

Wailmont

- Inside Netter's Headquarters

1939-
45

1cc

INSIDE HITLER'S
HEADQUARTERS

1939-45

WALTER WARLIMONT

Translated from the German by R. H. Barry

★
PRESIDIO

Note: 1-104 all have their dates marked.
 pp 205 et seq have their dates on this page.
 Note: All pages to be removed from 205-640
 have markings. Xerox them anyway.

INSIDE HITLER'S HEADQUARTERS

8, 12-15, 17, 20, 24, 26, ~~27-29~~
 34-38, 45, 50-51, 58-59, 61, 79, 81, 85-89, 91,
 95-99, 101-104, 106, 110-113, ~~114-117~~
 117, 119, 126, 136, 140, 143, ~~144-145~~
~~145-154~~ 160-167 169-73, ~~170-171~~
~~91-94~~ 179-184 186, 188-191,

205, 208-12/41; 210-11-4/43; 268-11/42;
 286, 286 [521-535] 12/42; 288-307-12/42;
 [319-331] 5/43; [347-72] 7/43;
 389 [397] 397 12/43; 450-7-8/44;
 466, 468-9-8/44; 486-489-12/44;
 491-496-12/44; 503-4-1/45;
 507-512-3/45; ~~521-535 (276) 12/42~~
 [536-564] 12/43; 640-1/45
 [568-574]

Mean ↑ This is a chronology
 might be useful for dating a
 photo, and equally good if not better

THE UNITY OF THE WEHRMACHT, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

~~10/15/01~~
AK

* See footnote to Diagram 1 (p. 4).

** Colonel-General (Generaloberst) is a rank which has no parallel in the British or US Armies. It is above full General but below Field Marshal or General of the Army.

* an ongoing source of trouble

The Higher Or

Under these circumstances to Blomberg and still more normal business there were in high places in the Weimar games, study periods and 'machtsmanoeuvres' held in out and practise the new criticism from below and to well state of affairs.

In spite of this the Comu
tinued to follow his self-app
From 1935 onwards he re
from the Chief of his Ope
himself so wholeheartedly
appointment of Chief of Sta
was the creation of a 'Wel
Wehrmacht General Staff'
the time part of Göring's A
as 1937 the question of 'W
ordinate to OKW came up
commanders should replac
Wehrmacht and should be r
security, intelligence, and
diary (27 January) that w
mander-in-Chief of the Ar
15 July Hitler turned down

The strained official relations even affected personnel there appeared an unprecedented officers of the Army; they with them and the result throughout the body of service on one side and the Army became a significant factor in quarters.

In spite of all this it may be said that intuition could, when all is said and done, be a useful tool in the reorganization of the Wehrmacht. But this was not far removed. Mc

The Background

this the conclusion that 'it must therefore be the directing element in war', Hitler was sufficiently perspicacious not to go further than to say, 'the other services play only auxiliary and complementary roles'.¹⁶ His argument was just as logical as that of Beck, but as a politician he took care not to let his future leadership of the Wehrmacht become too closely tied to OKH or the Army General Staff, of whose views he was only too well aware. Beck's claim was aimed at something far more than the achievement of the only sound higher organization of the Wehrmacht of that time; his object in trying to get the overall direction of the Wehrmacht into the hands of the Army was not to 'conduct' the war but to avoid it. This emerged clearly, later events notwithstanding, when he wrote: 'Policy is governed by the capacity of the Army. The Army is the most powerful and decisive instrument of policy and the capacity of the Army determines the limits within which the aims of policy must be confined.' It was these unpublicized but decisive differences of opinion, unrecognized at the time and in many ways still unrecognized today, which showed that after February 1938 the Army was still as far, if not further, from obtaining the solution it wanted than it had been before. In the spring of 1938 Hitler finally and publicly re-confirmed the existing organization, thereby putting an end to the battle of giants which had carried the disagreements outside the sphere of organization and had begun to affect appointments to the senior posts in the Army.¹⁷ This decision set the seal on the victory of Keitel and Jodl who had been staff officers to Blomberg for many years and were the principal supporters of the system founded by him. All too soon it proved to be a fatal error. Keitel and Jodl saw in it no more than the institution of a direct link between the highest level staff of the Wehrmacht and the all-embracing authority of the Dictator; they therefore looked forward to an end to all the difficulties over the unified command of the Wehrmacht. What they obviously failed to realize was that, with Hitler's assumption of command over the Wehrmacht, the staff of OKW had lost the purely military character which it had hitherto preserved. In other words the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, which under Blomberg had been 'a military authority capable of defending its professional interests against the political leaders and capable of acting on its own responsibility vis-à-vis the Government', became henceforth the 'working staff' or to put it even more clearly, the 'military bureau' of Hitler, the politician.¹⁸ It was no more than a few weeks before the new

The Hig

Supreme Command his aims in the game any opposition at the

General Keitel had to be military Chief of staff to be degraded in the *Chef de Bureau*. He claimed that he should be an officer in the spring of 1945 when he was here. When I expressed my surprise at his being Head of OKW, Blomberg said he had been both in the name of any officer of the OKW Staff under that general who's been 'Oh, Keitel; there's the man who runs my office once: 'That's exact

For a long time, he was sounding phrases in the office of Chief of staff, adviser in all questions, convinced that his questioning with him in command, even though to represent them in the words of Hitler this was his life. He worked on other; he was a tireless worker and was in his position these days

Jodl too, though brought to his job 'Führer's genius', an illustration is the command to the Berg the Führer talked of on political questions point out to the Führer say the least unfo

The Higher Organization of the Wehrmacht

Supreme Commander began to misuse the Armed Forces to further his aims in the game of power politics and this time without meeting any opposition at the highest level.

