

10.04

Nuremberg, November 19th 1945

Introduction

As last Commander in Chief of the German Army before the command was taken over by Adolf Hitler in December 1941 I feel obligated, in agreement with several generals of the former army, to testify on behalf of the whole army before the International Court in Nuremberg.

Our statement will, to the best of our knowledge, give in all frankness a complete survey of all facts and events which were of importance for the German army in the pertinent period before and during the war. The facts stated can be testified to under oath by at least one of the undersigned. The statement was drawn up from memory, no official documents being at hand.

It is my aim to put at the disposal of the representatives of the Allied Powers who have here convened a contribution which may enable them to form a very clear picture of this field. At the same time I feel this to be my duty to the soldiers of the former German army.

(signed) Walther v. Brauchitsch

Walther v. Brauchitsch
Last Commander in Chief
of the Army (until 19 December 1941)

(signed) Erich v. Manstein

Erich v. Manstein
Fieldmarshall, Commander in Chief of the
Army Group South (until 31 March 1944)

(signed) Franz Halder

Franz Halder
Colonel General, Chief of the General Staff
of the Army (until 24 September 1942)

(signed) Walter Warlimont

Walter Warlimont
General of Artillery, Assistant Chief of
the Armed Forces Operations Staff (until
6 September 1944)

(signed) Siegfried Westphal

Siegfried Westphal
General of Cavalry, Chief of the General
Staff of the High Commander West (until
7 May 1945)

A. The Army from 1920 - 1933.

1. Organization

The army was organized in 1920 in accordance with the provisions of the Versailles Treaty at a strength of 4 000 officers and 96 000 enlisted men, divided into 7 infantry- and three cavallery divisions under the Army Command and two Group Commands. The "Chief of the Army Command" (Chef der Heeresleitung) was subordinated to the Minister of War (Reichswehrminister). The soldiers served for 12 years, the officers for 25 years. This organization of the 100 000 men-army lasted until 1934.

2. Armament.

The armament was limited by the Versailles Treaty. For arms that were not permitted for training purposes fake arms were substituted as f.i. wooden machine guns carried by the cavallery.

3. Armament industry.

Armaments were produced by a restricted number of factories admitted under the Treaty.

4. Fortifications.

The fortifications in the West were destroyed. In the East Koenigsberg, Pillau and Loetzen had antiquated

fortifications with armament permitted under the Treaty, the fortresses on the Oder - Breslau, Glogau and Kuestrin - and on the Danube - Ingolstadt and Ulm - had very antiquated fortifications without armament.

5. The General Staff, the Army Command, The Minister of War.

The so-called Great-General-Staff, the central organization of the General Staff in Berlin had been dissolved. The officers of the General Staffs of the troops, attached to the higher commands, were by the Interallied Control Commission allowed to continue. They were in the course of time referred to as "Leading-Staff-Officers" (Fuehrerstabsoffiziere). They wore the uniform of the former General Staff. One of the offices of the Army Command was staffed with Leading-Staff-Officers. It was called "Troop Office" (Truppenamt) and did the work formerly performed by the General Staff. The organization and the tasks of the Troop-Office were known to and approved of by the Interallied Control Commission.

There was no General Staff Corps as an independent unit or responsible military authority. The old General Staff had been a central military authority, directly reporting to the emperor. The chief of the Troop-Office was working under the Chief of the Army Command who in his

turn was subordinated to the Minister of War, while the Chief of the General Staff on an equal level with Minister of War and had disposed of an incomparably larger influence on general affairs.

The powers of the Chief of the Army Command were restricted to purely military work within the army. All contacts with foreign or domestic policies fell within the competence of the Minister of War, a civilian member of the cabinet, responsible to the Reichstag. He alone submitted the budget and decided which demands were to be submitted. He had his Ministerial Office (Ministerrat), for both army and navy, dealing with political questions and publicity, the budget, counter-espionage, administration of justice, League of Nations.

This organization, drawing a definite line between military and political affairs, was the natural consequence of the parliamentary system underlying the Weimar Constitution of the German Republic. It was at the same time part of the System of strictest isolation from politics to which von Seeckt subjected the army which he created. This isolation was called for by the exigencies of the time and the teachings of history as he understood them.

The Prussian army out of which the German army as it existed before 1914 developed had its centre in the

person of the king to whom it swore allegiance. For its financial means it had to apply to the Prussian Diet and later to the Reichstag before which it was represented by the Prussian Minister of War. The appointment of officers depended upon the Military Cabinet, which was directly responsible to the king. The General Staff was responsible for operative planning and for the education of staff-officers for its own purposes and for the high commands. The Chief of the General Staff was originally subordinated to the Minister of War. Count Moltke, the greatest incumbent of the office, developed it to the importance which it had prior to 1914 and made it independent of the War Ministry. He confined himself to military tasks without seeking influence in politics. His successor, Count Waldersee, had political ambitions which contributed largely to his withdrawal after the brief period of two years. Count Schlieffen and the younger Moltke who followed Schlieffen in 1906 returned to the non-political tradition of the elder Moltke.

The war of 1914 to 1918 being a war of alliance inevitably drew the General Staff into political contacts. The character of the last Emperor and the intricacies of the political situation at home were further reasons for throwing the burden of political decisions upon the General Staff whose Chief during the war was Fieldmarshall

von Hindenburg with General Ludendorff as First Quartermaster General. Von Hindenburg had the confidence of the nation in full measure, Ludendorff's masterful personality surpassed the stature of the political personalities in the civilian sector so that decisions in the political sphere were taken with his cooperation, in contrast to tradition. In the post-war period remnants of the old army were tied up with one political Putsch, the Kapp-Putsch, which proved a complete and immediate failure. Ludendorff was a participant in it as he was in Hitler's uprising in Munich in November 1923.

Against this background it was von Seeckt's purpose to disentangle the army from all political connections and possible combinations and to constitute it as the bulwark against revolutionary movements at home and against possible attacks from abroad. The soldier had no vote. So he was not interested in parties. His pay - neither the man's nor the officer's - did not permit him to go abroad. So he had no contacts abroad. He was entirely thrown upon his military duties with no aspirations in politics and scant knowledge of them. This heritage of von Seeckt, the complete isolation, even aloofness of the army towards the political life of the nation had its far-reaching consequences, lasting into the years of the recent war.

Von Seeckt himself was undoubtedly a man of considerable political gifts. The temptation to enter into politics and to play a leading part lay close at hand. He did not fall for it.

6. The Army and Foreign Policy.

What von Seeckt saw in the decade that he led the army was the occupation of the Ruhr and Rhine districts by the French army in 1922 and were the frequent demands on German territory uttered in Poland and Czechoslovakia, that is to say that he saw Germany exposed on three parts of her extensive frontiers to demands of three powers each single one of which disposed of an army superior to the German army.

Compared with Germany's army of 100,000 men France disposed of 600,000, Czechoslovakia of 250,000, Poland of 400,000. These armies would in war be increased to 1,500,000, 600,000 and 1,000,000 respectively. In view of this overwhelming superiority of Germany's neighbors the training which von Seeckt gave the German army had to be, and was, entirely defensive in character.

7. The Army and Domestic Policy.

Within the country the army had in the early twenties taken part in quelling numerous riots. It was withdrawn from these duties as soon as the police force was strong enough to cope with the situation. The last case of participation of troops was the Munich Putsch of

November 1923 which resulted in difficulties with the Bavarian government. The Commander of the Bavarian contingent was retired. On the other hand officers of the infantry school had sided with Hitler. Their attitude was generally resented in the army.

The national and social ideas of the NSDAP appealed undoubtedly to many men of the army. But the noisy methods, the extreme antisemitism were considered repugnant.

Some young officers at Ulm violated in 1930 the regulations against political activities in doing propaganda-work for the NSDAP. They were court-martialled. The proceedings created considerable sensation. The Commander of the regiment who brought the officers to trial was Colonel Beck, later Chief of the General Staff of the army.

? There were very few officers at this period who had personal relations to Hitler or other leading members of the party. General von Schleicher had as head of the War Minister's special office contacts with most political personalities of all parties. They were continued and increased when he became Minister of War and Chancellor. His intimate friend, von Hammerstein, Chief of the Army Command was known as an outspoken opponent of the NSDAP. He was retired soon after Hitler came into power. His successor, von Fritsch, was chosen by the

President, von Hindenburg, solely for his military ability. - Von Blomberg who succeeded von Schleicher as Minister of War had no political record. He appointed as head of his Ministerial Office von Reichenau who had been his Chief of Staff in his former command and who was friendly towards the NSDAP. This led frequently to friction with leading men of the army. When von Reichenau was considered for the position of Commander in Chief of the Army in 1938 Hitler did not in the end choose to impose him on the army, acting on the advice of the Chief of the General Staff, Beck, and the oldest officer of the army, von Rundstedt.

