

ZEUGENSCHRIFTUM

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Wehrmacht III - Wehrersatzwesen
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Hesse, Prof.

Col. Hesse is a former instructor of Military History at German War Academy. He is a well-known writer and several of his books are on file in the Intelligence Library. At the outbreak of the war Col. Hesse was in charge of Propoganda for the German Army. He was charged with the preparation of the film "Victory in the West." It is well known to Col. Truman Smith, Col. Percy Black and Col. Howard Smith and in their opinion Col. Hesse leans politically to the Anglo-Saxon rather than to Nazism. He was captured in France and brought to this country where he has been interviewed and questioned at great length by G-2. He has since been repatriated because of his failing eyesight. In the opinion of Col. Howard Smith this document can be considered highly reliable and many of the statements have been corroborated from other sources.

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COLLAPSE OF THE GERMAN WESTERN FRONT 1944.

The following constitute the basis of this discussion and judgment: Two trips in the summer and fall of 1942 from the Army High Command to Belgium and France, and on this occasion visits to numerous coastal sectors, conversations with the military commanders in Belgium and France or the Chiefs of the General Staffs of these two military administrations, General von Falkenhausen and Colonel von Harbou for Belgium, General von Stuelpnagel and Colonel Kossmann for France, with General Blaskowitz, Commander in Chief of the 1st Army, whose personal guest I was for 2 days and, in addition to this, conversations with a number of corps and division commanders and commanding officers.

From November 1942 to August 1944 I administered as "field commandant" (*) the largest French department-Seine-et-Oise, which surrounds Paris, and from here I maintained continuous liaison both with the group of armies in St. Germain and with the Military Commander of France. The same holds true as regards the highest command posts of the Luftwaffe, the Navy, other Reich authorities, and particularly the German Embassy. During this time I had numerous long conversations, mostly private ones, both with Field Marshal von Rundstedt and his Chief of Staff General Blumentritt, and with Field Marshal von Kluge and Rommel, Field Marshal Sperrle, Admiral Krenke, and Admiral Donnitz. After the beginning of the landing I traveled over the front line twice. From 26 August to 3 September 1944 I myself had a combat command and witnessed from close quarters the retreat or we may say the collapse. Later on, in captivity, I had an opportunity to discuss in detail the aspects of the collapse with a number of division and regimental commanders, numerous general staff and line officers of all branches.

Personnel List, 8/1/44

and Belgium in the year 1944 it will not suffice merely to investigate on the one hand the landing of the Allies in Normandy and their subsequent operations and on the other the German counter-measures. Neither will one arrive at a satisfactory judgment by emphasizing various other military factors such as for example the English-American air superiority, the preponderance in equipment, especially in tanks and airplanes, the better fuel supply, undisturbed rear communications of the attacker and other things. Of course, all of these were important factors and we must take them up, but each of them had after all only a limited share in the collapse of the German West Front. Hence, one cannot say, for example, that it was first of all the air force of the attacker which made victory possible. It was not at all made possible by military measures alone, but there was a combination of things which brought about the condition that made the German soldier in Western Europe ripe for defeat.

In 1944 the main war effort of Germany -- and this is something one must always bear in mind -- was being exerted in the East against the armies of the Soviet Union which had been on the offensive continuously since the spring of 1943. At the same time Germany had done heavy fighting in Africa, then in Sicily and in Italy. Forces were also tied down in the Balkans, in Finland, Lapland, and Norway and at a number of other points. A later and final consideration of the second World War will probably lead to the conclusion that the strength of the German people was not sufficient for the task that was forced upon it by the development of events. If we consider the situation from the standpoint of military operations, this means that the German command had scattered its forces and at the decisive moment did not have them at the proper place. In doing this it had disregarded one of the most important teachings of military history.

Of course, in the lack of strength and the resulting superiority of the Anglo-Saxon landing operations is to be found an important reason for the German defeat of 1944; however, if we evaluated this alone, other important things would be left out of consideration. We must certainly follow the spirit of an army and in a wider sense of a people in their development, consider France and the French in their attitude toward the German occupation, and take into account numerous

psychological and economic factors in order to explain the catastrophe correctly.

So then in our discussion we shall have to go farther back. We must first see what happened in Western Europe from the summer of 1940, from the collapse in Western Europe, in the case of which we must survey a period of approximately 3 1/2 years. Beginning in the fall of 1943 for the first time the Germans began energetic defense preparations, hence, at a time when the military landing preparations of the English and American commands were in full swing. The third phase then is the landing with the subsequent fighting and the establishment of a large firmly held beachhead. It is with this that the main operations join up.

Our task here is not to describe the latter or to examine the decisions and steps taken by the one or the other side. On the contrary, it is our purpose here to discuss the deeper reasons for the collapse, and in doing so we must enter into particulars concerning some of the German leaders. Men such as Field Marshal von Rundstedt, von Kluge and Rommel cannot be separated from the events. We must show to what extent they are responsible for the development of events. Even now we must say that there was a frightful split in leadership and that oftentimes there was no leadership at all. For this, however, the blame is perhaps not to be placed on the aforementioned persons, but is to be sought in the authoritarian system itself, and lastly in the Fuehrer, who wanted to do everything himself, not place real responsibility upon any one, who gave orders time and again to the troops without informing the higher commanders and in this way caused so much obscurity and confusion in the giving of orders that the results were bound to be calamitous.

What developed upon the Western European theater of war after the collapse of France in the summer of 1940? The German command had won a victory the magnitude of which was scarcely conceivable. The strongest continental power -- as France was regarded at that time -- had been overthrown in 6 weeks by a storm attack of the German armed forces. The majority of the high military commanders on the German side were themselves completely surprised by it. Later, however, it was not seldom that an intelligent general staff officer expressed himself in this sense: "If only we had not had this quick and easy victory! It would

have been better if the Fuehrer had experienced a different war here. Was it not entirely natural that he should be strengthened in his conception of the "divinely favored generalship" that had fallen his share, that his unfavorable judgment of the leadership qualifications of the German generals and of the general staffs after the Polish campaign should find new encouragement and, finally, that among the high military commanders the view should come to prevail more and more that the Fuehrer was a genuine military commander such as a people is given only about once every 200 years."

There are numerous proofs that the Fuehrer considered himself alone to be the spiritual father of the operations of 1940. On the basis of an article dealing with 10 May 1940 in which various things were said about "German leadership" his chief adjutant, General Schmundt, wrote the following to the author in the spring of 1941: "You have a false view of things. There has been no German leadership but only the Fuehrer; the latter and no one else conceived the idea of this operation. He had to make his idea prevail against a different conception and resistances of many kinds. Unfortunately, there are many people and even higher officers who cannot see what a unique military commander has been given to the German people in the person of the Fuehrer."

After the armistice of Compiègne, France was not to be any military factor for a reasonable space of time; this was the general opinion and, of course, the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch and his chief of General Staff, General Halder. In connection with the overthrow of the enemy in Western Europe there immediately arose, of course, some essentially new questions and important tasks.

In the foreground was the question: How shall the war be continued? England was still in the field, and though after the catastrophe of Dunkirk no longer on the European continent, she was still so on the Island. Should one not immediately cross the Channel and exploit the victory?

So then the question of landing in England was the next in order. During the campaign the German command answered by saying that the means were not available at that time and that nothing of equal value could be pitted against the superior English fleet. Germany had neither suitable nor sufficient shipping space nor

could this be provided in a short time. On the other hand the German naval forces were too weak to give sufficient protection to such a landing operation. It is possible that not enough importance was attached at this time to the fact that we had almost complete mastery of the air and that we had a strong air transport fleet - according to the statement of a general staff officer of the air force there were available 1,500 Junker machines for the transport of troops and material.

At that time England was in an almost defenseless position. She had been able to save only the wreckage of her continental army, which was without artillery, tanks and other materials, and even this was in a badly shattered condition. Today the English declare openly that at that time a few German divisions could have conquered England. As to whether the war would have ended with this is, of course, to be doubted. The Empire as such still had strong reserves and in the background was the United States of America. Later, at the beginning of July, the idea of the landing did take hold and numerous preparations were made for this operation, preparations designated by the code word "Sea Lion", but one must say that the proper moment had been neglected. Thereby, however, one renounced operational freedom in general. The enemy was given time to recover, to arm himself and prepare for the counter-blow. So then in order to understand the collapse in the West in 1944 one must certainly reflect upon this point. What we once neglect can never be made good.

On the contrary, the German command now had the task of protecting in its turn the Belgian and French coasts. If in the case of the first one certainly did not have to fear an enemy landing, one did have to prepare to ward off some commando enterprise or other or a local thrust in the form of a landing limited both in time and scope. Neither the command nor the troops took this matter very seriously. I myself had the opportunity in the summer of 1942 to inspect the Belgian coast, particularly at the mouth of the Scheldt, and a few months later I also inspected the Bay of Biscay fortifications. Only at a few points were there any military installations worth mentioning, as for example in Scheveningen where a few strong bunkers had been built and barbed wire entanglements put in place.

There were also several battery positions which were well defended. But otherwise there were long stretches of coast protected only by sentry positions and it would have been an easy matter for the enemy to land in many places. Of course, at this time there was still a good long distance reconnaissance and the coast was guarded continually by the Luftwaffe.

An additional question was to what extent France should be garrisoned in order to keep the country in subjection. One recognized quickly that only a small force was necessary for this. So then, for the campaign in Russia in the summer and fall of 1941, the great mass of the German Army in the west could be freed without any hesitation. The unoccupied part of France, however, caused some concern, since in accordance with the armistice conditions a part of south and southwest France was left in the hands of French troops without any German troops moving in. On the other side of the line of demarcation the French government, which had moved over to Vichy, was master in his own house for about 2 years. Of course, the German and Italian armistice commissions were allowed access and supervised the execution of the disarmament provisions. So then, if one could carry out here a certain amount of supervision and if necessary enforce demands, the situation was different in French North Africa, which likewise was not occupied by German troops. Here the French will to resistance became concentrated and here were organized the new military forces of France. This was the starting point of the march of General Charles de Gaulle, a person who had become known in Germany particularly through a small book dealing with the future war and who had attracted much notice in an intellectual sense but, of course, not enough as regards his activity in North Africa.

To be sure, in 1940, the German command had an opportunity to transport troops there by air, but at that time one was of the opinion that the German soldiers should not fight on African soil. General Rommel, who was still employed as the adjutant of the Fuehrer in the year 1940, related to me in October of this year, when he had just arrived at Potsdam from a conversation with the Fuehrer in the Reich chancellery, the following characteristic statement of the Fuehrer: "Not a man and not a penny for Africa."

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This refusal to establish a foothold in North Africa merely favored the English-American plans, as was shown by the landing in Morocco in the late fall of 1942. In the meantime, however, considerable German forces had been committed to the African theater of operations; the enemy had acquired mastery of the sea and air in the Mediterranean area to an extensive degree and in this way had brought about a weakening of German power of resistance as a whole, an achievement which could not fail to have a repercussion upon the events in the more restricted European field.

Then, too, we must make mention of the burden placed upon the German command by the entrance of Italy into the war. Whatever forces Germany might have had available, she should not have been required to employ them in the Mediterranean region. Under these circumstances we could have perhaps made an alliance with France, because there was no doubt an opportunity for skilled diplomacy.

Would England as during the time of Napoleon I try to gain a foothold in Spain and carry on the attack from here? This question also came up with the termination of the western campaign of 1940. In view of the friendly relationships between the German Reich and Spain we felt that we were safe from this side. Later on plans had to be made for protecting the Pyrenees frontier.