General Keitel had basically neither the ability nor the character to be military Chief of Staff to a man like Hitler and he allowed himself to be degraded immediately and unresistingly to the position of *Chef de Bureau*. He did not realize that it had never been intended that he should be anything else. Certain remarks by Blomberg in the spring of 1945 when he was under arrest in Nuremberg, are relevant here. When I expressed astonishment that Keitel had been appointed Head of OKW, Blomberg replied that at the end of January 1938 he had been both unable and unwilling to put forward to Hitler the name of any officer whom he thought fit to be in charge of the OKW Staff under Hitler. When Hitler asked 'What's the name of that general who's been in your office up to now?' Blomberg replied, 'Oh, Keitel; there's no question of him; he's nothing but the man who runs my office.' Seizing on this straight away Hitler said at once: 'That's exactly the man I'm looking for.'

For a long time Keitel maintained his confidence in the high-sounding phrases which Hitler had used when investing him with the office of Chief of OKW:¹⁹ 'You are my confidant and sole adviser in all questions concerning the Wehrmacht.' He was honestly convinced that his appointment required him to identify himself unquestioningly with the wishes and instructions of his Supreme Commander, even though he might not personally agree with them, and to represent them faithfully to all those involved. Based on these words of Hitler this conviction became more and more his rule of life. He worked conscientiously to this end and apparently to no other; he was a tireless worker but had no very firm personal convictions and was therefore inclined always to seek a compromise; in his position these characteristics were fatal.²⁰

Jodl too, though for other reasons and with other intentions, brought to his job a determination to suppress any criticism of the 'Führer's genius' which he or others might feel. The most striking illustration is the entry in his diary for 10 August 1938: 'I was summoned to the Berghof with senior officers of the Army. After dinner the Führer talked for nearly three hours explaining his line of thought on political questions. Thereafter certain of the generals tried to point out to the Führer that we were by no means ready. This was to say the least unfortunate. There are a number of reasons for this

The Background

pusillanimous attitude which is unhappily fairly widespread in the Army General Staff. To begin with the General Staff is obsessed with memories of the past and instead of doing what it is told and getting on with its military job, thinks it is responsible for political decisions. It does get on with its job with all its old devotion but its heart is not in it because in the last analysis it does not believe in the genius of the Führer. It is all very well to compare him to Charles XII. As sure as fate the result of all this belly-aching will be not only enormous political damage – for all the world knows about the differences of opinion between the generals and the Führer – but also some danger to the morale of the troops. However no doubt the Führer will find some unexpected means of raising the morale both of the troops and of the nation when the time arrives.'

The boundless confidence which Keitel and Jodl had in Hitler and their feeling that unified command of the Wehrmacht on the pattern they desired was now assured, led these two men into being instrumental in deepening the disagreements between the Supreme Command and the General Staff of the Army, although both were Army officers by profession. The basic unity of the Wehrmacht was therefore affected by disagreement over what was in any case a highly questionable form of organization; and this situation was aggravated by the fact that several senior officers of OKW considered it to be their duty to appear second to none in their enthusiasm for improving relations with 'the Party'.

On the other hand as a result of the confusion into which Hitler's European policy continually threw the Wehrmacht from the spring of 1938 on, no more thought was given nor practical steps taken further to build up a system of unified military command. Hitler by nature worked in a disorderly manner and was averse to anything institutionalized. Although therefore he called the OKW his personal staff, he disregarded the organizational implications of this title. He did indeed give Keitel on 18 February a renewed assurance that he 'would never take a decision affecting the Wehrmacht without first hearing the views of his Chief of Staff'.²¹ Yet only a few weeks later, when preparations for the Austrian Anschluss were begun, he created complete confusion, instead of allowing time and opportunity for orderly military planning, although such planning was intended solely to further his own political adventures.

The first move occurred during the night 9-10 March when the news arrived of Schuschnigg's ordinance for a plebiscite. The

The High

Supreme Commander (Cairo) and two other, with them the military pressure on Austria. K had happened early on writes Jodl, 'set off for after him to give him the of Staff of the Army w the Army was in no w: theless within five hour the units detailed cap 'directive' was issued things announced that operation. The Navy, any participation on th against possible wider for home ports'. Keitel typical.²²

The next night (11) phone call after telej Brauchitsch and fin: OKW Operations S to work on the Führ the smallest intention promised to do so and back to say that he l about all this; if he h been shattering and (Author's italics.)