8. Training of the Army.

The training of the troops in defensive warfare developed the tactics of "Hinhaltender Widerstand" (drawn-out resistance), the purpose of which was to fight for time by slow retreat. The soldier who served for twelve years was trained with the prospect of becoming a non-commissioned officer in case of an increase in the size of the army to possibly 300 000 men, i.e. an army sufficient to hold its own against either one of the two immediate Eastern neighbours of Germany.

In the early thirties certain cavallery units were motorized.

Until 1929 no mobilization plans were laid down. The transformation of the army from peace to war conditions

was for the first time considered as of April 1st 1930, the 7 infantry-divisions to be tripled by the calling of former professional soldiers and of volunteers. The trained reserves which could thus be counted upon were estimated to be approximately 150 000 men who were however neither registered nor otherwise controlled. There were no arms sufficient to arm 21 divisions; it was, therefore, planned, only to arm the first fighting line.

Arms which were under the Versailles Treaty forbidden to Germany, like tanks and heavy guns, were studied and developed in cooperation with the army of a country which was not a party to the Versailles Treaty. The armament industry in Germany remained confined to the concerns permitted to manufacture under the Treaty. The important German firms which had manufactured arms and munitions before 1918 did not transgress the restrictions imposed upon them by the Treaty. Some small plants for the manufacture of infantry munitions were established, but proved costly and inefficient.

Out of the fighting on the Polish frontier in the years after 1918 grew a Grenzschutz (frontier defence), a volunteer organisation of the population living in the frontier provinces. It was armed with rifles, a small number of machine-guns and still smaller number of cannons. It had the value of an untrained militia. -

The so-called "Black Reichswehr" which had consisted of the remnants of the Freikorps organised after 1918 was dissolved after a putsch in Kuestrin in 1923.

The means for the development of arms abroad and for the frontier defence units were asked for in the budget and granted and approved by the Cabinet of the Reich under the successive Chancellors Wirth, Stresemann, Luther, Bruening and as far as the frontier defence is concerned also with the knowledge and support of the Prussian Government, particularly the Minister of the Interior. This did not comply with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. In 1925 the Interallied Control Commission examined the state of disarmament of Germany and recognised it as completed. This was under the Versailles Treaty the time when general disarmament of the other nations was to set in. Nothing was done in this direction. It appeared, therefore, justified that Germany should strengthen its defences.

B. From January 31, 1933 to March 31, 1938.

I. Foreign Policy and the Army 1933 - 1938

The first important step in Hitler's foreign policy was to cancel Germany's membership in the League of Nations in October 1933. The Chief of the Army Command and the Chief of the Troop-Office were not consulted. The army had

based its general policy on the assumption that Germany when attacked would have to fight with the expectancy of succours through the League. The leaving of the League was therefore in this opinion of the army a step towards isolation which Germany should better have avoided in view of the very small strength in man-power and armaments which she possessed.

The agreement with Poland of January 1934 was received with mixed feelings. Some groups feared that all claims on territory formerly belonging to Germany had been abandoned while others hoped that the territorial questions regarding Danzig and the Corridor might find a solution by mutual understanding in the better atmosphere which was foreseen. It was felt that security on a definite part of Germany's extensive frontiers had been reached though this advantage might cost a loss of sympathy on the part of Russia. Good relations with Russia were highly valued in the army which had many close contacts with the Red Army. It was disappointing to see that the government was apparently not able to so lead the fight against communism at home that friendly relations with Russia could nevertheless be maintained as had been the case in the years following the Rapallo treaty. The violent language against Russia in the speeches of Hitler, Goebbels and Goering was deeply resented.

In a speech in 1934 Hitler gave - as he said definitely - up all claims on Alsace-Lorraine. This was generally regretted by most officers, though it was realised that under no circumstances another war with France should arise from this question.

The declaration of the independence of Germany in matters of armament of March 1935 was very warmly greeted as symbolizing the fact that Germany regained the position of an equal partner among the nations. It considerably increased the prestige of the government that this step did not result in any international complications. The army was entirely surprised by the news. No preparations for carrying it into practical effect had been ordered.

It must be presumed that even the Army Command had not been consulted. The Commanding General of the 3rd, Berlin, District and his Chief of Staff heard about it through the radio. The increase to 36 infantry divisions had been decided upon by Hitler shortly before the declaration. The Army Command would have preferred an increase to 21 divisions as it considered this the sound increase from an actual basis of 7 infantry divisions. The declaration laid this increase down as definite and as being for defensive purposes only. This corresponded to the ideas of the Army Command and of the army generally.

Before the occupation of the Rhineland the Minister of War and the Commander in Chief of the Army were informed.

The Minister of War had doubts as to the advisability of this one-sided step, and particularly of transferring troops to the left bank of the Rhine. They were at his suggestion limited to three battalions which could without difficulty be withdrawn in case of complications. The General Staff was totally surprised by Hitler's decision. It was allowed less than 24 hours for drafting and issuing the orders to the troops.

The naval agreement with England of October 1936 was welcomed with exceptional emphasis. It did restrict German armaments in a very definite manner. But this was not important in view of the expectation that a war with England could never occur again.

In the early months of 1938 there was much discussion of the possible Anschluss of Austria. No preparations were ordered nor did consultations with the Army Command take place. The Commander in Chief was absent from Berlin - and so were many officers of the General Staff who attended a tactical manoeuvre in Thuringia - on the day when the announcement of the Anschluss in Austria, resolved upon by Schuschnig, was made public. On the day after the announcement the Chief of the General Staff and the First Quartermaster General received order to report at the Chancellery. Hitler advised them of his decision to solve the question of the Anschluss. He said that he suspected

that the plebiscite would take place under the pressure of the government authorities and that that would falsify the actual will of the Austrian people. He expected that the German army would be heartily welcomed by the Austrian population, - a presumption that proved to be right, - and that the Austrian army would not put up any resistance. Neither the Western powers nor Czechoslovakia would consider the Anschluss unjustified. Difficulties might perhaps be raised by Italy. Hitler asked for proposals as to military measures. The Chief of Staff reported that the army was not at all prepared for this situation and could only improvise the necessary mobilisation of two army corps, a tank - and a territorial-division. Hitler demanded for political reasons the entry into Austria on the day before the plebiscite. The orders had to be issued within five hours, the preparations remained very incomplete.

The events in Spain from 1936 to 1939 did not concern the army as much as the Air Force. The General Staff was not called upon to deal with this matter at all. It was handled by the Air Ministry. The army delegated training groups and a batallion of light tanks. Demands, emanating from political sources, for 3 divisions to be sent to Spain were successfully objected to by the Commander in Chief of the Army.

The foreign policy of Hitler was in general warmly approved of by the army though in certain respects a more outspoken tendency towards friendship with England and Russia would have been desired. The principal thing was that all foreign countries recognised and treated Germany as an equal partner. This she had not been before 1933. The naval agreement with England seemed to indicate conclusively that the Versailles Treaty in its provisions on the restriction of armaments had been definitely discarded. A visit paid by General Beck, the Chief of the General Staff, to General Gamelin at Paris in 1937 and the visit of the General of the French Air Force Villemin at Berlin in 1938 demonstrated that the officers of the two great military powers were meeting each other on a footing of reciprocal comradeship and that between them the Versailles Treaty restrictions were forgotten.

II. The Army in its relations to the government, the Fuehrer and the NSDAP 1933 - 1938.

When Hitler was made Chancellor in 1933 Germany was in the midst of an economic crisis. Unemployment figures had reached the 7 Million limit. The bank crash of 1931 had conjured up all the dangers of the inflation years of evil memory which had taken away the economic basis of the upper middle class from which the majority of the officers came. Disturbances ending in bloodshed occurred almost every day. The flame up of the revolutionary movements which

had filled the five years from 1918 to 1923 appeared imminent. The moderate parties did not seem capable to deal with this situation. Hitler's program promised peace at home and abroad. The results of his measures were striking. Unemployment began to disappear and prosperity seemed to return.

