

Ref No SAIC/39
3 Jun 45

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SEVENTH ARMY INTERROGATION CENTER
APO 758 US ARMY

: S E C R E T :
:Auth: CG, 7th Army :
:Init: P.K. :
:Date: 3 June 1945 :
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SCHOERNER'S EVALUATION OF RUSSIAN ARMY

1. SOURCE

SCHOERNER, Ferdinand, GENFELDMARSCHALL (Field Marshal). He admits that he is, and will always remain, a National Socialist. At the same time, he maintains that throughout the last years the fight against the Western Allies seemed senseless to him. He is a fanatical enemy of Communism, which he considers a threat to the entire world. Like so many other German generals, he would welcome any opportunity which would enable him to pursue his military career.

Rating: B-2

Date of Information: See Text

Interrogator: W.M.B.

Personal History:

12 Jun 1892 Born in MUNICH.

1911-12 Served in Inf LEIB Regt, MUNICH.

12-14 Studied in MUNICH, LUCERNE, and FLORENCE.

14-18 Reentered Inf LEIB Regt, MUNICH; promoted to LT (2d Lt); campaigns in France, Italy, Serbia, and Rumania; decorated with "POUR LE MERITE" 17; promoted to O/LT (1st Lt) Mar 18.

19-23 Co CO, 41 Inf Regt.

23-26 At FUEHRERGEHILFENSCHULE (the illegal General Staff School).

27-32 Promoted to HPTM (Capt) 27; Co CO, 19 Inf Regt.

32-35 Tactical Instructor, Inf School DRESDEN; promoted to MAJ, 35.

35-37 General Staff, BERLIN; promoted to OBSTLT (Lt Col) 37.

37-39 CO, 98 Mtn Inf Regt; Polish campaign.

39-40 Northern France campaign; promoted to OBST (Col) Feb 40; promoted to GENMAJ (Brig Gen) Aug 40.

40-42 CG, 6 Mtn Inf Div, campaigns in VOSGES, Norway, Greece, Finland; promoted to GENLT (Maj Gen) Feb 42. Promoted to GEN D GEB TR (Lt Gen), Jun 42.

42-43 CG, XIX Mtn Corps, Northern Norway and Finland; promoted to GENOBST (Gen), Apr 43.

43-44 Chief of National Socialist Indoctrination of the Army; CG, Army Group SOUTH, Apr 44; CG, Army Group NORTH, Aug 44.

44-45 CG, Army Group CENTER, Jan 45; promoted to GENFELDMARSCHALL (Field Marshal), Apr 45.

2. GEO-POLITICAL MATTERS

Field Marshal SCHOERNER feels strongly on the subject of Russia's rise as a world power, and considers STALIN the greatest threat to peace and security. He feels that the US and Russia must eventually engage in hostilities, and the US should attack now in view of Russia's present weakness. The following is a summary of his opinions on the subject:

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Germany's collapse as a power has created new and far-reaching political and economic problems of a magnitude never heretofore experienced. These problems put the question of the balance of power in Europe into a mere subordinate category, comparable in itself to Britain's own lessening influence in world affairs.

Only two powerful states remain; the United States and Russia; allies today, and in all events, at least competitors tomorrow. Both powers today are at an extraordinarily high level of their war potential, which is still developing. Although the extent of Russia's undetermined possibilities of development present the great unknown, it is easily seen that the intensified and stepped-up utilization of America's vast economic and industrial resources places her in a position far superior to that of Russia.

The fateful question of America's future is, whether or not she can hold her advantage over the great competition of Russia (and her future spheres of influence, China, India, the Near East) even with the most extensive exploitation of manpower and technical resources of Germany.

Russia may be considered bled white insofar as her manpower is concerned. Even the younger age groups are severely weakened. Of utmost importance is the fact that the European Russians have been especially heavily hit. The total casualties can be estimated at 15 to 16 million, and despite the gradual repatriation of 2 to 3 million PW's the sacrifices have been stupendous. This manpower loss is most critical in the Officers Corps, which hardly continues to exist in some arms (e.g. inf). This lack of officers must be considered a critical problem which STALIN cannot overcome in less than a year.

It is more difficult, however, to estimate Russia's capabilities for developing her resources. The URAL region was the "Great Unknown" of German intelligence, and there certainly has been no lack of surprises during the war in the East, particularly in the field of armament (tanks, artillery, aircraft, ammunition.).

It is evident that because of America's superiority in materiel, the deciding factor will be one of manpower, and that STALIN will do everything in his power to neutralize this advantage as quickly as possible. However, his efforts in production will be facilitated through the recent acquisition of territory ranging from Petsamo to the rich potentialities of Czechoslovakia.