In the same year ce: (preparations for a sur: the Sudeten crisis) le: lationship between the one hand and OKH o: regiment in Düsseldorf when, in the late sprin co-ordinating confere: Plan to be conducted Army. Not a single me

A

The Higher Organization of the Wehrmacht

Supreme Commander summoned urgently Göring, Reichenau (from Cairo) and two other generals whom he knew personally to discuss with them the military measures required to threaten and exert pressure on Austria. Keitel was apparently only informed of what had happened early on 10 March by Hitler's personal staff and, writes Jodl, 'set off for the Reich Chancellery at 10 a.m. I hurried after him to give him the old draft' (of a staff study). Later the Chief of Staff of the Army was summoned and he reported to Hitler that the Army was in no way prepared to undertake such a task. Nevertheless within five hours improvised orders had to be got out to make the units detailed capable of movement. With this background a 'directive' was issued by OKW on 11 March which among other things announced that Hitler would himself take command of the operation. The Navy, acting on its own responsibility and without any participation on the part of OKW, took precautionary measures against possible wider repercussions and ordered 'all ships to make for home ports'. Keitel's own description of the part he played is typical:²²

The next night (10-11 March) was hell for me. There was telephone call after telephone call from the Army General Staff, from Brauchitsch and finally about 4 a.m. from the then Chief of the OKW Operations Staff, General von Viebahn, all imploring me to work on the Führer to give up the move into Austria. I had not the smallest intention even of putting the question to the Führer. I *promised* to do so and shortly afterwards *without having done it* rang back to say that he had refused. The Führer never knew anything about all this; if he had, his opinion of the Army Chiefs would have been shattering and I wanted to save both sides that experience. (Author's italics.)

In the same year certain events connected with the 'Green Plan' (preparations for a surprise attack on Czechoslovakia in the wings of the Sudeten crisis) led to the most serious upheavals in the relationship between the Supreme Commander and his staff on the one hand and OKH on the other. I was at that time commanding a regiment in Düsseldorf, and I got my first impression of the situation when, in the late spring of 1938, I was summoned to Berlin for the co-ordinating conference on the staff study dealing with the Green Plan to be conducted by General Beck, the Chief of Staff of the Army. Not a single member of OKW, neither Keitel, nor Jodl nor

Jodl Sept 10, '38

The Higher Organization of the Wehrmacht

frosty. It is tragic that the Führer should have the whole nation behind him with the single exception of the Army generals.

In my opinion it is only by action that they can now atone for their faults of lack of character and discipline. It is the same problem as in 1914. There is only one undisciplined element in the Army – the generals, and in the last analysis this comes from the fact that they are arrogant. They have neither confidence nor discipline because they cannot recognize the Führer's genius. This is no doubt to some extent due to the fact that they still look on him as the Corporal of the First World War instead of the greatest statesman since Bismarck.²³

These early events were enough to demonstrate the dangers which were bound to arise from the combination of Hitler's fatal policies with his pretensions to military leadership. The Dictator had been agile enough to nip in the bud the efforts of the new Commander-in-Chief of the Army to emulate his predecessor in his conception of the duties of his office and of the 'highest responsibility to the nation as a whole'.²⁴ which it carried with it. What was more, those at the head of the Führer's 'working staff', OKW, openly expressed their displeasure that Brauchitsch, supported by Halder, should try to put over his point of view even in matters of purely military policy. They once more made it clear that their conception of their overriding duty was to carry out Hitler's wishes and where required smooth the path for him in the military sphere. This was clearly a very different objective from that which Blomberg had set himself. The development of the staff which he had set up had been prematurely interrupted, the Operations Staff being still restricted to about six to eight officers; it now found itself confined to an ill-defined sphere of activity, floating between the intuitive political initiatives of the Dictator and their military consequences – on the one it was totally without influence, on the other its possibility of action depended upon the degree of recognition accorded it by the High Commands of the three Services. In these circumstances it was hardly surprising that OKW found it even more difficult than before to carve out a position for itself in the traditionally hidebound structure of the Wehrmacht and that it had no authority other than that which Hitler was occasionally willing to lend it.²⁵

At the height of the Sudeten crisis I was appointed to succeed Jodl on the OKW Operations Staff; my own experiences during the take-

late
1938

△

The Background

linked from the outset to defined political conditions and, most important of all, based upon a pre-planned time-table.

In view of the far-reaching importance of this document and in the light of my views on the relationship which should exist between OKW and the General Staff of the Army,¹ I felt it right to go over the draft of the key section of the addendum word by word with the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army (OQI), General Heinrich von Stülpnagel; he obtained the agreement of his Chief of Staff. I hoped in this way to ensure that no unnecessary limitations were placed on the Army and to seize on every opportunity of leaving the Commander-in-Chief of the Army a free hand both in general and in detail. The Navy and Air Force, through their representatives in OKW, kept an eye on the tasks allotted to them and drafted the relevant paragraphs themselves. The resulting draft was then, in accordance with standing orders, produced in 'Führer type', ie very large lettering which Hitler could read without glasses, and taken personally to the Reich Chancellery by Keitel. The document was returned to OKW a few days later with an introductory political paragraph in Hitler's own handwriting. It was distributed by the OKW Operations Staff to the Army, Navy and Air Force Commands and to certain other key organizations under a dateline of 3 April.²⁷

During the next few months the situation which I had observed at the time of the Sudeten crisis was repeated; it proved that, faced with Hitler's method of working, there was no function for a high-level inter-service operations staff other than to serve as a military 'registry' for acts of Government policy. Once again there was a complete lack of strategical direction on matters outside the scope of the Polish campaign and the defence of the western frontier of Germany. All OKW could do therefore was to assemble the plans already worked out by the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, primarily of course those of the Army General Staff.