Neither the army nor its leading officers had been active in bringing Hitler to power. The army saw with anxiety the swelling of the figures of the SA, the party's most revolutionary wing. At the end of 1933 Roehm claimed the command of 400 000 SA men. The army had 100 000 men, the police not more than 60 000. The speeches of the SA leaders left no doubt that they expected to seize the army command. Endeavours of Hitler to reconcile the army and the SA, undertaken in April 1934 remained fruitless. Hitler's measures against the SA on June 30th 1934 surprised the army. That steps against this unruly element were necessary was quite clear but the methods used distinctly shocked the army. The death of von Schleicher was considered an insult to the army. The accusations raised against him by Hitler were in no way believed. It was unfortunately impossible to prove the contrary. Protests which were submitted to the Minister of War were of no avail as the undersigned know from the Generals von Rundstedt and von Witzleben

who were at that time Group Commander and Corps Commander in Berlin. Further steps were cut short by the vote of the Reichstag which was approved of by the President of the Reich who was the Highest Commander of the Armed Forces. Fieldmarshall von Mackensen as President of the Schlieffen Association a union of former and active General Staff officers formally declared that von Schleicher and his collaborator von Bredow had been killed on the field of honour; the criticism of Hitler's action contained in his speech was warmly welcomed all through the army.

Though the army was not philosemitic the policy against the Jews and the methods employed were generally considered to be unworthy of the German nation. Streicher and his journal "Der Stuermer" were despised. The army tried to protect those in its ranks who were by descent or marriage affected by the anti-semitic laws. The success was small.

The army believed in the beginning that the party's friendly policy towards the churches was sincere. It was soon undeceived. Efforts of the party to change the attitude of the army, including a speech of Goering to this effect before senior officers in 1938 were of no avail.

From time to time officers who participated in training courses were conducted through the camps Oranienburg and

Dachau. They saw few political prisoners, mostly common criminals. The conditions were sanitary and not at all shocking. All prisoners dismissed from concentration camps were bound to silence and they never dared to speak freely, nor did those who happened to be familiar with the real situation. The government succeeded fully in its policy of keeping the general public, including the army, particularly during the war at the front, in complete ignorance of the number of, and the conditions in, the camps and the figures of the prisoners.

When the SA was stripped of its power, ~~and~~ the SS gained in influence. The army was opposed to its ambition of becoming a military body. It viewed with suspicion its anticlerical program and its illegal methods. Up to the outbreak of war the armed SS consisted only of very small units.

Altogether the relations between army and party were never warm. The personal life of party functionaries, the propaganda methods, the praise of the Fuehrer as the greatest German were not at all in keeping with the traditional views of the army.

III. Rearmament 1933 - 1938.

1. Organization

Soon after January 30th 1933 Hitler made it known that he intended to restore Germany's independence in matters

of armament. In 1933/34 preparatory measures were taken for the increase to 21 divisions, the organisation of recruiting offices, the establishment of an armament industry and the production of modern arms. The Air Force was taken care of by the Minister of Air, Goering.

In 1935 compulsory service was introduced, limited to one year, later extended to two years. The Army Command was most anxious to avoid precipitate growth. The officers of the Command had all gone through the experience of the World War. They were haunted by what Bismarck had called the nightmare of coalitions. They knew that Germany could not endure a war against East and West and they knew that an aggressive war must necessarily lead to the dreaded two-front-war. They bent their efforts on creating a defensive army which they did not expect to be complete before 1942.

The General Staff was on account of this attitude frequently accused of weakness, even of sabotage, by leading party-men like Goering, Himmler, Ley, Kube and by Hitler himself. Hitler never felt confidence in the General Staff nor in the generals.

The "frontier defense" was abolished in 1936. In its place 21 divisions of secondary reserve (Landwehr) in the nature of a militia were provided in case of war.

The preparations for mobilisation of reserves proceeded slowly. In the spring of 1938 it became clear that a well organised mobilisation was still impossible.

2. Fortifications.

The fortifications in the East were increased, particularly through a fortified zone on the Oder and Warthe, to protect Berlin. In the West minor projects were started until in 1936 the decision was reached to erect a fortified line similar to the Maginot-line, to be completed by 1945. In 1938 Hitler decided to accelerate the construction, took it away from the military authorities and transferred it to the Organisation Todt. Even in 1939 the Westwall had only a limited defensive value.

3. Training.

The training of the troops was greatly hampered by lack of non-commissioned officers, by the fact that many officers were drawn over to the Air Force and that the officers returning to the colours had frequently reached an age which made them little suitable for protracted service.

4. The General Staff.

The General Staff was reorganised in 1935 under General Beck. He was subordinate to the Commander in Chief of the Army and strictly limited to military matters. Political questions remained with the Minister of War who was at the

same time Commander in Chief of the Forces. General Beck was during his tenure of office from 1935 to 1938 only twice received by Hitler and rarely asked to report to the Minister of War.

General Beck was responsible for the training of the officers destined for the General Staff. The principal course for this training were the General Staff tactical journeys. They had for their objects the defense against attacks from East or West, or combined attacks from both directions. In 1938 no such tactical journey was made, but a task-study was ordered. To examine the question whether in case of a war with Czechoslovakia and France it would be possible to defeat Czechoslovakia before France could come to her aid. In his summing up speech General Beck impressed most earnestly on his audience that Germany was unable to meet such a contingency. He and with him the General Staff were very anxious to keep the officers of the army from fantastic ideas of aggrandisement.

One of the principal tasks of the General Staffs of all countries is the planning for the assembling of troops in frontier areas in case of war. Until 1934 no such plans were prepared for the German army. It was for the autumn of 1935 that for the first time plans for assembling of troops were laid down for the protection

of the Western provinces under the name "assembling plans red". For this purpose three small armies were envisaged. The protection against Poland was to be in charge of one small army and a military commander in Silesia. For the Czechoslovakian frontier only frontier defence units remained available which were, beginning in 1936, replaced by territorial divisions. One army command with the rest of the army was the reserve of the Commander in Chief.

During the years 1937 and 1938 the possibility of a joint action of France and Czechoslovakia against Germany gained in importance. The results of the studies during the General Staff tactical journeys demonstrated that Germany could not meet such an attack merely on the defensive. It would be forced to meet the weaker enemy first and then to turn against the stronger forces. In the fall of 1937 an assembling plan "green" was drawn up, providing for the assembling of four armies and one independent army corps on the Czechoslovakian border. The remaining forces, consisting of three small armies were to protect the Western frontier while another small army and the military commander in Silesia secured the Polish frontier. The assembling plans were given to the group commands. They were prohibited to pass them further down the line; so they never reached the troops.

5. The Dismissal of General von Fritsch.

The Minister of War von Blomberg was Commander in Chief of the Forces, i.e. Army, Navy and Air Force. The army felt that he did in important matters not share the views of the Army Command or was not able to give them sufficient weight. The army believed that in a war the influence of the Army Command upon the conduct of operations ought to be decisive. In every war that Germany would have to fight the ultimate decision would fall on land. The Army Command therefore disapproved of the well known theories of General Drouhet on strategic Air warfare. It thought that the task of the Air Force should be to support the operations of the army by direct cooperation. It wanted to see the Command of the Armed Forces and of the Army united in its hand.

This conflict found its definite, though unexpected solution when von Blomberg was relieved of his duties - for reasons which were entirely personal - and Hitler decided at the same time to dismiss the Chief of the Army Command, General von Fritsch, on February 4th, 1938. With him the head of the Personnel Office and shortly later the Chief of the General Staff, General Beck, were dismissed. His chief collaborator, General von Manstein, was transferred to the front.

The dismissal of von Fritsch took place in connection with an ugly intrigue, engineered by the Gestapo and the SS.

It had not infrequently been claimed that at this time the generals of the army should have risen and seized the government. This would have been possible only under the leadership of von Fritsch himself - if at all in view of Hitler's immense popularity. But von Fritsch did not choose this way, alien to the traditions of the army in which he had grown up. He tragically sacrificed himself to these traditions.

C. From the Spring of 1938 to the Autumn of 1942.

I. From the spring of 1938 to the Polish crisis.

The dismissal of von Fritsch was not the only change in the leading positions of the forces. Von Blomberg retired as Minister of War and Commander in Chief. Hitler gave him no successor, but himself assumed the Command of the Forces. His staff, to assist him in this position, was the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) (High Command of the Armed Forces), the Chief of which was General Keitel. The OKW consisted of officers of the three forces and was divided into offices (Aemter), the first of them being the Wehrmachtfuehrungsamt (Armed Forces Operations Office), later called Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab (Armed Forces Operations Staff). The other offices were Military Political Affairs and Intelligence Service; Military Economical Affairs; Administrative Affairs. The brother of the Chief of the OKW, General Keitel, was made head of the Personnel Department of the army.