The psychological make-up of the Russian people must also be considered. STALIN has a comparatively easier task in preparing his nation for war, in that the average subject is more simple, gullible and superstitious. The Russian is bound to the earth, and draws his reflections from nature, more so than from education. He can be induced to fight with greater ferocity and duration than a subject of Western civilization. His physical needs are fewer, as well as his spiritual wants.

However, one danger has been exposed. The Russian soldier who has come into direct contact with Western Europe discovers that he has often been misled by propaganda into believing that Europe (especially Germany) exists in a primitive form because the people have not been given the advantages of Communism. This line of thought has repeatedly been encountered among the many Russian prisoners of war. It is now up to STALIN to readjust his argument or change the standard of living in Russia.

3. SCHOERNER'S EVALUATION OF THE RED ARMY

Russian infantry no longer exists as such. It is composed of poorly trained Asiatics who are incapable of any independent offensive deployment. A few "National Russians" provide a certain backbone in defensive operations, especially in AT and Mortar crews, and occasionally carry out reconnaissance and assault actions. A useful lower echelon infantry leadership exists only in rare and exceptional cases.

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"The training of tank crews also shows a continuous and rapid deterioration. In Mar 45 we observed that repair personnel were employed as crews for newly delivered tanks. Mobility and aggressiveness in the tactical employment of Russian armor has been constantly diminishing during recent months. Initial successes were hesitantly and slowly exploited, and developed into far reaching success only in cases of our defensive failures. During recent weeks enemy tanks repeatedly fled when our own armored vehicles appeared. In two cases tanks were abandoned by their crews and could be taken intact. The Russians were extremely sensitive to our air force, and frequently stayed in hiding for several days. Successful defensive measures were in all cases obtained through the possibilities of being able to destroy, or at least disrupt, the attack preparations of the enemy (Russian). Commanders and troops with a certain amount of experience in Russia could always determine with a high degree of confidence, the sectors in which the enemy was preparing to attack. In cases where the well known and repetitious scheme of the Russian attack was destroyed, or where the leading tanks were put out of action, the battle could be considered won. If the Russians encountered stubborn resistance, they would immediately break off the attack and attempt to force a breakthrough in another sector. These tactics were often successful."

The Russians achieved their successes thru employment of the following means:

- a) A very good and highly mobile High Command, of which ZHUKOV was outstandingly the best. Compared to this, however, the middle and lower command levels were mediocre to very poor.
- b) A destructive material superiority of massed artillery together with numerous mortars. Add to this the universal demoralizing effect of their rocket projectors.
- c) A partially limited air superiority. Although their bombing tactics were extremely poor, the enormous number of aircraft put into use had a terrific effect on the nerves of those who had experienced six years of constant warfare.
- d) An increasingly precise cooperation of ground and air forces during the phases of attack and breakthrough.
- e) The infiltration tactics of their numerically superior infantry. This numerical superiority was significant during the last few months in that the quality of the infantry was extremely negligible, exemplified by the ease in which they were put in flight whenever an energetic attack with numerically inferior forces was launched by the Germans.

4. POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION OF THE GERMAN ARMY

In Mar 44, SCHOERNER was assigned Chief of National Socialist Leadership in the German Army. This job really consisted of indoctrinating the troops in Nazi ideology. SCHOERNER insisted that the program was necessary to improve the fighting spirit of the individual soldier. Unfortunately the program was devised and begun in the middle of the war, at a time when the great victories of the German Army had already been won. In fact, by the time indoctrination was begun in smaller units, the general situation was none too good. SCHOERNER admits that it was difficult, if not impossible, to convince men of the political superiority of their government at a time when they were involved in continuous withdrawals.

Source creates the impression that this indoctrination venture was unsuccessful. He states that great difficulty was encountered in finding qualified men. SCHOERNER wanted men with considerable military experience who had seen front line duty and preferably those who had been wounded. But even if he found men of that type, he could not be sure that they possessed the necessary energy and enthusiasm, or that they were ardent Nazis

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themselves. Furthermore he wanted young men who, in addition to these qualifications, had been brought up in the spirit of National Socialism unquestioningly. The program turned out to be unsuccessful. Although there was no actual resistance to it, the General Staff merely tolerated the idea.

For the last two years SCHOERNER was at the front. He was totally unaware of what went on in the REICH. He did not realize that many people in Germany were becoming increasingly skeptical about what was being told them. He claims that the front line soldier performed his duty well, never losing faith in the idea of eventual victory for Germany. He is willing to believe that dissatisfaction existed in the rear areas, but claims the front line soldiers were never affected by it. He admits that psychological conditions were entirely different on the Western Front.

3 June 1945

SEVENTH ARMY INTERROGATION CENTER

Paul Kubala

PAUL KUBALA,
Maj, MI,
Commanding.

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