As far as the High Commands of the three Services were concerned, they arrived at the necessary agreements during their preparations through liaison officers; they could see no necessity for participation by the OKW Operations Staff and had no occasion to call for a referee. In fact the Commanders-in-Chief and their staffs, freed from the obstacle of a superior intermediary which the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht had represented, found all the more reason to cultivate a direct relationship with Hitler. They discovered that the aides, who formed part of Hitler's personal staff, provided an easy

The High

method of jumping or wished. Even the Chief into the background. matters', his role vis-à-vis between, if not of a witness to his appointment of hot potatoes and which have many memories when I was in this office questions were primarily Labour Service and that in Jodl's diary of the p

28 September. The cautionary measure of total mobilization.

The Commander-in-Chief placed great pressure on the responsibility to try the Sudeten area.

Keitel had already said and it has already been representations. The question even more difficult

Hitler had had a 't' for the offensive against liaison officer to OKW should be spared as was.²⁹

General Keitel has the latter consult the reserve to himself. Keitel can do no other but be any question of himself approach

The forces struggling had therefore in a measure quietly achieved that of so many proposals

counter by such means and on such opportunities as were available to us Hitler's drive against Poland and consequent headlong career towards another world war.

1 Summary
39

The first attempt was based upon knowledge of the Supreme Commander's predilection for quantitative arguments - irrespective of whether they had any direct bearing on his war plans; the object was to convince him, even though he refused to reckon upon their intervention, that the armament of the West European powers was vastly superior to the German war potential. This plan was put to the Chief of OKW and its true purpose frankly explained to him; it collapsed because, after rapid consideration of it, Keitel turned it down on the grounds that Hitler would immediately perceive that its intention was to influence his decisions and would as a result lose confidence in his staff. The next proposal was that, as in previous years, a major Wehrmacht war game should be laid on by OKW in the summer of 1939, that it should be based more or less on the existing world situation and that it should be proposed to Hitler that he should direct it himself. It was emphasized to the Chief of OKW that this proposal might well have better prospects of success if he would point out emphatically to Hitler the considerable publicity possibilities, both internal and external, which this would offer him as Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. This plan would in the course of the war game have brought Hitler face to face with the fateful consequences of his adventures but it too failed to get past Keitel. He declared that it was asking the impossible to load the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich with the burden of running a war game. The counter-argument that Hitler proposed in any case to direct the Wehrmacht in war met with no success.³³

As a result of these experiences and in view of the personality of Keitel it all too soon became obvious that there was little the Operations Staff could do by methods such as these to influence the course of events more effectively. Meanwhile however nothing further emerged from Hitler or his entourage tending to increase the danger of war; on the other side the staffs of the Services continued to refuse to associate Section L with their further preparations. So in these last weeks before the greatest war in history the officers of the highest level staff of the Wehrmacht found themselves in a peculiar, uneasy vacuum. The only task of any importance they had was the drawing up of a timetable, on the lines of those used for the 'walk-over wars', for actions to be taken should the conflict with Poland have to be

settled by force. This was the Army and Air Force; it listed the latest laid down the latest data on the issue of the necessary camouflage against enemies to which, in the last resort, march to the attack could be a typical example of what staff had to do; it cleared peace or war.³⁵

From the middle of August, established in the Berghof in military matters; this stream of new demands plans for the move forward what was going on at all to making verbal representations the lines of Hitler's wish to avoid unduly arousing the dissensions such as had Hitler's personal intervention must be admitted that the move forward of the.

On 22 August, in the afternoon, he gave an address lasting some ten minutes. He said that the Wehrmacht who would be in command of operations against force would be necessary ever was once and for all of the correctness of his that the Western power day it had become known non-aggression pact with considerable weight to the commanders gave detailed plans to Army level. Hitler showed details and did not hesitate without any reference to both of whom were present.

The procedure was the

by presentations by the individual commanders who, with certain significant exceptions, took the opportunity of stressing their military confidence in Hitler. This set a pattern which, as political leader and Supreme Commander, Hitler turned into a habit; it was destined to be repeated before all the great campaigns or other important developments right through to the Ardennes offensive at the end of 1944. It could however be no substitute for the well-tried and convincing method of a war game.