Among the Chiefs of these offices the following enjoyed to a certain degree the confidence of Hitler: the Chief of the OKW, - the Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff for operative tasks proper since the Norwegian campaign in 1940, - the Chief of the Administrative Office, particularly since the organisation of the National Socialist Leadership Organisation in 1943, - Further the following held a position of trust: the Chiefs of the Armed Forces Aides since 1938, - the Chief of the Army Staff within the OKW for Army Organisation since 1942, - and the General charged by the Fuehrer with the History of the War.

Whenever the term OKW is used in the following pages, particularly where conflicts and disagreements between OKW and Army Command are mentioned, the term OKW is meant to comprise Hitler himself and his immediate military collaborators. The departments of the OKW and the Generals and General Staff officers serving with them were merely executing the orders which they received, as was the case in the corresponding departments of the Army Command. The majority of them appreciated and shared our views. We want to acknowledge the cooperation and support which the army received from them.

What von Seeckt had been for the army of 100.000 men, von Fritsch had been for the army after 1933. This army was

his work. It was devoted to him and it was known outside the army what his personality meant for the army. When Hitler eliminated him, at the same time abolishing the position of the Minister of War and taking over the Command of the Armed Forces, he deprived the army of its outstanding representation and basically changed his own position towards the Commander in Chief of the Army. Hitler was now not only the head of the state, but the direct military superior of the Commander in Chief of the Army.

General von Brauchitsch was the successor of von Fritsch in title, but not in substance when he was appointed Commander in Chief of the Army. His first efforts were directed towards rehabilitating von Fritsch. This brought him in opposition to Hitler, the SS and the party.

Soon another conflict with Hitler was to follow. At the end of May 1938 an order was received from OKW to take military measures in support of political negotiations with Czechoslovakia, these measures to be effective as of October 1st. General Beck had the necessary preparations made, but at the same time drew up a memorandum protesting on behalf of the General Staff against any policy that might involve the country in a war which would inevitably lead to a world-wide war. The Commander in Chief of the Army approved of the memorandum and discussed

it with the Commanding Generals of the army who all shared his views. He laid it before Hitler who denied hotly that Germany's foreign policy could cause a world war.

General Beck was in September 1938 succeeded by the oldest General Staff Officer, General Halder.

The military measures in the territory surrounding Czechoslovakia were executed in the autumn of 1938. The Sudeten question found its peaceful solution at Munich. The Army Command was not further asked to participate in political considerations or decisions. In March 1939 it was ordered to occupy Czechoslovakia after arrangements between Hitler and Hacha had been made to that effect.

In this period two important orders were received.

It had been the custom in the army since 1813 that the Chief of Staff was responsible together with his Commander for all military decisions. This was abrogated. The Commanding Officers were held solely responsible. This decreased the influence and importance of the Chief of the General Staff and of Staff Officers generally.

The other order was to the effect that until 1945 the Army should devote itself exclusively to organization and training. Preparations for operations in case of war were to be omitted, including the preparations for frontier

defence which had since 1935 been annually made in view of possible political tension. The order was very welcome as it coincided with the views of the army.

For 1939 no increase of the regular peace units was intended. The progress of the Westwall necessitated the creation of 3 fortification divisions in case of mobilisation. The reserve divisions for this case were doubled. The demands of the party for influence on the army grew more impetuous but were not successful.

II. The Polish Crisis.

The events leading up to the Polish crisis came to the knowledge of the Army Command only through publications in the press. Hitler rarely talked to the C.in C. about political questions and then only on specific subjects. The Foreign Office had instructions not to inform the C.in C. nor the General Staff.

In April 1939 Hitler advised the C.in C.s of the three Forces that he intended to solve the Danzig and Corridor problem and ordered military measures to be prepared for the support of political demands. In May reports to that effect were demanded. Hitler said: "I would be an idiot if I would drift into a world war on account of the lousy Corridor question as the fools of 1914 did." It was felt that a military attack was not in fact earnestly considered. On August 22, the Generals of the Armed Forces were received at Berchtesgaden. Hitler said

that he had isolated Poland, that England and France could and would not seriously support her, that the threat of a blockade was ineffective on account of the agreement concluded with Russia. Negotiations were still being pursued.

A definite decision was not proclaimed. It was not clear whether one had been reached. The marching order of August 25 was withdrawn the same day, accompanied by the advice from Hitler to the C.in C.: "The negotiations are continued." A definitive order was received on noon of August 31, to enter Poland on September 1. The Polish mobilisation had taken place on August 30.

III. The Polish Campaign.

The Polish campaign was undertaken with 41 infantry and 14 motorized divisions. On the Western frontier 5 infantry and one armored division remained available. There were no reserves at the disposal of the C.in C. The organisation showed grave defects in trucks, rail-road-units, signal-corps, security-units behind the front.

The campaign resulted in no differences of opinion with Hitler until shortly before the end. The C.inC. wanted the capital which was surrounded to surrender when the army defending it realized that its situation was hopeless. Hitler insisted for political reasons to have the campaign immediately closed. He ordered the attack on Warsaw.

The participation of Russia was a complete surprise for the C.in C. He found himself in strong opposition to the political authorities with respect to the administration of the occupied territory for which he had made preparations. He protested against excesses committed by police forces which the SS had sent. Hitler made biting remarks about the "Antiquated ideas of chivalry" on the part of the generals. He transferred the administration of Poland to a civilian "General Government". - He criticised severely the honours bestowed by the army on its former leader von Fritsch who had died in the battle of Warsaw.

IV. Between Poland and France.

The Polish campaign had given the army a considerable increase in popular prestige and esteem. This was answered by the party in glorifying Hitler as the greatest strategist of all times. Quarrels with Himmler on questions of religious service in the army and of the maintenance of the traditional moral standards of married life ensued. The secret augmentation of SS units was strongly objected to by the army.

At the end of September Hitler advised the C.inC.'s and Chiefs of Staff that he would not wait for an attack by the Western powers but would himself attack as this was necessary for the protection of the industrial districts on Ruhr and Rhine. The neutrality of Belgium he considered

insincere as that country had fortifications against Germany but not against France. The Belgian and French General Staffs, it was proven, had held discussions pertaining to the entrance of French and English troops into Belgium, the mass of which stood assembled on the Northern Borderline of France. He did not expect to attack Holland, but would make a political arrangement with respect to the Maastricht area. The Army Command was ordered to prepare plans for operations to meet this situation.

Hitler's ideas were contrary to the considerations which had so far guided the Army Command which wanted to continue in its defensive attitude. Only recently the General Staff had laid down its considerations which were based on the policies inherited from General Beck.

A further discussion with Hitler took place in October, showing a stronger tendency for the occupation of Holland, probably instigated by the needs of the Air Force.

The Army Command could not dissuade Hitler. It issued orders for preparedness as of November 12. On November 5, however, the C.inC. advised Hitler once more of all the reasons speaking against an attack. The conference ended with a grave conflict. Hitler now ordered the attack for the 12th of November. The order was withdrawn on the 7th. Several orders and counter-orders followed. An extraordinary wave of cold weather made the attack impossible.

The differences of opinion led to a meeting between Hitler and the principal generals on November 22. Hitler reproached them as being subject to a spirit of chivalry which was entirely antiquated. They had advised against all his successful actions: Rhineland occupation, Austria, Czechoslovakia. Poland was solely his success. He expected them now to follow his ideas unconditionally. - The same evening Hitler repeated his reproaches in an interview with the C.inC. who offered his resignation which was however not accepted.

V. The Norwegian Campaign.

In December 1939 or January 1940 Hitler gave order to the Chief OKW, and probably also to the Chiefs of the Navy and the Air Force, but not to the C in C of the Army, to make plans for an amphibian operation against Norway and Denmark. The decision was taken without consultation with the C in C of the Army. OKW merely ordered that certain units and staff personnel should be put at its disposal for special purposes.

Hitler demanded the occupation of the two countries in order to protect the Baltic Sea, to maintain the operative freedom of the German fleet and to keep open the importation of supplies from overseas. The neutrality of Norway, he said, was in danger to be violated.

by a British-French Expeditionary Force, ready for action since the late autumn of 1939, destined to support Finland against Russia via Narvik

by the British fleet; violations had already taken place in the Cossack - Altmarck incident

by numerous British agents disguised as British consuls in Norwegian ports.