So then beginning with the summer of 1940 there was not for a rather long time any question of a western European theater of military operations. France was an occupied country which had to be kept in a peaceful condition and used for the German conduct of warfare. The more this was brought about with the cooperation of the French people and French economy, the better it would be for the German cause. So then it was the duty of the administrative authorities employed to achieve this goal by appropriate and adequate measures.

Before we consider in a brief manner the German military administration, we must call attention to a few characteristic factors in the structure of France. This country and its people must always be understood from its center, Paris. France is nothing without its capital, one may say. The capital is not only the great population center but is also the headquarters of the political, intellectual, artistic, and economic life, particularly the latter. Here all the

great lines of communication come together, and one may say not only those of France but those of other parts of the world. It was certainly difficult for the French government to decide to abandon the capital and go to Vichy. It removed itself from this network of relationships which had developed over a long period of time. It represented France from a point which was not a real center. The advantage it first had in not being in the immediate sphere of German influence was lost by the occupation of southern France, which occurred later. If one wished to organize a new resistance, one could probably do this easiest in Paris, which is lacking in transparency in so many respects, and which is the hiding place of so many adventurers, but which is at the same time the headquarters of the international world, whose relations with foreign countries were not entirely destroyed in spite of all the obstacles placed in the way by the occupation.

Relatively speaking France was not hit very hard by the defeat and her losses in killed were not at all comparable to those of the first World War. The destruction throughout combat actions, especially air attacks, were small in extent when considered as a whole. Hence, her considerable war potential remained intact to a great extent, and this is proved especially by the fact that the German Wehrmacht gave French industry large orders. It also had an advantage in that millions of French workers were not only employed but paid better than formerly, at least in the majority of cases. So then the country was kept peaceful.

Probably this would have been the case anyway, because the French people were tired. In 1940 and also later it showed no will to fight, especially so long as the German military authorities could follow its policy of a quiet sensible administration of the country. If the English had really intended to land, they could have counted on scarcely any support from the French people, especially not in the first years after the defeat, when as a rule one heard the opinion expressed among the French population that England had left France in the lurch in her critical hour.

Both of the German military administrations set up in Western Europe -- the two involved were the military commander for Belgium and North France and

the military commander for the rest of France -- had certainly contributed a great deal to keeping the French, Belgian and Dutch populations in a tranquil condition. A great contribution to this had also been made by a skillful selection of persons both for the leading positions and for the subordinate positions. The military commanders, the chiefs of staff of these authorities and the respective administrative heads, with the 4 commanders subordinate to them, and the Oberfeld (*) commander and the "field commander" were in the majority of cases not partisans of militancy in politics but were men who were chiefly concerned in bringing about an amicable understanding between the German and French people (or Belgian, and Dutch). Unfortunately, they were not always masters in their own house. Other state and political authorities carried out a French policy on their own responsibility and did their best to make the activity of the military commanders appear at the Fuehrer's headquarters as a policy of weakness. This led to many improper interventions by higher authorities and finally to a change in various officials.

If we observe the work of the two great military administrations, we can see that as regards the events of 1944 it is not to be separated from Generals von Falkenhausen and von Stuelpnagel and Colonels von Harbou, Speidl and Kossmann. General von Falkenhausen was military commander in Belgium and North France for almost 4 years. His chief of staff was Colonel von Harbou for almost the same period of time. The former was fortunate in a political sense. Skillful in a social sense and basing his policy of reconciliation on the recognition of as many of the interests of the country as possible, he was able to mobilize in a high degree the rich economic resources of Belgium and North France. In this a great deal of assistance was rendered by the former collaborator of Ludendorff, Colonel von Harbou, who, after his departure from the high army command after the first World War, found, like so many other general staff officers, a leading position in industry and brought with him a rich experience in the handling of people and the activation of economic energy. I fondly recall meeting both of these persons in particular on the occasion of a trip which I made, in my position as chief of army propaganda, as early as the year 1940, with German scientists.

(*) Head of a military government or a headquarters.

writers and high political leaders to the western theater of military operations. The military administration not only did every thing to make such trips through the country a success, but it received its guests in a fitting manner and gave the impression of administering the country wisely.

At any rate General von Falkenhausen had achieved two things: the country was still tranquil in the spring of 1944. In spite of a serious food situation, the damages of war had been extensively repaired and the economy of the country had made essential contributions to the German war effort.

In the jurisdiction of the military commander of the rest of France the situation was more difficult in many respects. In the first place the area to be administered was considerably larger than that of the military commander of Belgium and North France, because for a rather long time about half of the country was not occupied by armed forces. Finally, the French people were different from the Belgians in structure and mentality. The military commander in France at the time of the landing, General von Stuelpnagel, had regarded his task in the same manner that General von Falkenhausen had, namely, as one of pacifying the country and skillfully utilizing its economic resources. As an individual he differed, of course, in many respects from the military commander of Belgium and North France. He restrained himself more than the latter. Though he was personally amiable he seemed to be less transparent. His recall and sudden death soon after 20 July 1944 -- General von Stuelpnagal attempted suicide but did not die until a few days later -- enabled us to draw certain conclusions. If we disregard certain incidents, his activity in France must be regarded as successful on the whole. The fact that he succeeded in getting the French administration to cooperate with the German authorities and in employing the industry of the country to the maximum extent, proves that his measures were appropriate. The various chiefs of the general staff and the individuals acting in the administration contributed much to this. Mention must be made in particular of Colonels Speidl and Kossmann. The former had previously been a military attaché in France and not only spoke excellent French but also had a good knowledge of the country and

of the mentality of the French people. He was one of those general staff officers who combined skill, wisdom and sound political sense. Even in the moments of the greatest military successes he retained his calm and with this the ability to criticize, which is so important, but through the military commanders his influence could be exerted only in a limited way. Later on, used as chief of the general staff of the group of armies lately organized by Field Marshal Rommel, he did excellent work here also. At an early date he recognized that the landing was bound to succeed, unless there was a basic change in operational conceptions at the Fuehrer's headquarters. At the beginning of August 1944 he told me that the war was lost unless there was an immediate evacuation of Western and Southern France and the considerable German forces in this region placed behind the Seine-Loire-Saone-Rhone line. Besides, this was also the opinion of Field Marshal von Kluge, who, as successor of Field Marshal von Rundstedt, was later placed in command of the West group of armies.

Colonel Kossmann, who replaced Colonel Speidel as chief of the General Staff of the Military Commander of France, perhaps knew less about the country at first and in the beginning was also less critical of the development of the situation than the latter, but he was a broad-minded, enthusiastic, and amiable person who was skilled in a social sense and a valuable support of the Military Commander. He realized more and more the correctness of the German policy carried out in France and tried to direct the disturbing forces along the right path.

Above all, it was a question of anticipating the demands of Gauleiter Sauckel as regards inconsiderate taking of French laborers for employment in Germany. These demands were of a kind to activate the French National Forces that were beginning to gather in the resistance movement. So long as the volunteer method was used or when a labor contract was entered into by two parties and the French worker went to Germany of his own accord, there was nothing to fear for the peace of the country. This changed the moment that Gauleiter Sauckel made demands that could no longer be fulfilled. One can say that by this means one only played into the hands of an enemy that had decided upon making a

landing and that tens of thousands of French were driven into the so-called Maquis movement. In spite of this it would not be correct to say that the situation in the spring of 1944 in France was perhaps no longer under the control of the German military administration. But there was a growing tension and this in turn affected both the activity of the German authorities and of the German troops, who were forced to take measures of security for their own protection. Then too the protection of roads, railways, bridges, and numerous military and industrial objectives required the employment of an ever increasing number of troops. Their being tied down here meant a perceptible weakening of the front and this must also be taken into account in connection with the landing and its consequences.

The most important question, however, is to what extent the German soldier in France was affected by the country and his military qualifications were influenced. Field Marshal Rommel told me, when I had an opportunity to talk with him personally in the spring of 1944 at Fontainebleau, that at the Fuehrer's headquarters, from which he had just come, one had a very poor opinion of the German soldier in the West. He claimed the Fuehrer himself had said that the German soldier was "eaten up". Paris seemed to him like a Babel. He said that the military commander had done nothing to prevent the decay of the military spirit.

What was the real truth of the matter? There is no doubt that the troops staying in the west for a long time had become accustomed to the country; they gladly made use of the good quarters, of this or that opportunity to improve their living conditions and to secure foodstuffs, household goods, and clothing for the homeland. The interest in the latter seemed to stand very much in the foreground, if one may judge from what was seen, for example, in 1942 or 1943 on the big business streets of Paris, Lyon or Marseille and also of Brussels or Amsterdam. One who stayed for only a short time in the occupied territory of the West would necessarily get the impression oftentimes that one did not think very much here about the war. The soldier loaded with packages had evidently

replaced the fighter with weapons. One lived well though the cost was high; on Sundays one took a trip and carried his girl friend along. Was it really this way? One would certainly do the soldier in the West an injustice to generalize this judgment. This certainly is not true as regards the divisions stationed on the coast. One cannot deny that France, the Frenchmen, and even the French women exercised a certain influence which adversely affected a limited part of the German armed forces and particularly the administrative authorities. But the military authorities had things fully under control and both General von Falkenhausen and General von Stuelpnagel, with whom I had an opportunity to discuss this matter, saw the situation clearly and did their best to maintain order and discipline.

The military authorities may be blamed for the situation which prevailed at the time of the collapse of the western front only with qualifications. Many times it was a question of the so-called "flight automobile" and not of the military vehicle. There were in France, and particularly in Paris, numerous other authorities of the state and of the Party and representatives of industry in large numbers. In a number of cases it was also ascertained that the French or Belgian women were taken along for their personal protection and at their own request. In spite of this there were a great many things that were not clean and the homeland would necessarily get the impression of a catastrophe.

The assertion that the French women won a victory over the German soldiers is not tenable when regarded more closely. Of course, there were liaisons, but not to the extent that was supposed. Where they appeared too openly, the military authorities always intervened and frequently the soldier concerned was transferred to the East or to the Balkans.

In Paris, in particular, there was good order, something which the German commander saw to. At the time of the landing of the Allies in Normandy this was Major General von Boyneburg, a soldier who was just as energetic as he was amiable and who had taken special precautions for the defense of the city from the outside or from disorders within. Unfortunately, he was relieved of his post a few days

before the fall of the city and replaced by General von Koltitz, who was intelligent but who was not acquainted with the situation. Since at the same time there was a change in the command of the West and Southwest front of the city, which was affected by the American attack, the situation for Paris must have seemed serious. The responsible infantry general here, Vierow, a commanding general who had made an excellent showing in the East and who had been a commander in Northwest France for a year, was relieved by a high Party leader who had received his last military training 30 years ago as officer candidate, who had no kind of front experience but who in spite of this was promoted in one day from Lieutenant Colonel to General.

Before taking up this matter, however, we must pose the question as to whether or not the spirit of the German soldier had changed from 1940 to 1944 in a manner decisively effecting the conduct of battle. There is not a doubt of this. There are many things to be considered if we wish to do justice to the internal development of the German armed forces. It is only by considering them properly that we can understand why the collapse had to take place in the manner that it did.

In reality, it was no longer the soldier of 1940 which again went into battle on French soil 4 years later. It was less the influence of the West -- and this must be emphasized again -- or even of women that had destroyed his fighting morale. Four years of war had consumed him. It is not that one can say that he had become tired; this is true, of course, for a number of the members of the armed forces, especially for the old men; but in the face of events the men were indifferent and many times they had an inner feeling of doubt which, of course, they did not dare to express.