On 23 August, without even waiting for the latest possible date laid down in the 'time-table', Hitler in his impatience ordered the Wehrmacht to launch the attack on Poland on 26 August; this brought tension almost to breaking point. The task of the OKW Operations Staff at this juncture was, among other things, to inform all the highest authorities in the Reich and the Party, so that they could set in motion all the measures designed to support the Wehrmacht, protect the population and regulate the public life of the country in the event of war. Here again Hitler's complete disregard of any orderly military procedure became glaringly obvious. Under the direction of OKW, working with practically every Ministry and with the 'Chancellery' of the Party, minute preparations for war had been worked out over a number of years and, following normal military practice, had been incorporated in a 'mobilization book for civilian authorities'. At the last minute these preparations were now brushed aside and thrown into confusion on two counts. In Hitler's view the Polish campaign did not count as a war but only as a 'special employment' of the Wehrmacht; he therefore demanded that until further orders no steps should be taken leading to lasting disturbance of the life of the country. Considerable portions of the Wehrmacht had to be mobilized between 26 and 31 August but the armaments industry and with it the greater part of the manufacturing industry of the country was not to follow suit before 3 September.³⁷ This caused all kinds of difficulties. Initially the principal sufferer was industry, for this mobilization by stages, cutting across the plans carefully worked out over the years, meant that men liable for service had to be released even if classified as essential workers; this later rebounded on the Wehrmacht which had to undertake the detailed and laborious task of weeding out these specialists. The final blow against this crumbling organization took place when, on the very day that war broke out, Göring persuaded Hitler to remove from OKW its co-ordinating function even in these matters. The

duties which had hitherto been the responsibility of the OKW Operations Staff. The Reich Defence Council (Reichsverteidigungsrat) was dissolved and the OKW was dissolved as the Defence of the Reich. The provisions of the Law of the Reich, of which had already been set aside of any position of responsibility. The Chief of OKW no objection.

Late in the afternoon the attack on Poland began. Since the cut-off of the decision upon us, the decision was made. Shortly thereafter I received the Reich Chancellery. Section L, Hitler's writing. On the way to since I imagined that before I had had time to one of deep disillusion with the words history quoted: 'Don't start the days' postponement!'

The picture of conflict that moment was, for horrifying to a degree. Only round the corner, quarters to continue in order. The question was apart from OKW, only headquarters in Berlin. gone over to their mobilization in process of moving to advance for use in war. huddled, partly of protection training area, some two Air Staff was in the Wil. But no move was planned.

A

The Background

of these meetings is that after my short *exposé* of the situation, not a further word would be spoken.

In addition I made considerable efforts to maintain personal touch with my superiors as far as this was possible. The first flight I made for this purpose, about 10 September, took me to Inau in Upper Silesia whither the train had moved from Pomerania. Once more I got the impression of a camp living in a state of feverish activity, quite foreign to the normal picture of a Supreme Headquarters. In spite of the good progress of operations in Poland and the continued lull in the West a visitor to the Headquarters soon got an unmistakable impression that people were uneasy; this showed itself particularly in the strenuous efforts being made to achieve a more rapid build up of Army reserves. For this purpose Hitler turned first to the increased manpower which mobilization had placed at the disposal of Himmler and Daluge and organized a 'Police Division'. The reason may have been the one officially given, that there was a large reserve of trained manpower in the police. The Party and political implications of this measure however disquieted even Keitel; Jodl cleverly contrived to avoid taking any position in this first ticklish case of this type. This did not alter the fact however that the necessary orders had to be issued through Section L of Jodl's staff, a fact which, in the eyes of the Army, linked OKW even more closely with the Party.

The move of the Red Army into Poland gave me another even more striking proof of the fact that basically there was no headquarters organization capable of functioning itself or of issuing instructions to others. About midnight on 16-17 September I received a telephone call in Berlin from our Military Attaché in Moscow, General Köstring; he informed me of the imminent entry of Russian formations into Eastern Poland. Köstring was clearly, as he later admitted, completely ignorant of the set-up at the head of affairs; at the other end of the line, I, as Chief of the OKW Operations Section, found his information almost unintelligible since I was completely without knowledge of any agreements on the subject or of any possibility that this might happen. All I could do was to assure him that I would pass the information on at once. Even Keitel and Jodl knew nothing about it. One of them, on first hearing the news that the Russians were on the move, replied with the horrified question 'who against?' Precious hours were wasted before the resulting essential orders could be got out. Serious and bloody encounters between German and Russian troops were only too likely since they

Lessons

were now advancing toward the Polish forces between the 125 miles beyond the demarcation the Russians but of which they had no knowledge. On the afternoon of 17 September I was in Berlin, accompanied by Adolf Hitler, to discuss the objectives attained and the progress of the campaign in Poland. He was a Colonel, and he listened to my information as a significant sequel to the telephone call the night before from Moscow and reported the information from his Military Attaché to the oil area of Dnieper. This was a violation of the demarcation line to the 23 August 1939, not knowing about the true situation. Military Attaché our claim that it was a sacrificial lamb to be offered for German friendship. Then Ribbentrop had protested against setting his political plans, and dismissed him with the war, it's always supposed to be closed and there were no more to happen later however, no of the necessity for real cooperation and the High Command, in Hitler and the Foreign Minister, Himmler and Lammer in permanent attendance on Headquarters; they had the richest and most diverse material. The clearest indication of the level German command organization which was by far the best period, and a development decision to extend the war to victory which followed in 1941.

