgegeben werden, der die Akademie-Rede, die Denkschriften vollständig (vor dem Rücktritt) sowie weitere bisher unbekannte Arbeiten bringen soll. Die im Nachlass Grosscourth enthaltenen Denkschriften sind m.E. sehr zeitgebunden und scheiden deshalb aus. Ausgenommen sind nur

die Skizze : "Die russische Frage für Deutschland"
Betrachtung über die deutsche Lage von S. 63 - 70

Ich habe deshalb die grosse Bitte an Sie, sehr verehrter Herr Dr. Krausnick, diese Denkschriften für die "Studien" zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Können wir uns am kommenden Dienstag darüber unterhalten? Ich bringe den Akt zurück und wäre Ihnen dankbar, wenn wir uns etwa 10.30 über die hier angeschlagenen Themen unterhalten könnten.

Inzwischen verbiddliche Grüsse

Ihres aufrichtig ergebenen

Koili. v. Schramm

T. J. J. 9. 9. 64

Erzählt lang...
von neuem
gegründeter,
aufgeblüht
immer noch
Gr. Deutschland
Pöckel-Goerdeler
Hansell-Zimmet
über
(2.3.)

M: Verwendung
von Beck - Denkschrift
mit fortw. Diskussion
nicht vor publ. Publikation

Er: Veroff. - Form für Beck - Studien II
Mann selbstgr. bestimmt werden

fehlt nur Vorwort bis 15.10.