In the ranks of the German armed forces one no longer believed in victory, and this probably characterizes in the most pointed manner, the psychological basis which caused the collapse. Outwardly the men acted as if they believed in victory but in private conversation the case was different.

Unfortunately, this was the case in the officers' corps and even in the higher staffs. The situation was characterized by mutual distrust. This again was a

result of giving a political character to the armed forces, a development which was not even approximately so strong in 1940. Heavier and heavier inroads had been made upon the old officers corps, the party had gained more and more influence and the SS had thrust itself more and more in the foreground.

What kind of a measure was it anyway to create, in addition to the three branches of the armed forces, independent by their very nature, namely, the Army, the Air Force and the Navy, a fourth branch, the Waffen SS? How must it have struck the army when it was increasingly pushed back into a secondary place, when many times in contrast to the Waffen SS it was not given the necessary equipment, and even when it was prejudiced in the matter of reserves/^{its} good men taken away from it and finally when it was regarded as politically unreliable!

Of course, one cannot deny the fact that the SS divisions as a rule fought well, even though they were not always led in a corresponding manner. More than once, especially in the East, bloody sacrifices were made, which with intelligent leadership of these divisions could easily have been avoided.

The troops of 1944 were not only different from those of 1940 spiritually and morally but they were also physically different. Most of the German divisions went on to the French battlefields heterogeneously organized, meeting only in a limited sense field requirements as regards fitness; their officers and non-commissioned officers were much poorer than formerly and in uniforms, equipment, and supplies they could not be compared to the attacker.

If one wishes, one can classify these divisions on the basis of their fighting qualities. The armored division, the parachute infantry and SS divisions coming from the East were approximately on the same footing. In the second place were the active units which were in the West and which were held back as fully motorized strategic reserves. The third group was constituted by the Luftwaffe field divisions, which many times were well organized as regards personnel, but were not well trained and were frequently poorly led. In the fourth place were the coastal or fortification divisions which showed many weaknesses due to the fact that their officers, non-commissioned officers and men had been extensively "combed out" and for this reason were very old and did not have at their disposal the equipment of the

normal field division; their artillery was many times installed in fixed positions and their motorization was insufficient. The greater part of such divisions was, as regards the transport of their weapons, their equipment and their supplies, dependent upon horse traction and also in part upon country vehicles that had been gathered up, namely, the heavy two-wheeled French carts.

There were still other units as, for example, specially organized security divisions, combat groups with the strength of a division and those units which were organized during the catastrophe; but many times these were poor troops and represented little more than poorly led mobs.

When with all this we compare the picture of the English and American attack divisions, then it becomes clear why the number of fighters in 1944 would no longer be decisive. In another respect, of course, it had its importance. It was not a matter of indifference as to whether a tank division went into battle with 30 to 50 tanks or with 500, whether it had fuel for only one day or had an unlimited amount, or whether a unit was transported by cross-country vehicles which could carry it anywhere or whether it had to march on foot. The same thing must be said in regard to the air force. If the commanding general of the 9th Air Corps, the excellent young General Pels, who at the early age of 29 took command of the air corps used against England, gave the ratio of German fighter planes to English fighter planes at 1:10, how must the ratio have been later! It was not surprising that with such a neglect of the western theater of military operations or with the considerable lack of anti-aircraft defense the movement of troops on the German side in the day time became almost impossible. In addition to this, there was a corresponding moral effect, entirely aside from the considerable loss in men and materiel by all the military units from enemy air attacks.

While in the ranks of the English and American attack divisions there were only a few men over 35, in numerous German units at the time of the offensive this was the average age. Even the higher commanders of the Allies were much younger on the average than those on the German side, even though a rejuvenation had been carried out in the last few years at the expense of ability.

What happened in 1918 when the German general was no longer able to act tactically on a large scale and much less able to act strategically also made its appearance now. There was, of course, a difference: at the end of the first World War the influence of a long period of trench warfare made itself felt; the higher military commander got in a rut in his thinking and could not get out. Expressed in another way, he had forgotten how to lead and then too the war had changed in many respects in the meantime. In 1944 there were also generals who for years had led no troops in answer of movement. On the other hand there were among the commanders in the West numerous officers with experience in the East. Why then did they act in spite of this with so little determination and in a manner that was so inappropriate for the situation.

There is only one answer to this. Their hands were entirely tied by the Fuehrer's headquarters. In addition to this their love of responsibility had been paralyzed by numerous events, by all of those cases of removal and condemnation of generals by court-martial. The independent ones had probably deviated from an order of the Fuehrer and acted to the best of their knowledge but were unsuccessful. No one wanted to be removed from his position under dishonorable conditions, or be degraded or end his career in a concentration camp.

Perhaps every one did not see that the war had changed since 1939 or 1941 just as it changed between the years 1914 - 1918. As a rule the German general saw in the Luftwaffe less a strategic means for conducting warfare than a tactical means. Only in a few places was it realized that traffic chaos would render an orderly troop movement almost impossible. If it is true that the importance of the "new weapon" was exaggerated by the Fuehrer and in addition to this the fighter plane program neglected, this represents a failure to recognize the true state of affairs in 1944 and 1945.

If in 1917-18 it was the English and American tank against which the German infantry had no suitable defense, then this same tank on the German side in 1944 found itself almost defenseless against the pursuit bomber and since the German command had neither ground defense nor air defense it had to look on while the Tigers and Panthers fell victims to the enemy air attacks. The bomb carpet

which formed the breakthrough gaps for the English and American tank divisions was, as regards its strategic importance, not sufficiently realized before the battle in Normandy, and the cooperation between the air force and the tank formations was not developed in a similar manner by the German command. It is probable that the creation by the Germans of two separate branches contributed much to this. Agreement was needed in almost every case but instead there appeared differences of opinion in the command staffs and general staffs of both of the two branches of the armed forces. In the American Army there was no such division.

In this connection it may be mentioned that Major General Henning von Tresckow, an army chief who was killed in the East, the brains of the overthrow attempt of 20 July 1944, one of the best, wisest and most active officers of the German Army, told me in the fall of 1943 that in the early summer of 1944 the war would reach a stage, due to inability to resist the enemy bombing attacks, in which the German command would have no possibility of carrying on observation. When I replied that I expected the war would last at least into the fall of the year and probably through the winter of 1944-45, he told me that I was probably the only one who held this opinion. He said that the general staff, at least its more intelligent part, was of his opinion, but that one could not convince the Fuehrer and that there was no general who had the courage to tell him the true facts or to act in a determined manner.

Then, too, the higher military commander was not always given good advice by his general staff. Of course, the great majority of the officers serving in such positions were carefully chosen and also performed well but the "aftergrowth" was not sufficient many times and particularly in the case of the Luftwaffe. Then too the general staff officer was poorly treated. The unfavorable conception of the Fuehrer was also promoted to a great extent by his chief adjutant, General Schmundt, mentioned many times and himself a former general staff officer, who judged his old comrades in a most severe manner. If in spite of this the German troops still fought well in Normandy and Brittany in June, July and August 1944,

There is a double explanation for this: In the first place the sense of duty of the German soldier still expressed itself, and in the second place there was the spirit of the young soldiers, and especially of the young officers. In contrast to the mass of soldiers which believed the war had been lost, they believed to the last in the Fuehrer and his cause. They sacrificed themselves for him; in many places they were filled with real fanaticism for fighting. There were only a few among them who were accessible to an intelligent consideration. They rejected from the very start every calm criticism of the situation and saw in this an effort to undermine the will for victory and the belief in victory.

As a characteristic example of this we may take Major Harald Lindenberg, a spirited officer who could not be surpassed in soldierly enthusiasm and with whom one could discuss the seriousness of the situation; but when I did so he vigorously rejected the idea that the war could end without complete victory.

This group of pure idealists controlled to a high degree the attitude of the troops. It was this group which believed to the last in the V-weapons and their success, often in connection with foolish ideas taken from nowhere. They had no doubts about anything, provided it looked favorable and they rejected from the very start any bad news as enemy propaganda.

In contrast to 1918 the enemy exercised hardly any influence at all by propaganda. The flying leaflets dropped by English and American airplanes were not read, and the broadcasts were either not listened to or were considered as propaganda. If some felt anxiety about the homeland and were oppressed by the bombing attacks, the negative effects resulting from them showed strongly only in the case of the older men. On the other hand, people were entirely receptive to Goebbels' propaganda or the Party propaganda and did not notice how in many respects they alienated themselves from the spirit of the old army, to the detriment of the internal cohesion of the troops and of the relations of confidence between officers and men or between the higher command authorities and the front.

It is also a question here of determining the truthfulness of the assertion that the events which led to the attempt at assassination on 20 July 1944, and the attempt itself and its consequences contributed to the collapse of the German

West Front and that the "treason of the generals" was responsible for it. This seems to be without foundation. Those who knew about the assassination attempt were limited to a very small circle. If there were among these certain persons who were of great importance for the conduct of the war, they did not sabotage the measures for preventing the enemy landing and did not keep the troops in the West from being supplied sufficiently with ammunition, fuel, food and other things. If in the course of the campaign there appeared deficiencies in this respect on the German side, they were caused by the destruction of the rear communications by the enemy air force and the lack of motor vehicles and fuel and were not caused by the intentional prevention of important military transportation. Neither can one say that the higher command, in expectation of the coming events, acted hesitatingly or neglectfully; on the contrary, everything was done that was at all possible to prevent the landing and it will be possible to see this later on. The events of 20 July 1944 were not known among the troops until very much later. Even at the beginning of August there were numerous companies in which nothing was known concerning the attempt at assassination and there were others in which one did not believe the report. It was really surprising how little repercussion this extraordinary event had. Many times it appeared as if it were not taken seriously.

In looking back over the development of events one can see clearly that this was, of course, already a symptom of collapse. That the success of the attempt or in other words the removal of the Fuehrer and the replacement of the National Socialist Fuehrer system by a military dictatorship would have brought about a turn in the war and would have saved the German people from unconditional surrender seems improbable on the basis of what has become known in the meantime from the circles of the American and English general staffs. Two things presumably would have happened: There would have been a quicker collapse of the German fronts and possibly a fight among the Germans themselves and at the same time a corresponding advance of the enemy in the East, West, and South. Of course, the destruction of German cities by enemy air attacks beginning with the fall of 1944 would probably not have materialized.

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The fact that the German soldier still continued to fight for 9 months after the attempted assassination and manytimes in a really heroic manner, especially on the Eastern Front, shows that new forces of resistance developed from the attempt. They could no longer be effective on the Western Front but the events here from the end of July on developed rapidly and the battle of France was really decided when the landing was a success, after the command had neglected to withdraw the troops from Normandy, Brittany, Bay of Biscay and the south coast of France to form a short line, a plan which represented at this time the main conception of the West group of armies.

At the beginning of the landing the command in the western theater of operations was in the hands of the West group of armies, whose commander in chief was Field Marshal von Rundstedt. His headquarters were at St. Germain near Paris and, hence, I had an opportunity to be there often. Befriended by his only son the amiable Lieutenant von Rundstedt -- he was the special mission staff officer of his father -- I often had an opportunity to speak with the Field Marshal, especially in the critical period. I should like to summarize my impression of this individual who today is strongly criticized and not least as regards his activity as chairman of the court martial which was created because of the events of 20 July 1944: 68 years old, with a military career lasting 50 years, a long time in the service of the general staff; Field Marshal von Rundstedt had real ability and great experience; besides, he knew France well from the first World War and from the German Offensive of 1940, in which he had already led an army group in an important position. He enjoyed great respect in the German officers corps and especially in the general staff and enjoyed in a peculiar manner the confidence of the Fuehrer who regarded him as the oldest general of the German armed forces and trusted him time and again, even though he removed him from his position twice.