und
t exposed of the situation, not a
arts to maintain personal touch
ssible. The first flight I made
y, took me to Ilnau in Upper
om Pomerania. Once more I
state of feverish activity, quite
preme Headquarters. In spite
oland and the continued lull in
soon got an unmistakable im-
is showed itself particularly in
hieve a more rapid build up of
er turned first to the increased
laced at the disposal of Him-
lice Division'. The reason may
at there was a large reserve of
Party and political implications
even Keitel; Jodl cleverly con-
in this first ticklish case of this
never that the necessary orders
'Jodl's staff, a fact which, in the
more closely with the Party.
Poland gave me another even
t basically there was no head-
nctioning itself or of issuing in-
on 16-17 September I received
Military Attaché in Moscow,
of the imminent entry of Russian
string was clearly, as he later
e set-up at the head of affairs; at
of the OKW Operations Section,
telligible since I was completely
agents on the subject or of any
All I could do was to assure him
on at once. Even Keitel and Jodl
m, on first hearing the news that
plied with the horrified question
ere wasted before the resulting
Serious and bloody encounters
ops were only too likely since they

were now advancing towards each other with merely the remnants of
the Polish forces between them, and in places our armies were already
125 miles beyond the demarcation line agreed by Ribbentrop with
the Russians but of which the Wehrmacht had never been informed.⁸
On the afternoon of 17 September the Russian Military Attaché
Berlin, accompanied by Admiral Canaris, appeared in Section L's
offices in the Bendlerstrasse to get from me information regarding the
objectives attained and moves carried out by German troops in
Poland. He was a Colonel, dressed in a brown battledress blouse, and
he listened to my information poker-faced and without a word. There
was a significant sequel to this. The next morning Jodl told me over
the telephone that the night before Stalin himself had rung Ribben-
trop from Moscow and reproached him bitterly because, according
to information from his Military Attaché, German forces intended to
hold on to the oil area of Drohobycz in South Poland. This, he said,
was a violation of the demarcation line laid down in the secret
annexe to the 23 August Treaty.⁹ Knowing our shortage of oil but
not knowing about the treaty, I had particularly stressed to the
Military Attaché our claim to this area, so I saw myself as the first
sacrificial lamb to be offered on the altar of this questionable Russo-
German friendship. Then however I heard from Jodl that when
Ribbentrop had protested against the military meddling in and up-
setting his political plans, Hitler had turned on his Foreign Minister
and dismissed him with the words 'when diplomats make mistakes in
war, it's always supposed to be the fault of the soldiers'. The affair
was closed and there were no further consequences. As was so often
to happen later however, no one drew the obvious conclusion from this
of the necessity for real co-operation between the Foreign Ministry
and the High Command, in spite of the facts that both headed up to
Hitler and the Foreign Minister was continually beside him. Ribben-
trop, Himmler and Lammers, the Head of the Reich Chancellery, were
in permanent attendance on Hitler and counted as part of the 'Fuhrer's
Headquarters'; they had their own train with the code-name 'Hein-
rich'.

The clearest indication of the true position within the highest
level German command organization is however provided by some-
thing which was by far the most important development of this
period, and a development in the purely military sphere - Hitler's
decision to extend the war by an early attack in the West. The rapid
victory which followed in the spring of 1940 seemed for a time to

A

The Background

prove Hitler right; this and the eventual catastrophe make it almost impossible to give any true picture of the impression made on nearly everyone in the high-level staffs when Hitler's intention became known. The declaration of war by the Western powers on 3 September had had a shattering effect upon senior officers who remembered the first World War and were aware of the unpreparedness of the German armed forces of 1939. But now the two sides had lain opposite each other for several weeks, occupying the fortifications on either side of the Franco-German frontier and almost completely inactive. It is hardly to be wondered at that this fact, combined with the rapid elimination of Poland as a political and military factor, should have raised high hopes, particularly within the Wehrmacht, that the war could somehow be brought to an end by political means before the centre of Western Europe went down for the second time in a quarter of a century in ruins and ashes amid fearful losses in blood and treasure. In the last resort, people thought, a firm defensive attitude could be adopted in the West, backed shortly by the mass of the German forces; industrial and agricultural goods could be freely imported from the east and eventually the West would be ready to conclude peace. The Army Staff had already issued initial instructions for the bulk of the Army to go over to the defensive.⁷

5088
139
No one can say on what day the Supreme Commander reached the decision to take the offensive in the West or what influenced him to do so. One thing is clear; the Commander-in-Chief of the Army was the man most intimately involved; yet when Brauchitsch appeared on the train on 9 and again on 12 September, on the first occasion spending no less than two hours alone with Hitler, the latter breathed not a word to him of his intentions. After this conference Brauchitsch asked Vormann whether Hitler had any ideas of attacking in the West. When Vormann replied in the negative Brauchitsch added: 'You know we cannot do that; we cannot attack the Maginot Line. You must let me know at once if ideas of this sort come up even in the course of conversation.' It is also clear that no other senior officer was consulted before the decision was made, in spite of the fact that it was tantamount to no less than a decision to embark on a second World War. I myself learnt of it when I visited the headquarters for the second time on 20 September (the offices had then been transferred from the train to the Casino Hotel in Zoppot). Keitel, who appeared thunderstruck, told me of it with the most serious warning not to let out a word about it and with the caution that Hitler's inten-

tion must be treated as a secret. 'sole adviser in W had learnt of it th was therefore no against it. As far : cudgels against th of OKW nor via laboration with t more important t a second World V to be that of the because I knew fi Staff (I) that Ge Commander-in-C mander-in-Chief defensive war coi nagel was looking The Zossen chair for.⁸ Up to 27 Se notice of my infc General von Vor offensive and ap categorical negat