The occupation of Denmark was considered indispensable in order to safeguard the communications with Norway.

The kings of Norway and Denmark were to be asked through diplomatic channels to consent to the occupation. This was a matter to be handled by the Foreign Office.

The OKW had never considered Norway as a subject for study or action. Maps and geographical descriptions had to be bought in Berlin bookstores. The preparations lay with the OKW. OKH was ordered to keep six divisions prepared.

Operations commenced on April 9, 1940. An Agreement with Denmark was concluded the same day. There was hardly any resistance to the occupation.

British orders were found during the fighting near Namsos and Andalsnes revealing that a British force had stood ready in British ports to occupy the Norwegian coast even without previous German action.

Norway was the first theater of war known as - "OKW theater of War". Operations and administration were carried out and on without responsibility of the Army Command, by orders directly issued by OKW. This method was

increasingly applied in later years, comprising Africa, Finland, the whole Western, Southern and South-Eastern theaters of war. The purpose was to restrict the influence of the Army Command which was constantly and inconveniently warning against the extension of military operations and the splitting up of military forces. The relations with allied forces were reserved to OKW, excluding from them the Army Command.

At this period Hitler took the production of armament under his direct influence and guidance by putting Todt in charge of it who was after his death succeeded by Speer. In the place of the Army Command^{and} its officers party functionaries directed the production of armaments and munitions.

During the winter 1939/40 preparations for operations in the West were continued. By order of Hitler they were extended to include the Netherlands, particularly the so-called "fortress of Holland". The Air Force was to contribute airborne troops at Rotterdam. Hitler let it however be known that he intended to advise the Queen of Holland. He insisted that he had definite proof of General Staff discussions between France and Belgium and of preparatory English and French commandos in Belgium.

Independently of the operation orders the Army Command took measures for the military administration of occupied territory.

VI. The French Campaign.

From the very beginning of operations in France the C in C had continuously to meet attempts of interference from Hitler. One of them had very serious consequences. French and English troops were attacked around, and to the North of, Courtrai. The German tank heads were already in the back of the English and menaced their line of retreat towards Dunkerque. It was a question of days that they would be definitely cut off when Hitler personally, out of anxiety for the tanks, ordered the tank units to be halted. This laid the way to Dunkerque open for the English troops. To make his order effective against the recalcitrant C in C of the Army Hitler sent officers of his entourage, amongst them Keitel, to the command-staffs of the army with his orders.

The second part of the French campaign showed no differences of opinion between Hitler and the C in C of the Army.

Military agreements with the Italians who at this time entered the war were not made by the Army Command which did in no way welcome this event. It meant a broadening of the sphere of the war and burdened Germany with an ally who needed assistance in every respect.

When the French campaign was finished Hitler examined the question of continuing the war against England. Preparations were made under the name "Sea-lion"

(Seeloewe) for transferring two armies to the South coast of England. Though the orders emanated from Hitler the C in C found no support when he urged immediate action. Only air-raids were started. It seems that Hitler did in fact not seriously want to see the landing in England. Perhaps he hoped for an agreement by negotiation.

After the armistice with France Hitler established the administration for the territories occupied by the army. He included Luxemburg and Alsace-Lorraine into the Reich and placed the departments of Northern France under the Belgian administration.

The military government which the Army Command had organised became gradually only a matter of form. In France the German Embassy in Paris became Hitler's political representation. Contrary to the wishes of the army and the interventions of the C in C Hitler's policy was directed towards utilizing to the full the economic resources of the occupied area instead of cooperating with the population on the basis of mutual confidence. The C in C had forbidden to buy freely in the country and had barred the frontiers against the transport of goods to Germany. His orders were cancelled by Hitler.

In order to alleviate the situation in France the Army Command transferred numerous divisions to Germany. Some

went to Poland where an increase of troops appeared indicated in view of the increase of Russian troops on the line of demarcation and because the SS had commenced to raise new units and to take over the frontier sections. This participation of the SS was not desirable.

VII. Preparations for the Russian Campaign and the Balkan Campaign.

In July 1940 Hitler seems to have conceived the idea that Russia might enter the war and that such an attack might have to be anticipated by a German attack. Jodl made this known to a few officers of the OKW. The Forces themselves were not advised. They received merely an order of the OKW dated August 9, 1940 concerning "Reconstruction East" to organize the occupied Polish territory as future frontier area by constructing railroads, roads, barracks, air-fields etc. The intention to attack was not recognizable. In December 1940 a conference was held in which Hitler discussed with the C in C and the Chief of the General Staff the geographic and operative bases for an offensive in Russia. Hitler ordered all preparations to be made for the possibility of a war with Russia. They were to be concluded as of May 15, 1941. Hitler indicated that the reason for this was that aggressive tendencies on the part of Russia were unmistakable. They arose out of the Bolshevist claim of world domination and had been confirmed by

Molotov's demands during his recent visit at Berlin.

Hitler's decision was in no way welcomed by the Army Command. From a purely military point of view it meant for the Forces, already engaged on three fronts in Norway, France and Africa, the opening of a fourth front and battle against the strongest military power in Europe. The resources of the German nation could not possibly be sufficient to endure such an extension of military operations.

Instructions of the OKW to the Forces for preparation of an offensive war against Russia were issued on December 18, 1940. Armoured units had to be reenforced and increased, motorised and infantry divisions increased as well as truck- and signal-, railroad- and road-building-units. Against the wishes of the army SS-units were increased and combined in motorised divisions.

The number of divisions on the Russian side was at this time considerably greater than the number of German units and was still growing. Their grouping showed conclusively the intention of attack. In May 1941 it was estimated that 160 Russian infantry divisions and the majority of tank formations were lodged in the frontier area. Informations indicated that in the interior production was at highest output.

The plans of the army for the initial operations were reported on February 3, 1941., to Hitler by the C in C

and the Chief of the General Staff. It was particularly emphasized that the Russian resources in personnel could not possibly be estimated. Hitler remarked that quick and decisive blows in the beginning were essential. That would let the whole fabric of Bolshevist domination crumble that was hated in Russia. A reference to the material strength of Russia was met with the answer that the Russian tanks were antiquated, the tank defences inadequate.

The plans of operation covered only the first targets, for the Southern army group up to the lower Dnjepr, for the middle group to the hills east of Smolensk, for the Northern group to the Leningrad area. The C in C referred to Moscow as the centre of Russia's lines of communication and essential area for organizing new armies and producing armaments. Hitler said Moscow was entirely without importance for him. Leningrad as "hatching house of Bolshevism" and the South as economic basis were much more vital.

The O KW agreed with the Finnish Government that several German divisions should assist the Finnish army upon that country's entry into the war. They were to be taken out of the German troops in Norway. North-Finland was declared theatre of war of OKW, outside the jurisdiction of the Army Command.

During this period the Balkans claimed increasingly the attention of the military authorities. In October 1940 Antonescu impressed by the seizure of territory by Russia and by the assembling of troops on the frontier had requested German support for the reorganisation of the Roumanian army which was granted. German troops were sent to Roumania. This served at the same time as preparatory measure for the march into Bulgaria which had been agreed upon by the political authorities without knowledge of the Army Command.

In the meantime the fighting in North Africa had taken an unfortunate turn for the Italians. Hitler decided in the autumn of 1940 to render assistance, though on a moderate scale. But it meant a new splitting up of forces and later at a time of highest tension in Russia it cost the German army some of its best tank-divisions, to be wasted on a theater of war of entirely secondary rank.

The commencement of the war between Italy and Greece was a complete surprise for Hitler and the OKW. The use of German troops in Albania could be prevented. But Hitler conceived the idea of relieving Italy by an attack on Northern Greece. He intended further to prevent the entering

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of English troops in the Greek parts of Thrace and the possibility of air-raids on the Roumanian oil-fields. The OKW issued in January instructions for the march into Bulgaria and the occupation of Salonika and the coast-line to the East. It advised that English units would probably soon appear in Greece.

In March 1941 Hitler spoke in the Chancellery to the higher commanders of the three Forces about his political ideas concerning the war with Russia. He mentioned Russia's claims on Finland, the Balkans and the Dardanelles, the increase of troops on the frontiers. He indicated that secret agreements with England seemed to exist which were probably the reason why England had declined the German offer for peace. Russian would be England's last sword on the continent. It was necessary to anticipate her attack.