One cannot by any means say that Field Marshal von Rundstedt reciprocated this favor of the Fuehrer; there were even moments, especially at the beginning of the war, in which he expressed very sharp criticism, wanted to "throw his stick against the wall", meaning his marshal's staff, and in no way agreed with the strategic conceptions of the Fuehrer's headquarters. More than one he proposed -- and this is definitely confirmed -- to tell the Fuehrer what he thought. If

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this did not happen and he returned, again won over by his discussion with the Fuehrer, the only explanation is that he like so many others weakened under the influence of this demonic personality. In addition, he had for his age an astonishing ambition and in a certain sense an urge for activity and did not want to be set aside because of his age. Those who knew him were intimately regretted that after being rendered harmless he again took steps to be employed again.

In my last meeting with him, in the early summer of 1944, I found him old, tired, and almost decrepit, and even for a very narrow circle he was not accessible for a detailed conversation, but preferred to play for hours at a time with the big Bergdackel of his chief of general staff; he made him jump many times in the central heating plant or in a place enclosed with glass and here closed him in and enjoyed playing with him. Of course, I saw in this a kind of tactics to avoid some question or other, which, of course, could be posed only in a cautious manner.

If the German command in the West had no success, one cannot reproach either Field Marshal von Rundstedt or his active chief of staff of the group of armies, General Blumentritt. Both held the same opinion to a high degree but were not able to make their viewpoint prevail in the Fuehrer's headquarters. Field Marshal von Rundstedt wished to withdraw his strategic reserves far back and fight from the depths of the defense area, in other words, carry on a war of movement, while the Fuehrer, and with him Field Marshal Rommel, who was the commander-in-chief of the newly formed group of armies on the coast, was of the opinion that one should have the forces as close as possible to the front and that was threatened. In St. Germain the opinion prevailed that the available divisions were not to be of equal strength everywhere, while those in the higher positions wanted to occupy all the points in about the same strength. The result was that one did not have sufficient strategic reserves, did not have them in place at the proper time and did not have them sufficiently strong at the decisive point.

In view of the air superiority of the enemy and the poor motorization of the German divisions, and in view of the lack of tanks and means for tank defense and the destruction of rear communications, it is very doubtful that the Germans could have carried on a war movement in the summer of 1944. It was only by concentra-

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tion of forces and their employment in short organized sectors, with a simultaneous large scale terrain mission, that one could still carry on the fight, in other words, a delaying action, sparing our own formations to the maximum extent. Hence, nothing was more erroneous than the winter offensive of the German Army in the Ardennes, at a moment when not only the situation in the East was extremely critical but at a time when the German personnel and equipment reserves were at the point of exhaustion. Moreover, this was again the idea of the Fuehrer, but Field Marshal von Rundstedt offered to carry out its execution although without a doubt he himself held a different conception.

Of course, the three army commanders placed on the coast, General von Salmuth, Dollmann and Blaskovitz, agreed with the commander in chief of the group of armies, but they too were unsuccessful in bringing their influence to bear, especially after the formations stationed in the threatened coastal sector were organized into a new group of armies under the command of Field Marshal Rommel, in accordance with the special instructions of the Fuehrer. This certainly was no wise measure and this holds true both in the matter of personnel as well as in the delimitation of command relationships. Rundstedt and Rommel and also Rommel and Kluge were different people. At the very best Field Marshal von Rundstedt saw in Rommel a good division commander but never the commander of an army or group of armies. Of course, he gave due credit to what had been done in Africa, but saw in this only tactical command of troops. "A tactician but no strategist", is the way Rundstedt characterized him. In my first conversation in Roche-Guyon on the Seine below Paris where, after the departure of Rommel at the beginning of August 1944, I had a rather long conversation with Field Marshal von Kluge, who at this time commanded both groups of armies, the latter reported to me his first conversation with Rommel. It was approximately as follows: "First of all you must learn to obey, Rommel, do you understand that?", began Kluge. To this Rommel replied: "I do not know what you mean. You probably forget that you have a field marshal before you." Kluge: "I fully realize this. You have had, however, up until now independent positions and have carried out your intentions over the heads of your superiors, by going to the Fuehrer. I am of the opinion that the difficult situation here in the West can be controlled only by strict leadership." Rommel: "My order to

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protect the coast is clear. I demand that the West group of armies place at my disposal all the necessary forces and material." Kluge: "You may be assured that this will be done, but I not only have to think of Normandy but of the Western theater of military operations as a whole. You will, as an old general staff officer and as a leader who has proved his worth in the East, grant that I have an understanding for strategy."

The conversation, which at times, according to the statement of Kluge, assumed a cutting tone, ended by Rommel promising to subordinate himself and to refrain from independent steps in the Fuehrer's headquarters.

The successor of Rundstedt, Field Marshal von Kluge, whom I had already got well acquainted with as a general staff officer of the 36th Division in the first World War, who was later my teacher and whom I talked to last in the East, at Smolensk, in 1941, was the type of the high German officer coming from the General Staff. He was still physically and mentally fresh, intelligent and skilled at the age of 60 -- in the army he was called Wise Hans -- and knew his profession well. In addition to this, he had political insight, was well educated and was certainly one of the best generals of the German Army. He did not shut his eyes to the seriousness of the situation in the summer of 1944 any more than did Field Marshal Rommel or General Speidl. "We are on the verge of a catastrophe" was his opinion at the beginning of August 1944. I shall not go into the matter of the connection between his recall, which followed soon after, and the incident of 20 July, though a connection was claimed. On the basis of his real attitude Kluge was in the camp of those who saw the fatal outcome and who wanted to avoid it if possible. As to whether or not it could have been done the way the men of 20 July intended will always be an open question. For the Prussian soldier von Kluge even the acceptance of such an idea was certainly a serious question of conscience, but on the other hand he was a man having ambition and who evidently still expected to play an important part. At any rate one may conclude this from a remark he made to me when he took leave. Field Marshal von Kluge died on his way from Paris to the homeland, as was reliably reported, of a heart attack during a stop to eat.

In regard to the campaign in France Kluge was of the opinion, when he relieved Field Marshal von Rundstedt, that the landing had been successful and that it was no longer possible to throw the enemy back into the sea. In this he was in direct opposition to the opinion of the Fuehrer, who proceeded on this assumption when he ordered the push against Avranches. Kluge regarded France and Belgium as operational areas which were to be utilized for defense. He realized his inferiority in forces and as a result of this strove to economize them.

The personality of Field Marshal Rommel is so generally known that we need only to mention some characteristic features and conversations to understand events in France. In contrast to all the other high leaders in the West Rommel had not come from the general staff. He was a real troop expert, the "desert fox", as the English in Africa called him. While one of his strong points was the ability to take in the situation at a glance, he at the same time exerted his extraordinary activity and energy in a decisive manner upon the spirit and the performance of his troops. He demanded a great deal, gave the example himself and carried all with him; he was a leader who was not only always at the front but always appeared at the right moment at the decisive point on the front, but, of course, he neglected the broad phases of command and left it to a large extent to his general staff.

A few days after he had taken over the command on the coast and had just returned from a visit to the most important sectors of the front, I was able to talk with him for the first time. In comparison with 1940 he had not changed much. It was not true that he still suffered from the effects of the African campaign. Just as always he devoted himself wholeheartedly to his task. He expressed different opinions of the troops on the coast; concerning some of the commanders he expressed sharp criticism and let it be known that he would make some quick changes here. For him much too little had been done for the defense. His new ideas concerning foreshore barriers, stake obstacles, the so-called "Rommel stakes" for preventing enemy landings, the organization of a second rear position and other things were developed by him with great vigor. He definitely counted on the landing, but was in doubt as to whether or not it would take place on the Channel

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coast or in Normandy or even in South France. This uncertainty also existed in the mind of the German command after 6 June. The landing in Normandy was regarded as the first part of the great enemy enterprise. The main landing was still expected on the Channel coast. To this fact we may attribute both the hesitating employment of the reserves and the failure to organize quickly a definite point of main effort for the German Army in Normandy.

"If we do not succeed in driving the enemy into the sea by the fourth day at the latest, the landing will be a success". This was Rommel's opinion and he added: "I am convinced that we can prevent it if only we have the forces to do so. For this reason I want to have strong tank units close to the coast and I am glad that the Fuehrer is of my opinion. We have our experience from Sicily and Italy. We do not want to make the same mistakes again. Reserves which in the former conception were held far back as strategic reserves cannot be put in position at the right time, and it is here that I differ in opinion with Field Marshal von Rundstedt who is certainly a good general but he is too old. I do not know at all why the group of armies remains in St. Germain. Our only problem now is to employ all our forces for preventing the landing."

Though here there still appears an agreement with the conception of the Fuehrer's headquarters, I also found for the first time a definite criticism. It appeared in a remark that there were too many people around the Fuehrer who did not understand military matters and who evidently influenced the Fuehrer. Later, after the landing had succeeded and Cherbourg had already fallen, Rommel expressed himself in a way which must be regarded as indicative of an inward change. He told me about an exchange of telegrams between him and the Fuehrer's headquarters concerning the measures for the protection of Cherbourg. With bitterness he said that his proposals had been rejected twice and, finally, when it was too late, accepted. He made the Fuehrer's headquarters and especially General Jodi and Warlimont responsible for the fact that he was not given a free hand. He said among other things that it was impossible to command when from this authority the troops were given orders over his head by people who had no knowledge of the true situation. He said he did not know whether or not under these conditions he could retain the command for very long. He said he had no desire to take blame for failures caused by the Fuehrer's headquarters and not by him.

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In the last conversation that I had with him on the day before his departure for Germany and when he was on a sick bed in the Le Vesinet Hospital near Paris, he regarded not only the battle in the West as lost but also the war. This is not to be attributed as might be supposed to the fact that he had suffered greatly from an accident and that he was in a pessimistic frame of mind. On the contrary, I found him surprisingly fresh. The chief surgeon who was treating him, the Leipzig Surgeon Dr. Bach, told me that only a sound and energetic person like Rommel could "pull through" such a serious brain injury as he had suffered in the automobile accident. On his return from the front Rommel was attacked by 8 English pursuit bombers; his chauffeur received a serious shoulder wound from which he died soon thereafter and the fast travelling automobile was left without a driver. The car skidded and Rommel was hurled against the upper metal piece of the windshield and then against the pavement. The result was a fracture of the base of the skull on both sides with a wound 9 cm long and a lacerated eye muscle.

Rommel evidently needed to be alone to express his views. I had known him as I said, for a long time and he knew that I recognized in him a genuine enthusiastic soldier who loved responsibility, a genuine soldier. This last conversation lasted almost an hour, during which he expressed to me once again all his thoughts concerning the campaign in France and gave a clear picture of the development of the situation. At this point, when the push against Avranches had already failed and the breakthrough of the American tank formations and the encirclement not only of the mass of the German West Army in the kettle of Falaise but also of the encirclement of Paris became evident, there was according to Rommel only one solution left, namely, break contact with the enemy. "Unfortunately, however, the Fuehrer does not realize that we cannot act otherwise. He has not learned anything from the fall of Stalingrad, still wants to fight for separate points, and he is still of the opinion that it is not compatible with the prestige of the German soldier and, of course, with his own to give up this or that position or a fortress or a city. This will cause us to lose the war."