On 27 Septem assembled the C Force, with Keite formed them of clearly entirely ta any rate grasped no. 4 just issued, ' strategy in the W on which he had ground of his dec he wished to giv into the fire in his

Although it obv comic-opera side nessed during my twenty to thirty c

A

Lessons of the Polish Campaign

disaster make it almost
impression made on nearly
Hitler's intention became
powers on 3 September
officers who remembered
the unpreparedness of the
two sides had lain oppo-
the fortifications on either
most completely inactive.
combined with the rapid
military factor, should have
Wehrmacht, that the war
political means before the
the second time in a quarter
ful losses in blood and
a firm defensive attitude
by the mass of the Ger-
oods could be freely im-
est would be ready to con-
sued initial instructions
defensive.⁷
Commander reached the
what influenced him to do
Chief of the Army was the
Brauchitsch appeared on
on the first occasion spend-
the latter breathed not
a conference Brauchitsch
ideas of attacking in the
ative Brauchitsch added:
attack the Maginot Line.
this sort come up even in
that no other senior officer
in spite of the fact that it
to embark on a second
ated the headquarters for
es had then been trans-
in Zoppot). Keitel, who
the most serious warning
ution that Hitler's inten-

tion must be treated as Top Secret. Even he, the Chief of OKW and the 'sole adviser in Wehrmacht matters', had not been told by Hitler but had learnt of it through one of the aides! Keitel considered that there was therefore no possibility open to him of making representations against it. As far as I was concerned, I decided at once to take up the cudgels against this decision of Hitler's and to do so not via the Chief of OKW nor via Jodl who had shut up again like a clam, but in collaboration with the Army General Staff. There could be no duty more important than that of saving the people and the country from a second World War. The only channel open at the moment seemed to be that of the Army General Staff; the lead-in was also obvious because I knew from my regular contacts with the Deputy Chief of Staff (I) that General von Stülpnagel had been instructed by the Commander-in-Chief to work up an appreciation of his (the Commander-in-Chief's) concept of the war in the West - an entirely defensive war continued if necessary for years; General von Stülpnagel was looking for all possible arguments to support this thesis. The Zossen channel did not however produce the results I had hoped for.⁸ Up to 27 September the Army Staff appear to have taken no notice of my information. At any rate about this time they asked General von Vormann again whether Hitler had any plans for an offensive and appeared quite satisfied when he replied with a categorical negative.

On 27 September, the day after his return to Berlin, Hitler assembled the Commanders-in-Chief of the Army, Navy and Air Force, with Keitel and myself, in the new Reich Chancellery and informed them of his intentions. All, including even Göring, were clearly entirely taken aback. None of them had apparently read or at any rate grasped the full import of the sentence in OKW Directive no. 4 just issued, 'the capacity to implement at any time an offensive strategy in the West must be maintained'. Hitler had a slip of paper on which he had written a few key words to remind him of the background of his decision and the broad directives for operations which he wished to give. As soon as he had finished speaking he tossed it into the fire in his study; no one had spoken a word in protest.

Although it obviously had its serious implications, there was a comic-opera side to the proceedings which one or two scenes I witnessed during my stay in Zoppot will illustrate. Early in the morning twenty to thirty cars were assembled two abreast in the hotel drive to



The Background

go to the area of operations north of Gdingen. It was the job of General Rommel,* the Headquarters Commandant, to get this cortège moving, with Hitler at its head. When I asked in astonishment why they drove two abreast, Rommel replied that, after many unhappy experiences, he had laid on this 'order of march' because it offered the best hope of satisfying the precedence and protocol requirements of the large number of non-military visitors who had meanwhile flowed into the headquarters. In this way at least six or eight of them, two car-loads, could be level with each other and at the same distance from Hitler, and for them that was more important than anything. In spite of this Rommel had another unhappy experience that day; the cortège went down a narrow track where the two-abreast formation was no longer possible and the majority of the cars were held up at a barrier while Hitler and the leaders drove on. The word was immediately passed round to those left behind that the tour had been temporarily interrupted so that Hitler might pay a short visit to a field hospital near by; nevertheless, although they were almost on the battlefield, Martin Bormann, the Head of the Party Chancellery made a fearful scene and cursed General Rommel in outrageous language because of the supposed slight inflicted on him. There was nothing Rommel could do in answer to such insolence. When I straightway gave vent to my indignation at Bormann's behaviour, Rommel merely asked me to tell Schmundt, the senior military aide, equally forcibly what I thought about it.

* The General of later Western Desert fame (see Part 1 Introduction Note 3).