He further said that the war with Russian could not be fought with chivalry. It might be a fight of metaphysical and racial contrasts, to be fought with unrelenting hardness. The officers would have to free themselves of traditional views. He knew that their reasoning would not permit them to comprehend the necessity of this kind of warfare. He could not change that. He demanded unconditional obedience to his orders and would not suffer any protest. In this connection he spoke of the treatment of the political commissars attached to the Russian troops. They could not be considered as soldiers. They were the bearers of the Weltanschauung which was opposed to National Socialism. The instructions which he gave were to the effect that the commissars if taken prisoners should be shot. Whether it was at this occasion or later that they were ordered to be handed over to the SD cannot now be ascertained. German soldiers

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who would violate the laws of warfare in Russia should not be called to account unless it were for common crimes. Russia did not adhere to the Geneva Convention. There was evidence that Russia would not recognize members of the SS and of the police as members of the armed forces, but would shoot them. A discussion was - as usual - not admitted.

All commanders of the army who were present were greatly shocked. Some made reports to the C in C. He advised them that the army would not issue instruction for the execution of the order. To firmly establish the opinion of the OKW the oral order of Hitler was laid down in writing at the Army Command and the transmission to the OKW with the advice that no order of this character would be issued by the Army Command.

The Commander in Chief of the Army did not issue such an order. On the contrary he issued an order to the army that the discipline in the army had to be kept up strictly by all means and that no measures should be carried out which were contrary to German ideas of discipline.

Whether an order in writing of the OKW concerning the treatment of commissars was issued and distributed cannot be definitely ascertained at present. As far as is known Hitler's order has not been applied by the army. The order of the C. in C concerning the maintenance of discipline was carried out strictly.

On the day on which Yugoslavia took position against Germany in changing her government Hitler declared to the C in C and the Chief of the General Staff: "I have decided to throw down Yugoslavia". He saw the influence of England and Russia at work.

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There was danger of military cooperation with Greece where English troops had landed. Italy's position in Albania was critical. Simultaneous attack on Yugoslavia and Greece was ordered. They commenced on April 6, 1941.

The political organization in the Balkans - including the new frontier in Croatia - was perfected without consultation with the C in C, the administration of Greece established by Italy in agreement with the OKW. A small part of Greece and the military government of Serbia remained formally under the Army Command.

VIII. The Russian Campaign until December 19, 1941

At the time of the commencement of the Russian campaign the activities of the Army Command were for all practical purposes restricted to the army in the East consisting of 35 motorized and 120 infantry divisions. This the C in C considered sufficient only for the very beginning. Hitler thought, however, that he could not impose upon the German population a further draft at this period. The demand of the army for further increase in man-power remained a source of constant friction with the OKW.

Hitler convened the principal commanders on June 14, 1941 in order to instruct them for their tasks. He could not raise their enthusiasm. They took a grave outlook of the future. It seems that Hitler held the conviction - neither shared nor nourished by the Army Command - that he could force Russia to conclude peace within the year 1941 and thereby make it impossible for the Allies to continue the war. There was only six

months left of the year when on June 22, 1941 the demarcation line was crossed.

Soon after the first battles the interference of Hitler in military matters, even tactical details, began. It led to an unbearable tension between him and the Army Command which culminated in the battle of Kiev.

The Army command considered the principal task of the operations to destroy the mass of the Russian army which it expected to find on the march to Moscow. To take this area was to be the first aim and the basis for the operation of the following year. Hitler ordered the concentration of all available German forces upon the parts of the Russian army in front of the Southern German army group. The battle of Kiev diverted the German effort from its chief task to an undertaking of secondary importance which cost irrecoverable losses in time and strength. It was now too late for the attack on Moscow which Hitler ordered. The winter which started unusually early and was to be unusually hard began before Moscow could be reached.

Hitler believed that Russia's military power had been destroyed by the battle of Kiev and that the loss of the eastern Ukraina would paralyse her war production. He therefore ordered the dissolution of 40 divisions of the army for the benefit of German war production and ordered a considerable decrease in the production of ammunition for the army. He did not consult the Army Command before issuing these orders. Its resistance deepened the cleavage of diverging opinions. The opposition of the Army Command against the order concerning commissars

caused instructions of the OKW to the effect that commissars should be separated from the men only in camps further in the rear of the front. In the previous campaigns the prisoners had been transported by army units. This was now made a matter to be handled by the OKW. Fearing the spread of communism at home Hitler demanded that Russian prisoners should not enter German territory where preparations for taking care of them had been made. It was not until untenable, even chaotic conditions developed in the camps and diseases began to spread that the transport to Germany was permitted.

During the Russian campaign Hitler ordered commandos of the SD to follow immediately upon the fighting units. Against the protest of the Army Command and the Commanders of the Armies they were advanced into the zone of operations. They had political tasks about which they were not permitted to advise the Army Commanders. They reported to the Reich Leader SS.

Hitler's declaration of war on the United States was a complete surprise to the Army Command. It meant a change of his policy of caution and moderation for which nobody was prepared. The reasons for it were unknown.

The Army Command attributed decisive importance to the entry of the United States into the war. It destroyed the last ray of hope for winning the war by military action. Only a political solution seemed to remain possible.

Soon after the beginning of winter military failures commenced to happen, which had their ultimate cause in the consequences of

the battle of Kiev, the fatigue of the troops, the measures of the enemy and errors of local German commanders. They were serious at Rostow and in the attack of Tishwin which Hitler had forced inspite of repeated advice to the contrary. The worst defeat was caused by the Russian counter-attack at Moscow in December 1941.

Hitler's interference in all questions concerning the army and the fact that no influence was allowed to the Army Command on the political and economic administration of the occupied territories led to increasingly frequent conflicts between Hitler and the C in C of the Army. They grew more bitter in the autumn of 1941 in consequence of the military events and the political measures in the occupied zone. They were enhanced by the endeavors of the party to gain influence within the Army.

Realizing the impossibility of effecting any change in this unbearable situation the C in C submitted his resignation on December 7, 1941. It was accepted on December 19 for "reasons of health".

The army had from now on no representation as Hitler himself took over the command and delegated such powers as did not directly touch on operation to Keitel.

The propaganda of the party spread the information that von Brauchitsch had caused the failures at the beginning of winter and that the defects in the supply of winter clothing were due to him.

IX. The Russian Campaign from December 19, 1941 to September 24,

1942

The views of the Chief of the General Staff were in the field of operations diametrically opposed to those of Hitler who knew only one basic principle: never voluntarily to give up even one square foot of land; every man had to fight until the last wherever he stood.

In order to avoid unnecessary losses and to regain the freedom of action it had always been considered strategically wise to retreat carefully if need be. Generals who followed this maxim were called to task or even court-martialed and dishonoured by Hitler. The customary confidence between officers and their superiors was displaced by fear of punishment. The readiness of taking responsibility which had been the source of success began to disappear.

When in January 1942 the Russian counter-attack against the middle part of the front had come to a standstill Hitler demanded offensive action. The Chief of Staff thought that defensive strategy was indicated. He did not submit proposals for an attack. Hitler issued the orders himself.

The Russian army dodged the attacks on Volga and Caucasus. Hitler took these retreats for victories. He sent parts of the of the best divisions to the West and to Leningrad while in the meantime the Russians concentrated armies on the Volga, the Don and in the Caucasus and attacked heavily on other parts of the front. Hitler refused to see these facts. When the ability of the divisions on the Volga and in the Caucasus to attack further

began to dwindle and heavy losses occurred on other parts of the front he held the troops and their leaders accountable.

Realizing that fruitful cooperation with Hitler was as impossible as it was to convince him of the soundness of the principles which had heretofore secured the successes of the Army Command the Chief of the General Staff decided to force an open break.

On September 24, 1942, General-Colonel Halder was relieved of his duties. General Zeitzler became his successor. The change was not made known to the public.

P. X. The War from the Autumn of 1942 to the Spring of 1944

The period from the autumn of 1942 to the spring of 1944 can be described only from the point of view of men standing outside the High Command of the Army. We did not belong to it. This period followed upon a period of almost uninterrupted military successes. In Stalingrad began the battle for Germany's life. The sequence of events will be given later. The first object will be to elucidate the symptoms which determined the character of military decisions in conducting the war. They were preeminently the case for ultimate total defeat.

I. The Elimination of Military Influence on Operations.

1. The Fuehrer.

Since the winter of 1941 Hitler was High Commander of the Forces and at the same time of the Army. He actively engaged himself in leading the army in certain fields.

a. This was particularly true of operations. Since the

end of the offensive in the Caucasus and at Stalingrad operational ideas were in the main limited to defending every square foot of soil. It was very rarely possible to impress on Hitler the necessity of other operational ideas and exigencies. In some important cases it was however up to the spring of 1944 successfully done though it was mostly too late.