When upon my departure I said that there was no one in the army who did not hope that he would soon be fully restored and employed in a decisive position he answered, gazing at me for a long time: "I believe it is best that I got mine." These were the last words that I heard from Field Marshal Rommel, who left Le Vesinet the next day. They were characteristic of his conception of the situation as a whole.

The opinion that the high officers at the headquarters of the Fuehrer did not understand the situation clearly was encountered time and again. Without a doubt, Generals Gustav Jodl and Walter Warlimont were both well trained general staff officers, the first leaning towards Bayer and by nature a secker after adventures, at times also more serious than the Prussian Warlimont, who, coming from industry, had no pronounced military personality, in the opinion of his comrades. He was also driven forward by ambition and this caused him to place in the background solicitude as to the conduct of the war.

Field Marshal Keitel, who stood between them and the Fuehrer, was anything except a counterpoise of the Fuehrer. He was at the best his Berthier, the general assistant of Napoleon I, a type ready to execute orders, a soldier always filled with wonder at the Fuehrer and not a strong personality. A person like this had no place in the Fuehrer's headquarters. He who fearlessly expressed his opinion, as for example the predecessor of General Schmundt or Lieut. Colonel von Lossberg, employed in the operations group of the army high command and who gave to the Fuehrer a true picture of the strength of the Soviet Union in due time, was quickly removed from his position.

Of the three army commanders already mentioned General Blaskowitz merits special emphasis; even though he had no part in the prevention of the landing, his army protected the coast of the Bay of Biscay and, hence, was not affected by the events and did not appear on the scene until later. In the fall of 1942 I had an opportunity to talk to him a long time on the occasion when I was alone with him for two days in his week-end house on the coast near Bordeaux.

He told me at that time that the group of armies expected a landing in a short time and said that it wished to meet it by a concentric advance of the free forces of the armies in the Belgian and French area. At that time the 1st Army, led by him, had 3 motorized divisions for the employment of which plans had been made; they were to make a thrust towards the north.

General Blaskowitz, a particularly good leader who came from the General Staff, judged the strategic possibilities as favorable, because the enemy was not in a position to bring up strong tank units as quickly as needed. He remarked, of

course, incidentally that he realized clearly how the Fuehrer's headquarters saw the situation. In other matters his opinion had not changed. He saw clearly the strength and the weakness of German military leadership, but still he expressed himself optimistically over the outcome of the war. As to whether or not this was his real judgment I shall not attempt to say. In all of his statements General Blaskowitz was always extremely cautious. He showed his real position, however, in the attitude he took toward the SS in Poland. I knew him well from his activity as inspector in the military academy and I knew what a valuable person the German Army had in him.

We may express a similar judgment concerning General Dollmann, who fell in the fighting in Normandy, an intelligent, serious commander and upright man who was highly respected by the troops. And still he was not the decisive individual in the first battles. This was the commanding general of the 84th Army Corps, General Marcks (artillery). He was the son of the well known German historian, exceptionally well educated and philosophically gifted; a person who had proved his value on various fronts during the war, had already been seriously wounded-- he had lost a leg --- and who was in the very midst of happenings in the critical days. He also met a soldier's death on the battlefield, a death which he had always desired. There is no doubt that General Marcks saw the situation clearly. The weakness of his own forces and the superiority of the enemy air force filled him with anxiety and he expressed it openly to Field Marshal Rommel, who also recognized it and did everything he could to remedy it.

General von Salmuth, commanding in the North and a genuine Prussian officer -- he had come from the 1st Unmounted Guards Regiment -- like General Blaskowitz -- had relatively little influence upon developments; only his extreme left wing was affected. Later on there was a new change in command relationships, as a result of which the 15th Army commanded by him no longer affected the combat area. Besides, Salmuth was soon removed from his post for reasons unknown to me.

It may perhaps be surprising that we have made no mention of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army; at this time it was General Zeitzler, the former chief of staff of the West Group of Armies. When he took over this position in 1943

He was regarded as an individual especially filled with the National Socialist spirit. I regarded him in this way on the occasion of my first visit to St. Germain, and before I met him those about Field Marshal von Runstedt called my attention to this in a special manner. Later on he came to adopt more and more the general staff attitude and for this reason bound to oppose the Fuehrer or in other words be rejected by the latter. In spite of his energetic appearance he could not hold this position and convince others by proposals showing streaks of genius. The situation which he found was, of course, such that he could adopt only a Falkenhayn strategy, or in other words renounce more or less operations in the open, in view of his inferiority in strength, and follow the tactics of General von Falkenhayn (1914-16), predecessor of Field Marshal von Hindenburg or General Ludendorff.

In the two meetings which I had with General Zeitzler, the first before Dunkirk in June 1940 -- he was at that time Chief of Staff of the tank army of General von Kleist -- and then in St. Germain, he gave the impression of being a good line officer, in other words the successor of Moltke. After 20 July which had heavily burdened the general staff, Zeitzler left his position. His successor was the creator of the German tank weapon and later Army commander, General Guderian.

This man certainly installed a new spirit in the conduct of warfare; as regards his enthusiasm, love of responsibility and work he was probably most like Field Marshal Rommel, but he differed from the latter in many respects. Guderian had early foreseen the future developments of the war, particularly in the technical field, and he was, we may say, the "father of Blitzkrieg" and also the creator of the tank division, tank corps, and tank army. His experience though was similar to that of Admiral of the Fleet von Tirpitz in the first World War; his program was not carried out with the necessary speed nor on a sufficiently large scale.

Employed in the Russian campaign of 1941 as an army commander, he was, together with General Hoepner, made responsible for the failure of the push against Moscow and removed from his position. Later, he was made general inspector of

the Armored Command and again won recognition. In 1944 when he became Chief of the General Staff of the Army the conditions were too serious to be mastered by his will and plans. He had come too late.

Neither Zeitzler nor Guderian could exercise upon the campaign in France in 1944, the influence that was necessary in view of the plan of the Fuehrer to put forces in reach of the coast. Both were in the last analysis organs carrying out the orders of others. In the second World War there was no longer any Moltke on the German side. But would the operation on an inside line, so much discussed by the latter, have led to success at this time? Would it still have been possible for a chief of the general staff to gather the mass of his forces in the Western theater of military operations? Did not the onrush of the Soviet armies represent the greater danger?

To answer these questions would again make necessary a discussion of the war as a whole. The concentric attack of the Allies is in progress, carried out by fighting forces which are numerically at least double the strength of the German forces fighting in France, Italy and Russia and many times as strong from a material standpoint. In this situation there was only one thing to do if Germany was to be saved; without regard to prestige and loss of most extensive territories won during the war it was necessary to gather toward the center all the available German divisions. It was necessary to evacuate the islands of the Aegean, Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, South and Central Italy, Southern France, Finland and Norway. The quicker this was done the better it would be. By this means one could count on securing a reinforcement of 1 1/2 million men.

On the other hand the strength of operations on an outside line, the kind represented by warfare as conducted by the Allies made its appearance in the summer of 1944. Its strongest factor is surprise. At the headquarters of the Fuehrer and also in St. Germain one counted indeed upon the thrust but did not know when or where it would come. Since our own air force reconnaissance at this time no longer did that which was demanded of it -- a superior enemy prevented us from observing his concentrations -- we were feeling in the dark. Even after the

landing, as we have already said, we were still in doubt for a long time as to whether or not the main thrust would still be on the Channel coast near Calais or at the mouth of the Scheldt. We were also surprised by the landing in Southern France, as had already been the case in the landing of the Americans in North Africa.

Since the German submarine, the chief factor in the fight against these operations on the outside line, dropped out to a great extent in 1944, these operations could be carried out almost undisturbed. The expectation which Admiral of the Fleet Donitz expressed to me in a conversation in Paris in the spring of 1943 had not materialized; namely, that in a short time we would render practically useless, by a new invention, the English position finding method. For the second time German naval warfare based on the submarine had failed. While in the first World War it failed for lack of submarines, it now had more than 500 submarines capable of being used, but they were subjected to the most difficult combat conditions. The worth of the individual officers and men was no longer the deciding factor and no longer the weapon itself. They had been eliminated by a new invention.

The second task for the German command had been to secure for service with the troops a high percentage of the millions of men who were occupied as soldiers behind the fronts in and for the four branches of the armed forces. The generals employed for this performed their mission in an energetic manner but with insufficient means. In addition to this the Navy and Air Force offered strong resistance to "combing out" and the abolishment of positions. It is difficult to imagine what aerial signal communications alone needed in the way of personnel and the number of persons that were needed in military industry behind the fronts and in anti-aircraft artillery with its observation and reporting apparatus, entirely apart from the real rear services engaged in transport. In 1943 when a Russian general staff officer made the remark that for every man at the front in the German Army there were 9 in the rear services, while in the Soviet Army there were only 2 to every man at the front and when he added that this was the

cancer of the German armed forces and the trouble that would cause its downfall, we must say that this statement certainly had some truth in it. Just think of the number of young men employed in the various signal communication regiments in the area of Paris alone. Most of them were men between 22 and 30, many of which in 1944 had already been for 4 years in their good quarters and we did not feel very much desire for taking their weapons in hand again. By this though we do not mean that they had not performed a difficult service in a spirit of sacrifice and that this service was not necessary, but it could have been performed to a greater degree than it was by women and in this way tens of thousands of soldiers released for the front. This attitude against the giving up of men is one of the factors contributing to the loss of the campaign in France. One can express it in another way: The body as a whole no longer had a satisfactory combat instrument. It had become burdened and sluggish. The office work seemed at many places almost as important as the combat task.

Did we not like the French general staff and its army in 1940 allow ourselves to be led astray by the belief that a powerful fortress can compensate for an existing weakness? The "Atlantic wall" at the time of the landing was what the Maginot Line had been 4 years before. It is true that in an astonishingly short time a fortification had been constructed which in power and originality was in many respects superior to the great French fortified line. But, for its occupation as well as for its development, strong forces were needed. I remember one of my visits to the coast during which a battalion commander told me that he could defend each one of his works with five different weapons and that these were actually available but that he had men only for one weapon.

Even a man like Field Marshal Rommel was impressed by the strength of this fortification. He is the one that demanded a second Atlantic wall behind the first and who carried forward its development. This was all the more astonishing as he himself had broken through the Maginot Line, though in a weak place. Should not the German Army have learned something from its experiences? Had it not itself broken through numerous bunker lines with new weapons? Had not firing

from gun shelters as well as the use of concentrated charges been developed into a special art? It is peculiar how at this point the Fuehrer, who gave such great consideration to technical developments in the military field, was guided by imagination.

It is possible that a great part was played here by the fact that the great breakthroughs on the Eastern Front were attributed to the fact that no East Wall had been built. At that time he himself had rejected it, although the higher command in the East had emphatically demanded it several times. Perhaps it was also the idea that he never again, through such neglect wanted serious disadvantages to be placed in the way of the German Army.

The Atlantic Wall, however, played a role in still another respect. Not only was it to be borne in mind that as a fortification it could be forced in a relatively short time with modern combat means and, hence, that it would be better not to build it — think of how much more the labor, steel and concrete were greatly needed elsewhere — but, it also meant placing restrictions upon strategic planning. Since the Atlantic Wall was there, it would be necessary to take up positions here to fight and, hence, it made necessary the keeping of reserves in readiness. If Field Marshal Helmut von Moltke, the victor of Sedan, opposed so strongly the building of a fortified line on the new frontier after the Franco-German War, it was because he feared placing restrictions upon strategic planning. The German General Staff would in a future war with France, with which Moltke reckoned, allow itself to be influenced by the presence of such a fortified line in the planning of the operations, and would no longer have freedom of action. Moltke saw beforehand that happened in 1940 to Gamelin and Weygand, both of which were led astray by illusions as to the strength of a great fortified line. But did this not also hold true for the fighting troops? Did not troops know that a bunker with 3 to 5 meters of concrete did not make them safe? After the breakthrough were they still ready to meet the enemy in the open field? There is no doubt that in this respect the Atlantic Wall had least influence. The German soldier moved out from this fortified line in a fearless manner and faced the enemy in the open field.

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So then one can say that in spite of the many modern things that German warfare created there was still a degree of inertia which was accompanied by serious consequences in 1944.

In this connection the question may be posed as to whether or not the German West Wall did not on two occasions act as an obstacle to strategic planning, in 1939 in the case of the French general staff and in 1944 in the case of the English-American command. Both times, so it appears to the German observer, this fortified line was evaluated falsely, in other words, it was regarded as an obstacle that could be overcome only by a systematic attack. In reality, this West Wall was finished in 1939 only in a few places and most important of all did not have any heavy artillery in fixed installations. In 1944 numerous works and installations were again improved and in a certain sense it was still only the framework of a defense line. Both times the positions were garrisoned rather weakly and in October 1944 only with the remnants of an army or units of various kinds which had been quickly thrown together and whose combat power was very small.

In 1939, during the Polish Campaign and also in October of the same year, the Germans feared that the Allies might advance. Five years later almost every soldier expected the English and Americans to advance to the Rhine and if necessary to cross it. The Cologne police commander reported later that an American tank unit had penetrated the West Wall to a depth of 12 km, and then, without meeting any resistance, turned back, evidently because it had lost contact with its infantry. It is possible that Germany would have collapsed as early as the late fall of 1944 if the English and American divisions had stood on the east bank of the Rhine.

An explanation for this "hesitation" may be found, however, in the fact that the English and American conduct of warfare, particularly the latter, had been guided throughout the war (and was still guided) by the desire to save as many lives as possible under all circumstances, even at the risk of losing time by doing so. So then one wished to avoid uncertain enterprise which might involve

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heavy loss of life later on. A third reason was that, in accordance with experience, every great offensive undertaken up until now had come to a standstill, when it got a certain distance from its supply bases. All great tank operations are dependent upon their rear communications. The fuel supply alone places upon them certain spatial limitations.

While on the German side we find certain things which necessarily led to rigid operations, we may say also that intellectual freedom, which was so often emphasized as a principle of German warfare, no longer existed. This is true in detail as well as in a general way, and for this one must make responsible the conditions existing in Germany as well as the general developments over a period of time. In the third Reich there was no freedom of thought; this was felt by scientists as well as soldiers. There is no doubt that we needed an arrangement in the general line of state leadership and a subordination in an intellectual respect to a national goal, but when under such an arrangement the creative spirit suffered and in addition one had to remain in subjection to small minds, put up with unbearable censorship regulations and political regulations, none of which had anything/^{at all} to do with science, there was bound to appear both torpidity in thinking and the elimination of many valuable forces. Without criticism, progress is not conceivable, but one could not bear this criticism and always saw in it something dangerous and proceeded in a corresponding manner against the few men who still had the courage to express a different opinion.

Even the general developments of the period were not favorable for real military leadership. Generalship is an art and it requires air and space. In a period of general triteness and intellectual decline it cannot develop. This was shown by the first World War and more still by the second one.

In addition to this there was the ever increasing influence of politics. The way things had changed is shown most clearly by that order of the Fuehrer which called for the unsuccessful thrust against Avranches. Field Marshal von Kluge called my attention to it in a special manner and I read it in the room of his chief of staff, that of General Speidl. It was a long teletype message, half of which was not very clear and contained military instructions which did not do

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justice to the real situation and whose other half contained sentences something like the following: "The German soldier must believe only in victory. The leader of the army group has a unique opportunity to win a place in history." I am dictating these sentences from memory but they correspond in contents to those in the order. In addition, it constituted a remarkable appeal to the ambition of military commanders, such as is seldom found in this form. Field Marshal von Kluge, as well as his chief of staff, noticed this also and remarked that such an order was indeed unique in the history of the German Army. But still it seemed to me to be characteristic of the intellectual situation, which -- this must be repeated many times -- must be regarded as the really deciding factor in the collapse of the German Army in the summer of 1944. It is a situation of the Fuehrer, of the high generals, and of the general staff, but it is also one involving the middle and lower line commanders and finally every soldier. Even fanaticism is a situation of intellectual restriction.

If now we turn to the strength on the side of the victor, then we may again see France as a military factor in the spring and summer of 1944. We have already said that the policy of the military administration, which frequently characterized itself as a supervisory administration, was to reconcile the two peoples to each other and that, of course, circumstances had recently appeared which did not favor this goal as for example the Sauckel labor program. The French government did not obey the German demand to change its seat from Vichy to Paris or at least into the neighborhood of Paris. Marshal Petain had gone for a few weeks to Le Voisin, a castle near Rambouillet, 30 miles from Paris, something which Ambassador Rentefink of the German Embassy in Paris regarded as very good. But his hope to appear in the eyes of the Fuehrer as the man who at this late hour had brought him Marshal Petain and France was not fulfilled. On the contrary, it was recognized at the Fuehrer's headquarters that this transfer of Petain to Le Voisin must appear in the eyes of the French people more like a kidnapping of the French chief of state than as a voluntary action. Even Petain expressed himself to this effect. He spoke to Ambassador Rentefink as he would his "jailer" and from General von

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Neubronn he did not conceal the fact that he was forced to leave Vichy. After this he soon returned.

General von Neubronn, who represented the German armistice commission in France in a manner that was as wise as it was skillful and who, by virtue of 20 years work in the general staff, in which he concerned himself only with France, could be regarded as one of those who knew the country best, judged the situation at that time as follows: "It is not Laval who is a really dangerous person for Germany but it is Marshal Petain. However amiable he may be, however much he gives the impression of being a great lord, however much he stands above petty things and will have nothing to do with small politics, he is still a Frenchman and will always be a Frenchman. He is playing a game that is not so easy to see through; as to whether or not what is happening in Africa is with his knowledge and consent or against the will of the Vichy Government, we do not know. Laval is the skilled politician who is handling the business but he is far from being the person that Marshal Petain is, because Petain by his service in the first World War assured himself a definite place in France; he is in the eyes of the French the old Marshal Petain, the French Hindenburg. He enjoys the confidence of the people."

General von Neubronn judged that the French were tired of war and that the nation was too old to work for important goals. Of course, he attached some importance to the resistance movement, because the Germans did not have sufficient forces for really watching over the whole country.

This was also noticed by the French population, whose attitude slowly began to change at the turn of the year 1943-44. In France conditions differed greatly depending on the place. There were parts, as for example South France or the Central Massif, or the Dauphiné, which did not have a single German soldier as early as the spring of 1944. Other parts, as for example the Department of Seine et Oise, in other words, the immediate neighborhood of Paris, and also Normandy, were almost untouched by terrorism, Paris itself, with its four million inhabitants, was almost completely quiet up until the last few weeks, a situation which must be attributed to the intelligent handling of the city by the commandant and his administration as well as to the support of the German

authorities by the French authorities, especially by the French police.

The manner in which the Prefects, subprefects and mayors, the French police and Gendarmerie supported the policy of the German military administration requires a special discussion. The Frenchman who has always been basically inclined to accept a sensible solution understood well that such a solution was being sought. I myself, in my position as "field commander" in the Department of Seine et Oise and thereby as administrative chief for the greatest French province sought time and again, in the case of certain trenchant measures, to convince the prefects and their employees as well as the so-called "mayor assemblies", sub-prefects and mayors of the necessity of the intended measures and in free conversation to remove any lack of clearness. In this way, as well as by allowing the French authorities a free hand to a large extent, it was possible to secure not only full cooperation but also to maintain peace and order in France with the use of a very small German force of occupation. There were many places which scarcely noticed the occupation of the country and there were many Frenchmen who said up to the last few days that they had only one worry and that was the prospect of again seeing France become a battlefield. In connection with this they feared that upon the departure of the Germans the existing peace and order would cease and Communism would raise its head.

If we evaluate this properly, we can understand why the English agitation which was carried on both over the radio and with the help of special agents no longer made any headway. The number of cases of sabotage was very small up until the fall of 1943. It was not until then that they began to increase. Their effect upon the military operations were, however, on the whole relatively small. The blowing up of some important bridges, especially in South France, were a disturbing factor. But compared with the damages caused by air attacks against important military objectives, these acts of sabotage played a very small part.

In a different respect, of course, there was good cooperation on the part of the French people for the cause of the Allies, namely, as regards intelligence. The excellent manner in which the English and American commands were informed concerning the distribution of German forces in France, the names of the com-

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leaders, shifting of troops, armament, morale, and special events is to be attributed to the cooperation of the French population. There was no staff that was not continually observed by some Frenchman who was in the employ of the enemy intelligence service, and it was very difficult to detect them. It was rare that the defense secured definite proof.

If at all we may speak of resistance in France, it consisted first in the Maquis movement and second in passive resistance of various kinds. The terroristic movement was to a great extent the work of individuals and, hence, developed in different ways depending on the place. It was also promoted by the lack of protection in many parts of the country and the failure of responsible German commanders to intervene at the right time. The weakness of the resistance movement lay particularly in a lack of weapons and training. Even though a very large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives were dropped by a specially organized service of the English Air Force, only a limited part of these supplies reached their destination. The German authorities were able to get hold of large parts of such dropped materials, and many times the enemy planes even "filled orders", in other words, they were led astray by skillful methods of deception. The real centralization of resistance did not take place until after the landing, and oftentimes not until the appearance of the first English and American soldiers. Then it expressed itself in a *Furor gallicus*, oftentimes in a form against which the decent English and Americans proceeded in a vigorous manner, and in some cases even made use of their weapons against the French.

It must be admitted that in this stage the terrorists rendered considerable help to the Allies, as for example in the fighting around Paris, and also in the French-Belgian coal districts and everywhere in the large cities. Now the Maquis also came out in large units, from the assembly places of the terrorists, and, even though they were poorly led, trained, and armed, entered the battle on the side of the Allies.

The real military strength of France, if we may at all speak of such, lay in the African fighting forces which General Charles de Gaulle had organized; but even their combat value was not excessively great. At any rate it was not comparable to that of the American and English troops.

Passive resistance expressed itself above all in a slow execution of German instruction, in a kind of slow-down tactics, and at times also in the making of complaints. As a rule it could be broken up quickly by a change in the French authorities responsible for it. Measured by the standard of positive performance, this passive resistance played a relatively small part; on the other hand we should emphasize the manner in which the French rendered assistance in the critical months, particularly in the repairing of damages. In June and July, 1944, 16,000 workers were engaged in the Department of Seine et Oise alone helping to remove debris around the great Paris railway depots.