- b. In the field of armaments Hitler brought his whole weight to bear. His interest in technical matters caused him to overestimate their value. He overlooked the needs and possibilities of the forces and their leaders.
- c. To increase his influence on the army, particularly on the appointment of commanding officers and the spiritual training of the officers' corps Hitler made his principal aide de camp, General Schmundt, chief of the army personnel office.
- d. Beginning in 1943 Hitler paid particular attention to the national-socialistic education of the army which in his opinion did not nourish the right "Faith" among the officers. He created so-called N-S-Leading Officers who were regarded as political commissars in the army and contributed much to destroying the authority of the commanders. Hitler had an unsurmountable suspicion against the Generals and the General Staff.

2. The Chief of the General Staff.

The Chief of the General Staff, Zeitzler, who was appointed in September 1942 was only a titular incumbent of the office. He was practically limited to operations in the East, to questions of supplies, organisation and training. He took great pains to carry suggestions of the Commanders of Army Groups into effect, but if he succeeded at all, it was mostly too late.

3. The OKW.

Zeitzler had no influence upon the other theaters of war, nor knowledge of them. They were directly operated by Hitler who was advised by General-Colonel Jodl. Fieldmarshal Keitel had no influence on operational questions since the time of the Norway campaign.

4. Air Force and Navy had their own Commanders in Chief, working directly under Hitler.

5. The home army passed under the command of Keitel when von Brauchitsch retired, the army in this way losing control over the personnel of its reserves.

6. The High Commanders of Army Groups were entirely restricted to the military operations of their particular parts of the front. They were not informed of the political or military intentions of Hitler nor about the situation in other theaters of war. They had no opportunity of forming an opinion of the general situation nor could they under these circumstances make well-founded suggestions for general operations. With respect to their own intentions they had continuous conflicts with Hitler with whom their relations grew increasingly more difficult. Opponents of the army constantly made use of these difficulties against the generals.

Personal conferences with Hitler became almost impossible to obtain.

The highest officers of the army were therefore robbed of all influence on affairs of importance.

7. Consequences for military operations.

This policy of conducting operations was the principal source of the failures

beginning in the winter of 1941/42. The lodging of practically the whole army group B before Stalingrad and the leaving of the neighbouring fronts in the hands of Allied armies resulted in the encircling of the sixth army in Stalingrad and its being sacrificed there, on the principle that no square-foot of soil should be given up. Hitler's decision to let the army remain there was supported by Goering's assumption that he could send sufficient supplies by his Air Force. This principle of standing pat under all circumstances led from one crisis to the other and cost the loss of most of the troops in the Crimea.

The loss of the Army Group in Africa was the second serious failure of the German army. Hitler had not gauged the difficulties for supplies, nor the importance of the domination of the air and of the sea by the Allies. Neither the efforts of the leaders on the front nor the heroism of the soldiers could balance the mistakes of the Highest Commander.

II. The development of the army 1942/44.

a. The units of the army.

Beginning in the winter 1941/42 the divisions of the army felt the lack of recruits. The losses were no longer fully repaired. The high losses of officers were seriously felt. The supply of arms was not sufficient as against the increasing superiority in material on the side of the enemy. The troops were constantly overstrained. This development was repeatedly reported, but these reports were not believed.

Recruits were not used to bring the old units back to their standards, but

to organize new divisions. The consequence was that the old experienced divisions were bled white.

- b. The armed SS consisted of only a few regiments at the beginning of the war. Beginning in 1940, they were increased to divisions and corps. Their armament and equipment and their recruits were incomparably better than those of the army. Their recruiting system drew away the supply of non-commissioned officers of the army.

The SS units were subordinated to the army only for tactical purposes and for supplies. Otherwise their commander was the Reichsfuehrer SS, also as regards questions of discipline.

The SS units fought courageously. Intelligent SS officers cooperated with the commanders of the army. In general, however, owing to the training principles of Himmler they remained in contrast to the army and its ideas.

- c. Air Force-Field- and Parachute-Divisions.

The Air Force disposed until the very last of many young recruits who were not fully employed. Endeavours of the army to make use of them were opposed by Goering until the autumn of 1944. The Parachute Divisions were increased and Air Force Field Divisions organized for which there were however not enough officers or non-commissioned officers. Their combat training was insufficient. They were subordinated to the army only for tactical purposes and supplies. Otherwise they belonged to the Air Force.

- d. Discrimination of high officers.

In the winter of 1941/42 several Army Commanders were relieved of their commands. One of them, General Colonel Hoepfner, was unjustifiably dismissed in dishonourable form. Such dismissals including corps- and division-commanders

withdrew a great deal of the leading minds of the army. In the summer of 1944 of 14 Fieldmarshalls only 3 had a command, of 25 General-Colonels only 14. In the Air Force no Fieldmarshall or General-Colonel was dismissed before the autumn of 1944. In the Navy only once - when Admiral Doenitz became Commander in Chief - a change in the higher commands took place. A great number of higher commanders was brought to trial for alleged mistakes in operations. Some were heavily punished, some sentenced to death. These proceedings greatly damaged the authority of military leaders and weakened the sense of responsibility.

III. German Administration of Occupied Territories.

1. Partisan- and band-warfare.

The war against partisans took place in the rear of the fighting front for the protection of the supply lines of the army. The irregulars did not fight according to the rules of the Hague Convention. As time went on it became clear that an organized aggressive resistance of considerable strength under unified leadership had to be dealt with. The counteractions of the army therefore took the character of regular military operations. Partisans who were made prisoners were sent to prison camps or transferred to labor exchanges.

In South-Eastern Europe the fighting with bands was particularly bitter. The losses of the Army were high, the methods of the bands were cruel. The atrocities of the Ustascha in Croatia were viewed with horror. In Italy and France the bands and/or maquis appeared in greater numbers from 1943/44. The Italian bands committed grave cruelties which called for retaliations.

The fight against the bands in the East and in Italy was transferred to the Reichsfuehrer SS in 1943. From time to time units of the Army were put under the command of SS and police-officers.

The army was on the defensive in the partisan- and band-warfare. That retaliation was in certain cases too severe must be admitted. Such cases as came to the knowledge of superior officers were punished.

2. Hostages.

Hitler issued an order concerning hostages in the autumn of 1941. It called for the suppression of communist excesses in the occupied territories. In each case of a death of a German several inhabitants of the country were to be shot. The order was boycotted. Hitler demanded its execution. The Army Command declared thereupon that each case must be investigated. The investigations took a long time and generally showed no results. In cases where Hitler insisted that persons must be shot for deterring effect the commanding officers generally ordered such persons to be executed who had already been sentenced to death in ordinary proceedings.

In view of this obstruction, SS and police-officers were installed in the occupied territories. They received their instructions from Himmler, not from the army.

3. The "Commando-Order".

In the summer and autumn of 1942 several Allied commandos were landed in Europe and Africa. It was doubtful whether their tasks and their fighting methods were compatible with the Hague Convention.

In October 1942 Hitler proclaimed publicly that all members of such commands would be killed in action or in flight. He expected from such a public proclamation a deterring effect. He formulated himself an order to the higher commands. Counter-suggestions of military and juridical experts were disregarded.

It is known to what extent the order was executed. But it is known that it was immediately destroyed in Africa and therefore never reached the troops. It is further known that its execution in Italy was by-passed, save for one case.

In Africa a nephew of Fieldmarshall Alexander was taken prisoner as member of a commando. He wore a German cap of the Africa Corps and a German gun. Though he was not entitled to privileges under international law and in spite of the commando order he was treated as a prisoner.

4. Destructions.

Upon the retreat from occupied territories Hitler ordered installations and goods be either destroyed or taken to Germany. This was for the first time the case in the Caucasus. The most important object, the oil-industry, had been destroyed by the Russians and had not been repaired to any extent. At the time of the retreat to the Dnjepr Hitler issued instructions to make the territory East of the river useless for war purposes. The order comprised the destruction of industrial plants, communications, barracks, supplies. The population as far as it was capable of military or labor service was to be removed.

The order was executed in part and only to the extent of military needs, observing the rules of warfare. Only the men capable of military service

The order was executed in part and only to the extent of military needs, observing the rules of warfare. Only the men capable of military service were removed as they were mostly subject to treatment as war prisoners and would have, if left behind, been pressed into Russian military services. The destructions of industrial plants were carried out upon instructions received from the Economic Staff East, a semi-military organization.