Looking at the English and American side, an appropriate share in the success of the great military undertaking must be ascribed both to the plans and their execution, to the commanders and the troops, to the equipment and the supply. One can also say that the total of these circumstances decided the outcome. There is no doubt that in the landing and in the campaign itself on the Western European theater of military operation we have an operation which will always occupy a special place in military history. It is characterized by a great idea, boldness and systematic execution. It represents the campaign of a coalition which, viewed from the outside, was carried out with rare harmony of views and measures. On the second day of the landing, when the German command captured the operations order of the Allies, it recognized an enterprise which the German command had never planned or executed in this form. Field Marshal von Kluge expressed his opinion to the effect that this was excellent general staff work and that the preparation for the landing had been preceded by a reconnaissance such as had never been carried out before in this manner. An officer of the English Intelligence Service told me among other things that by low flying every undulation of the ground and every ravine which could possibly serve as a cover for German troops had been photographed and that the same had been done in regard to an exact determination of the conditions of the ebb and flood tides. Foreshore obstacles under these circumstances meant little, and the "Rommel asparagus" which we have already mentioned was early recognized.

There is no doubt that the English and American general staff was fully informed concerning the fortress installations, the troops occupying them, their strength, armament, and many other things and not last the commanders on the German side.

On the basis of such preparations there could be a careful training of the troops for the enterprise. Combined with this there were extraordinary security measures and preparations of the most varied kinds which made success practically certain. Under the firing bell of ship artillery and the protection of the air force which in operations lasting for weeks had destroyed numerous defense installations and in particular the important points along rear communications, the landing took place on 6 June. It was accompanied by an air landing operation, so that from the very start the defender on the coast had to defend himself on two sides.

Here we may pose the question as to why the great enterprise was not aimed at the closest point, the Channel coast at Calais, where one would already be deep in the flanks of the German positions and thereby could probably have shortened the campaign considerably. This can be answered by saying that both the conditions on the coast as well as the German defense at this place were less favorable for the attacker. Besides, if Normandy were captured, one would have in Cherbourg the harbor that was needed, as well as a sufficiently deep front for strategic concentration on the mainland and at the same time a number of airports that could be used. An operation carried out from here against the heart of the country, towards Paris, could lean against the Loire on the right, and the Seine on the left and in this way have a natural flank protection on both sides. Then too in the space about Calais, German forces coming out of the Reich or from the East could be brought up more easily than they could into Normandy. It was to be seen soon after the landing what effect the destruction of the important railway lines in France had upon the employment of the strategic reserves. They could at the best get as far as Paris, and would have difficulty getting even this far over the railroads. Then came a march on foot of over 100 miles. A German concentration of forces in the region of Calais would make use of transports from Germany much more effectively than such a concen-

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tration in Normandy. Then too one could probably count on the limited intervention of units of the German navy at this place on the Channel.

The advantages that one gained by having a shorter sea route and in being at a jump-off place on the coast much closer to the German boundary than one would be in Normandy were fully compensated by the factors previously mentioned, especially that of the greater safety of the landing at this place.

The German observer of these Allied operations even today has too little correct understanding of what happened to describe it in a fitting manner. The description given me by Major Viebig, the first general staff officer of the 84th Corps, enables us to distinguish 3 distinct phases. The landing, the widening of the beachhead, and the capture of Normandy and Cherbourg taking place along with this and finally the operation involving maneuver.

Although the landing was kept a secret as regards time, this does not mean that it was a surprise for the command and the troops affected by it. One had been counting on it for days but, of course, did not know the exact place where it would occur. Pinned down to a great extent by the air force and the ship artillery and engaged in combat with the parachute infantry, the defense forces evidently did not have sufficient forces at most of places to ward off the real landing. After the landing had been discovered, the reserves were able to come up only in a few cases. The tank units that were available in the first few days were much too weak for the task assigned them and were not sufficiently protected by their own air force. All the troops were in agreement in saying that the English and American air forces had a surprising superiority and that German flyers were almost entirely absent. If not even an average of 200 fighter planes were available for use each day on the German side in the combat area, what did this mean against 4,000 or more enemy airplanes! With relatively small losses during the landing the English and American divisions were able to get a foothold. The divisions assigned for coast defense and hit by the attack were lost all except a few and the Atlantic wall broken through at the same time. The fact that in spite of this the battles lasted all of a week and then an

additional month passed while the bridgehead was being widened and Normandy overrun, shows on the part of the defender a surprising power or resistance and on the part of the attacker a systematic method of advance. At the headquarters of the German group of armies one was fully convinced of the systematic course of enemy operations and in the face of them saw on the German side nothing except makeshifts with insufficient means.

However much attention and admiration the first two phases of the landing merit, and it is certain that it was precisely here where the troops had the most difficult work, still the most attractive thing for the observer was the conduct of operations in the open. It bears all the features of genuine generalship; it aims at the destruction of the enemy fighting forces by one encirclement after the other, by overtaking pursuit and thrusts into the depths of the flanks. By making use of the protection of the Loire and Seine, whose bridges had been systematically destroyed by the air force from Orleans to Paris, the American tank divisions lunged eastward from Paris and advanced against Laon, Mauberge, Namur and Laotlich. Other formations pushed in the direction of the Burgundy Gate or the Swiss frontier and others barred off Brittany. The English and Canadian divisions thrust behind the German coastal fortifications towards Flanders and to the lower Scheldt.

If we consider these operations in connection with the landing in Southern France, with the campaign in Italy and the operations of the Soviet Army, the military operations in the fall of 1944 in the European theatre unfold before our eyes in a dramatic manner.

Recognition is due the responsible general staff chiefs as well as the one entrusted with the command of the Allied armies on the European continent, General Eisenhower, and, on the English side, Field Marshal Montgomery. That which was brilliantly planned was executed in a corresponding manner, even down to the line officers, who always had uppermost in their minds the achievement of the highest possible success at the least possible cost in lives.

This idea was in many cases not understood on the German side. When this or

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that opportunity for success was not exploited by the English or American troops or when an attack was not carried out ruthlessly, one concluded erroneously that the enemy would not advance or that he was "soft". On the side of the defender the fighting qualities weakened, without a doubt, in a number of places when the coast was lost. After the Seine was crossed by the enemy on a broad front there was determined fighting only at a few points. There appeared now in particular a failure of the higher and intermediate commanders and to a frightening degree. When 5 divisions crowded together in a disorderly manner on a highway, when at very important highway crossings and bridges there were no responsible officers, when there was no longer any concentration of tank defense at endangered positions but when everyone was fighting upon his own responsibility or not fighting at all, we can hardly speak of a command.

Twice during the combat operations on the coast in July and August I had an opportunity to convince myself personally of the situation on the spot, on the main battlefield. If I summarize my impressions today then they would be the following: Behind a fairly thin front, which was exposed to continuous observation from the air and continuous attacks by artillery fire and more or less heavy air attacks, there were almost no reserves at all. If formerly one spoke of an emptiness of the battlefield, one could now speak of emptiness behind the battlefield, where in the daytime one scarcely saw a vehicle or a human being up to a depth of 100 km. It was only between the evening and morning dawn that the roads were alive with traffic.

There was no continuous front at all. At the end of July and August we fought in larger or smaller combat groups. At this time the losses in men and material were already very heavy; if a tank division came out with 50 tanks this was a large division. The commanders of the corps and divisions were under great stress and part of them nervous. While as a rule the troops were still confident -- even though one was informed of the seriousness of the fight -- one found pessimism throughout the staffs. One recognized the superiority of the enemy, and one saw no possibility of meeting him with sufficient forces. There had to come a day when front breaches could no longer be closed.

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The combat terrain of Normandy seemed to me to be more difficult for the defenders than for the attackers. Even though to be sure the numerous low undulations covered with hedges, the individual farm houses, and the small pieces of forest offered good cover and the terrain was many times broken, the enemy tanks also had the same natural protection and were oftentimes before our own positions before we had time to notice them.

Supply itself was a very difficult matter but was still possible. One longed as a rule for the arrival of reserves, tanks, airplanes, and anti-tank cannon. One waited in vain. The events of 20 July -- I mentioned this in another place -- found little echo. It was spoken of only in the staffs at first. The French population in Normandy kept away from the fighting and in many cases helped the German troops in supplying the wounded and in transport. There was a considerable difference in regard to the morale, the military experience, the armament and equipment of the various units. The SS troops were, without a doubt, the best favored.

From the middle of August on the Department of Seine et Oise was itself affected by the fighting. With General Oehmichen (anti-tank defense) I was on the front at Chartres to prepare here some emergency barriers and organize into new units the men that were flowing back and this I succeeded in doing. The latter, a high officer from the engineers, sent from the Fuehrer's headquarters, certainly performed his mission with great zeal but with insufficient means. I noticed particularly that he was not active in any way with the general troops measures. It seemed to me as if someone wanted to carry on a war on his own responsibility; and this was the case in a number of positions. At the time of the collapse of the real battlefield this was a characteristic feature. What now appeared was a picture of emergency measures carried out in individual positions. There was no longer any question of a united leadership and a cohesive resistance.

As commander of a combat group in a division organized by way of makeshift I had an opportunity to live through the last phase of the fighting. The unit which I led -- and this was characteristic of the situation -- was made up of a security battalion, a demolition battalion, mostly of parachute infantry, one of the four

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Paris alarm battalions, two pioneer companies and a few anti-aircraft batteries. So then it represented a reinforced regiment, but scarcely had the strength of a normal battalion, in so far as its fighting qualities were concerned, and had scarcely any anti-tank weapons. It had some motor vehicles that had been gathered up and was partly motorized, but suffered from the beginning for a lack of fuel; the men themselves were for the most part capable only of garrison duty. The Paris alarm battalion proved to be particularly weak from a military standpoint. Many who had heart trouble gave out after a few kilometers of march.

It was really surprising, however, what such troops did. When only 20 miles north of Paris they received orders to advance to the Seine west of the city. They were engaged in serious fighting with terrorists and then were attacked by the Americans but stood their ground for three days, ^{up} until the evening of 29 August. In Paris itself General von Goltz capitulated on 25 August (of course, under the pressure of the local situation), instead of trying to advance through Bois de Boulogne with his 7,000 men, mostly untrained, toward the west and join up with the units that were withdrawing or fighting here. Eastward from Paris the Americans had already passed through Fontainebleau and Melun, so that an escape in this direction was no longer possible. In the north suburbs of Paris there were strong terrorists groups who had blocked the chief exit roads and many times with barricades.

Between 30 August and 3 September the combat group fought, receiving an order only now and then, up as far as the Belgian-French frontier where it came up against the First American Division of General Heubner on the Maubeuge - Mons Highway. I still recall the way things looked 3 September; it was a picture of absolute catastrophe, such as I saw in the battle of Tannenberg (in which Hindenburg and Ludendorff completely destroyed the Russian Narev Army). Five columns -- if we may use this expression at all -- march alongside, two of them out in the fields. They belong to five different divisions, seldom in a closed unit, marching at the most one-half mile an hour. At every bridge to be crossed

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the individual officers with weapons in their hands open a way for their vehicles and 500 and perhaps even 800 or 1000 form a wild confusion around such a passage.

Against one such disorderly march movement the enemy air force makes repeated attacks from a height of 30 to 100 meters with cannon and machine guns. On the flanks enemy tanks move up to within 700 to 1000 meters and by direct aim fire into the columns. Indescribable pictures of panic and confusion! Men who always had stood their ground lose their nerve. All cohesion is lost. Only a few small groups close ranks, abandon the vehicles and engage in combat. Many fled into the forests and villages and waited here the arrival of the enemy but in the night hours were attacked by terrorists.