In France, Belgium and Italy and in the Balkans similar measures were ordered by the OKW. In France and Belgium the retreat was so fast that they could not become effective. In Italy the port of Naples was destroyed, communications were interrupted and electrical plants paralysed. For Rome no destructions were ordered. The removal of the population of military age was ordered, but not effected in Italy and Holland.

5. Recruiting of labor.

The recruiting of labor did generally not belong to the jurisdiction of military authorities. The military commanders have repeatedly and vigorously protested against the claims and methods of the political and party officials.

6. Prosecution of Jews.

Measures against Jews were taken and carried out by the Reichsfuehrer SS, entirely outside the jurisdiction and the knowledge of the military authorities.

7. Re-settlements.

Re-settlement of persons of German descent was organised by the Reichsfuehrer SS without participation of the army.

8. Acquiring of objects of Art.

The army had nothing to do with preservation of objects of cultural and artistic importance. They were, as far as is known taken care by the the Minister Rosenberg.

Some months before the end of the war it was ascertained that a general of the army had acquired valuable furniture at very low cost from the Rosenberg organisation in France. For this and similar crimes he was condemned to death by the Reich Military Court.

E. The Last Year of the War.

1. Military events.

With the summer offensive of the Red Army of 1944 began a series of military catastrophies.

In the South the mass of the troops of the Army Group South Ukraina was lost as a result of the Rumanian Army going over to the enemy. Hitler had in spite of the warnings of the Army Group relied on insufficient political information and not realised the dangers of the Roumanian revolution.

The Middle Group was by virtue of Hitler's principle never to yield an inch of ground, caught in a defeat the like of which the German army had never suffered before. The enemy reached the German frontier. More than 30 divisions were lost. Within the area of the Army Group Northern Ukraina the enemy won ground up to Krakau. Numerous units were lost. The Army Group North was left in a hopeless position for reasons outside the jurisdiction of the army, first on account of Finland, then because the Baltic Sea was needed as training ground for submarines. Only small remnants could

be brought back over the Baltic.

The decisive factor for the events in the East was inefficiency in military operative leadership. One unit after the other was sacrificed for the principle of never yielding. No reserves were left. The relation of man-power was 7 Russians to 1 German or in many cases even more to the advantage of the enemy. All warnings that the German strength was exhausted had been in vain. In Italy the German troops were also too weak in numbers. The necessary retreat to the foot of the Alps was not agreed to.

In the Balkans considerable forces were tied up in a fight which was not of primary importance.

Unnecessarily strong forces were held back in Norway without action, others were retained in the Mediterranean islands and in Denmark.

In the West the invasion of the Allies succeeded primarily on account of the domination of the air. The superiority in man-power and material was considerable. The High Commander West, von Rundstedt, had no liberty of action; he was constantly interfered with by Hitler. Four times the High Command West changed hands. It was due to the efficiency and energy of the local officers and the courage of the soldiers that the units from Southern France reached Germany. It was also due to them that a line of resistance could once more be established in the West.

2. The year 1945.

In the last phase the fight was almost entirely hopeless on account of the superiority of the enemy forces, the almost complete lack of air-craft, the loss and destruction of armament and fuel producing plants and lines of communication.

The German offensives in the Ardennes and in Hungary could not alter the situation. The last hope was - the same as in the second half of the year 1944 - the use of new weapons, advertised for so long, or a change in the political situation. These chances were played up until the very last to foster resistance. But in this period even the young officers' corps began to have doubts. It was too late. The fate that was awaiting Germany in case of capitulation left no choice to the soldier but to do his duty to the last. He had not been taught to throw his arms away.

F. The Army Command and the Political and Military Decisions since 1942.

The Army Command repeatedly called to the attention of Hitler the probability of the landing of Allied troops in the French possessions in North Africa. No steps were taken. One of the reasons for this omission was apparently that in all questions concerning the Mediterranean Sea Mussolini jealously claimed priority. When the Allied troops had contracted their forces from Egypt and the West it was clear that the Italian and German expeditionary forces could no longer maintain their position in Africa. Fieldmarshall Rommel urgently demanded that measures should be taken to abandon this theatre of war. He did not succeed.

After the landing of Allied troops in Africa Hitler ordered the entry of German troops into the part of France which had heretofore not been occupied by German troops. The collaboration with France which the Army Command had frequently recommended after the armistice had not taken place. The last remnants of the French army were now dissolved.

In the Balkan countries the SS was entrusted with organising military units

of volunteers. The political questions concerning this area were handled in so unfortunate a manner that more and more troops of the army were tied up, particularly after the Italians withdrew or went over to the enemy in the autumn of 1943.

In March 1944 Hitler ordered the occupation of Hungary by German troops. The Hungarian army from this time on formed part of the German South Eastern front.

The events in Roumania, Bulgaria and Slovakia had not been foreseen. They cost irreparable losses in armaments and sources of supply, particularly fuel.

In Italy Hitler realised in time that Mussolini's position would become untenable. Preparations in anticipation of such a development could therefore be made.

Finland was strongly supported by Germany. Even when it became abundantly clear that she was negotiating for a settlement with Russia the German Army Group North had to remain in its position to keep up contact. Strong German units were thus employed on a political task which showed no results. They were not available for the defence of Germany's frontiers and were ultimately cut off and destroyed.

The General Staff desired that Japan should be urged to enter the war against Russia and strong Russian units be thus tied up in the Far East. The political authorities did not give effect to this idea. The contacts of the Army with the Japanese Army did not exceed those which are customary between allied armies.

The army was before 1933 uniform in character according to the principles under which von Seeckt and his collaborators had trained it. Von Fritsch and his collaborators, particularly Beck, continued his work. They succeeded

in impressing on the officers and men the best traditions common to all armies: strong discipline, a fair deal to the opponent, hard work, no politics. For the officers and particularly the General Staff moderation in aims and means was the outstanding principle .

After 5 years of National Socialist rule the education which the party gave to youth and to the nation as a whole naturally made itself more and more felt in the recruits and the younger officers. It also gained influence in sections of the older officers' corps.

When Hitler took over the Command of the Army in 1941 he said to the Chief of the General Staff: "The principal task of the Commander in Chief is to educate the army to National Socialism. I know no General of the army to whom I could entrust this task. I have therefore decided to take over the High Command myself."

It became more and more difficult as time went on to give a general education to the officers and men and to keep the commanding officers informed of the general situation. In 1940 an order in writing was issued the contents of which had already been orally proclaimed in 1938 to the effect: "No command and no officer is permitted to know more about a subject than is necessary for his task, and what he must know he shall not know earlier than is absolutely necessary."

This order was severely enforced. In 1942 General Stumme was Court-martialled because he had in an order to his own Army Corps mentioned the orders to be carried out by the adjoining Corps. It had always been customary - and it was indispensable for tactical reasons - to give such information in a Corps order.

Proceedings of this kind did no good to the discipline of the army. On the

contrary they were ruinous for the sense of responsibility and for resolute action in emergencies.

Numerous officers who did not fall in with the policies of Hitler and the Party or who aroused the suspicion or dislike of party functionaries were sent to concentration camps, among them the former Chief of the General Staff, General Colonel Halder.

Most of the leading men of the army saw the course that events took with deepest anxiety. They submitted their views, they protested. The only result of their protest was that they were relieved of their duties and replaced by less experienced officers who would adapt themselves more readily to the opinions favored above.

A group of officers decided to effect a radical change by killing Hitler. The question whether this was the way to save Germany had undoubtedly been asked by many.

Officers who had been educated in the Christian faith - and they were the overwhelming majority, particularly in the older generation - did not find a place in their creed for breaking their oath of allegiance nor for murdering their Commander.

Others followed these considerations: The nation had given Hitler its confidence and the majority in all probability still believed in him; therefore a change of government would not result in a liberation leading to a democratic form of government, but to another form of coercion; the army as a whole was not against Hitler; The SS which had numerous units in the army was certainly closely bound to the NSDAP, therefore a civil war on the front and at home was inevitable, and that in face of the enemy. German's defeat would undoubtedly have been

attributed to the army.

It could not be the task of the leading officers to break the backbone of the army. It is the responsibility of a man who undertakes to change the government of his country to provide a new and better government, a new leader. The army had been trained since the last war to keep entirely out of politics. It had now, in the hour of emergency, neither the men nor the means to take the political leadership of the nation into its hands.