In contrast to this the First American Division fought in full control of the situation, calmly and with assurance. I was able to observe their officers and men for hours. There was cooperation of the various branches of a kind that could not be surpassed. I was struck in particular by the constant cooperation with the air force. If any resistance appeared, one called on the airplanes in the air or the airplane groups and in a very short time the support of the sister arm was there. If we bear in mind that a single American division had three times the equipment and heavy artillery that a normal German division has and that in addition many times this amount could be drawn from the corps and army reserves in a very short time, we can clearly realize the German inferiority.

I was surprised by many things and not least by the excellent practical equipment of the American soldiers most of whom were young and well fed and such as were rarely seen on the German side. The equipment in motor vehicles, which were limited to only a few types, in strong contrast to that of the German formation, whose motor vehicles were not of a uniform type and were obsolete, was excellent.

These troops certainly had real fighting spirit and there existed an excellent relationship between officers and men. In the division commander, General

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Huebner, whom I met personally a few days later and with whom I conversed for quite a while, I found a real soldier. He was clear in his opinion, exemplary in his bearing and calm and sure of himself.

With a different kind of leadership and particularly with a careful preparation of this retreat and defense in depth on the important sectors, the catastrophe of the German west army could have been avoided to a great extent -- a statement which we can make by looking back. At the Fuehrer's headquarters one insisted too long upon holding the coast. One allowed the best divisions to be sacrificed uselessly in the encirclement at Falaise, instead of withdrawing behind the Seine. One changed commanders and commanding generals in critical moments. One threw reserves into combat recklessly. Oftentimes divisions were even torn apart. There were instances when one part of a unit was transported by railway, another part by truck, and the rest required to march on foot. The result was that such a unit was defeated piecemeal. Cohesion between the troops practically disappeared when Paris fell. The effort to reach the German boundary as quickly as possible became more and more evident. It also happened that commanders were separated from their units. The will to resist collapsed and the number of prisoners spoke its own language. What the German pioneers did to delay the enemy advance was by no means sufficient. And then too it was found that an attacker so perfectly equipped technically as the English and Americans could not be held up for long by blown up bridges, mine fields, and other obstacles, but could surmount these in a much shorter time than generally supposed. It oftentimes happened that German troops were cut off in their retreat by premature blasting measures or were forced to make a wide detour, as I myself have experienced.

In the critical days a feeling of loss and abandonment difficult to picture seized the German troops. This was made worse by the absence of orders or contradictory orders or orders which were in opposition to those of the neighboring units, the absence of a sufficient defense against enemy tanks and airplanes, the lack of vehicles making it impossible to carry away the wounded and the fact that many motor vehicles had run out of fuel.

The scattering of the troops which took place under these circumstances could be prevented with force only upon rare occasions. The only possibility of saving

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the situation was to round up the troops on the main sectors, and even here organization failed.

If in spite of this it was still possible to form a front it must be regarded as a wonderful accomplishment by the Germans. It happened, as we have already said in another place, on the general line of the West Wall, in so far as the sector is concerned: in the northern sector, by the use of the Belgian-Dutch river and canal system; in the south, by the use of the Vosges. The German command had a last chance. Though its reserves were all used up and it was subjected to great difficulties due to the lack of material on the new front, it was still able to form a battle line and after a few weeks to secure limited reserves. It was all a question of economizing these forces. What was done in the push against Avranches was repeated on a larger scale in the winter offensive in the Ardennes, an enterprise which may, only with certain qualifications, be regarded in connection with the events of the summer and fall of 1944.

The battle in France must be regarded as ended in the latter part of October 1944. At this time all of France, with the exception of Alsais-Lorraine, is in the hands of the Allies, as well as a considerable part of Belgium and a small strip of Holland. In a campaign of less than 4 months it had been possible to change completely the picture of the war in the Western European theater. Germany now found her western boundary threatened by the combined armies of the English and Americans and the French Army which was in the process of being organized. The German command could certainly expect that the offensive of the enemy which had come to a standstill would be resumed after a certain time, when his rear communications had been properly organized and the necessary personnel and material and replacements had been brought up. At the best there was a pause for breath.

The demand of the commander in chief of the enemy, General Eisenhower, for a capitulation was rejected by the Germans. In doing this one knew that the war in its worst form would be carried to German soil in a short time. One could have no illusions about the destruction that would then start and also, of course, the bloody sacrifices, the suffering of the population, and all the difficulties resulting from an unsuccessful campaign, and one knew what would happen on the

basis of experiences since the fall of Stalingrad. The hope that there would be a falling out among the Allies at the last minute, that English and American policies would seize upon the idea of a common struggle of the western world against Bolshevism turned out to be an illusion. In this situation, after the collapse of the German Western Front, and in view of the further unfavorable military developments in the East there was only one thing for the responsible German statesmen to do and that was to admit the loss of the war. It had to come sooner or later. If he decided now to capitulate, he could save the German people a great part of the losses, sacrifices and suffering of which they were later a victim. As in the first World War, so in the present one, Germany had not been a battlefield with the exception of air attacks and the surrender would take place not under pressure of political circumstances as at that time but as a clear admission of a lost war. This, however, did not happen and the result was another failure in the German conduct of the war and in connection therewith the making of a battlefield out of Germany. If we glance over the fighting from November 1944 to the final capitulation of the German Reich on 8 May 1945, we see that the great offensive of the Allies in France in the summer and fall of 1944 takes on the character of a decisive weakening of the German Army. Its best divisions have been crushed and can no longer acquire their original form. The enormous losses in material, especially in tanks, heavy artillery, and airplanes can no longer be replaced. France and Belgium whose great resources are of such great assistance to the German war effort are lost. At the same time the threat of the English homeland by the new German weapons and from the airports in France and Belgium is eliminated. The most important support points of the German Navy on the Flanders coast, in Normandy, and in Brittany are lost.

The Allies secure bases in the immediate neighborhood of the German west boundary and are now in a much better position to conduct aerial warfare against Germany. In the fall of 1944 Germany, we may say, was already in reality defeated. The only thing is that this fact was not realized by those in responsible positions and as a result of this the war was continued under much worse conditions than before, with insufficient means for the struggle and for defense against enemy air attacks.

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An das
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Institut für Zeitgeschichte			
Eingeg. am: 3. Juli 1956			
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Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. Vogelsang!

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Unter dem 12. April ds. Jrs. stellten Sie mir verschiedene Fragen. Ich konnte diese, wie Ihnen dies meine Frau schon mit einem Zwischenbescheid mitteilte, infolge einer Reise in den Mittleren Osten, von der ich erst vor wenigen Tagen zurückkehrte, noch nicht beantworten, möchte es aber heute tun, wenn auch nicht ausführlich.

Der Miliz-Gedanke wurde in den Jahren 1931-33 in Kreisen des Reichskriegsministeriums häufig erörtert. Ich erinnere mich auch, mit General von Schleicher darüber gesprochen zu haben, der sich für diesen Gedanken interessierte, weil er darin eine Art Ersatzmöglichkeit für das frühere Wehrpflichtsystem sah. Ich weiß auch, daß in der Abt. T 2 des Ministeriums darüber gearbeitet wurde. Jedenfalls erhielt ich für meine Broschüre "Miliz" von dieser Seite Unterlagen, und ich konnte mich auch des längeren mit dem zuständigen Mitarbeiter über verschiedene von mir angeschnittene Fragen unterhalten. Allerdings weiß ich jetzt nicht mehr, wer es war.

Meine Schrift "Miliz" als "offiziös" zu bezeichnen, wie es Herr Brauner getan hat, erscheint mir nicht richtig. Im Auftrage Schleichers oder der "Wehrmacht-Abteilung" (?) habe ich die Broschüre nicht verfaßt. Sie ist wie alle meine damaligen Arbeiten von mir selbst in der Absicht, politische und militärische Stellen für den Gedanken zu interessieren, geschrieben worden, allerdings unter Förderung durch das Ministerium.

Mit Schleicher habe ich immer einen gewissen Kontakt gehabt. Ich lernte ihn in den Jahren 1919-22 kennen, wo ich im Kriegsministerium zunächst in der Abteilung C 1 a und später in der Pressestelle des Reichswehrministeriums tätig war. Damals aßen wir öfter zusammen, und er interessierte sich immer wieder für meine schriftstellerische Arbeit. Auch nach meinem, durch ein Augenleiden bedingtem Ausscheiden im Jahre 1929 sah ich ihn gelegentlich und

Bitte lesen Sie
nicht an mich.
Kra

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An den
 Direktor des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte
 Herrn Professor Dr. H. Krausnick

8 München 27
 Möhlstr. 26

Sehr verehrter Herr Kollege Krausnick!

In Beantwortung Ihres freundlichen Briefes vom 14.1.1969, für den ich Ihnen bestens danke, darf ich Ihnen folgendes mitteilen:

Um in meiner Stellungnahme zu Ihren Fragen sicher zu gehen, habe ich Ihren Brief zunächst an Generalleutnant a. D. Kurt S i e w e r t, Hannover, geschickt. Seine Antwort füge ich im Original hier bei. Sie bestätigt meine Erinnerung.

Oberstleutnant i. G. G r o s c u r t h ist wenig in Erscheinung getreten. Es mag dies daran gelegen haben, daß er selbst zur Zurückhaltung neigte und nicht besonders aktiv war. Vielleicht empfand er auch das Übergewicht von WPr., dabei der von November ab im Aufbau befindlichen Gruppe V (Heer). Eine Überschneidung mit G. ist mir nicht in der Erinnerung, wohl aber habe ich manchmal mit ihm Fragen, die den Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres betrafen, besprochen.

Was meine in Aussicht genommene Zuteilung zur Abteilung Ic/AO betrifft, so ist es richtig, daß der damalige Abteilungs-
 chef von WPr. Oberstleutnant i. G. v. Wedel keine zweite Propaganda eines Wehrmachtteils aufkommen lassen wollte. Damit verhinderte er aber nicht, daß die Gruppe V (Heer) sich nach ihrer Aufstellung nicht nur recht selbständig entwickelte, sondern, was auch der Bedeutung des Heeres als des größten Wehrmachtteils entsprach, personell und in ihrer Tätigkeit den Mittelpunkt der Wehrmachtpropaganda bildete. Ich weiß nicht, ob es Ihnen bekannt ist, daß ich mir bei der Aufstellung ausbedingte, unmittelbar dem Chef des Wehrmachtsführungsstabes, dem Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres und dem Chef des Generalstabes des Heeres Vortrag halten zu dürfen. Es ging dies besser als erwartet, wenn es auch immer wieder hieß auszugleichen. Sonst kann ich Ihnen zur Person Groscurth und seiner kurzen Dienstzeit im Stab des Ob. d. H. nichts mehr sagen.

Darf ich Sie bei dieser Gelegenheit fragen, ob Ihnen meine 1200 Schreibmaschinenseiten umfassende Darstellung der Tätigkeit von WPr. bzw. WPr. V für die Historical Division bekannt ist, die ich 1946 - 1949 verfasste? Ich habe sie s. Z. General

K
 Kr ist bei
 Krausnick (in
 Front-Korresp)!

v. W e d e l in einem Durchschlag für sein Buch über die Wehrmachtpropaganda im zweiten Weltkrieg, später noch Oberst a.D. M u r a w s k i zur Verfügung gestellt, der sie ebenfalls benutzt hat. Leider besorgte ich die Niederschrift, ohne in die heute bekannten Quellen - mit Ausnahme einiger von mir selbst geretteter Dokumente - einsehen zu können.

Mit kollegialen Empfehlungen bin ich

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Ihr sehr ergebener

Hess

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