** before Hess' flight*

THE J

HI

Septen

A

The Picture Within

maison militaire, Keitel, Jodl and the aides, and usually Goring's 'personal liaison officer', General Bodenschatz. The Army liaison officer had meanwhile, at Jodl's instigation, been excluded from the circle as being unnecessary. The Head of Section L and his officers were normally *not* included even when they had just returned from some special assignment at the front or elsewhere.² It was not long before General Jodl pushed his way into the position of principal reporting officer. He was well fitted both by character and training to be an assistant to a superior commander and by this means he put himself on the same level as his superior, the Chief of OKW, and frequently by-passed him. Keitel seemed to be resigned to saying nothing at all except to give emphatic support to Hitler's ideas. Jodl delegated parts of the report dealing with the events of the day to the two staff officers who had been detailed as assistants to him. From now on Hitler's aides were in general reduced to the role of spectators - this too on Jodl's instructions.

These presentations were for the most part based upon the reports and intelligence which Section L was responsible for collecting from the Services. Naturally these dealt primarily only with occurrences and changes on the day in question and did not go into more far-reaching problems of the type which proper personal contact with the troops brings to the notice of a Commander at any level. This did not however disconcert either Hitler or the OKW Generals who were always buzzing round him. They went calmly on working out their arguments and decisions on a totally inadequate basis and continually facing the Commander-in-Chief of the Army with preconceived ideas, sometimes even with *faits accomplis*.

There was another equally serious danger stemming from these arrangements. The Chief of OKW and the Chief of the Operations Staff fell completely under the spell of Hitler and at the same time became more and more divorced from the thinking of the Wehrmacht in general and that of their own Service, the Army, in particular. These were the men who, when Blomberg departed, had worried and fought for a unified command of the Wehrmacht; yet now their actions were a major factor in destroying its solidarity.

TENSIONS AND FAILURES WITHIN THE OKW OPERATIONS STAFF

The root of the dissensions lay within Jodl's own staff. As soon as he returned to Berlin I had asked for another posting. Although we

△

The Build-up of the Headquarters

General Staff of the Wehrmacht. Instead the responsibilities of the highest-level Wehrmacht staff in its existing ill-defined field developed *ad hoc* without any clear rule or direction.

1940 An outstanding illustration of the situation was the fact, already referred to, that it was Hitler personally, alone and unaided, who took the decision to launch an attack in the West and laid down the general lines on which the operation was to be conducted. Moreover the procedure followed in this case was *not* that of 'normal military staff work'. Jodl went into this aspect of the question in some detail in his evidence before the International Military Tribunal, saying that: 'the Commander-in-Chief, in this case Hitler in person, received data for the decisions to be made, maps, strength returns of both our own and enemy forces and information about the enemy'.⁹ In fact Hitler's procedure was the exact opposite. His order for an attack in the West was based primarily on his own intuitive appreciation of the enemy and entirely disregarded the fact that, once the war had spread beyond Poland, his freedom of decision in politico-military questions was limited. In the case of other subsequent decisions, in particular his attack on Russia, his declaration of war on the United States, and last but not least his pressure on Italy to enter the war, he was literally mesmerized by his own concept of the political situation and did not take the military implications adequately into account. This was a perverted application of the classic principle that diplomacy governs strategy. He had access to exhaustive statistical information on the armaments of foreign powers, their fortifications and the strength of their naval and air forces; in general he was well aware of the facts of military geography. But all these factors added up in his mind to an exercise in wishful thinking and when he later asked for concrete military facts and information he only took account of them to the extent that they supported the opinions he had already formed. Anything else was as a rule rejected out of hand and ascribed to 'General Staff defeatism'.

1941 On 9 October 1939 Hitler issued a comprehensive *aide-memoire*, entirely his own production, seeking to justify his plans and instructions for an offensive in the West, to which he knew that the Army was strongly opposed.¹⁰ Jodl stated at Nuremberg: 'It was dictated word for word by the Führer himself and was completed in two nights.'¹¹ At this stage it was the job of the OKW Operations Staff to dress up Hitler's plans and desires in the form of a directive and this went out the same day as no. 6. There were eight short

paragraphs, the Chief to submit directive at the of progress through

This formula Those not verse to see that this c Staff which had and the first ph the same time th to work out the Operations Staf the autumn of 19 though oddly en Tribunal claime historians.¹² The studied in detail show quite clearl to emerge when OKW directive proof of this can't

On 21 October Operation Yellow before by the Arm a draft operation the Army left it t business', someth again. This was h directive already i

Jodl himself pr forces, including between the Arm OKW. Hitler con tional requiremen to Zossen to inform requirements.¹³

After consideral senior officers of O Chief and Chief o operation order on

paragraphs, the last of which read: 'I request Commanders-in-Chief to submit to me (Hitler) their detailed plans based on this directive at the earliest moment and to keep me constantly informed of progress through OKW.'¹²

This formula became the rule for subsequent similar directives. Those not versed in military matters can however hardly be expected to see that this concealed an important fact; it was the Army General Staff which had to work out the real plan for distribution of forces and the first phase of the operations – the operation order in fact; at the same time the other two Services, particularly the Air Force, had to work out the main lines of their own detailed plans. The OKW Operations Staff was incapable of 'laying on operations'; prior to the autumn of 1944 there is not a single instance of it having done so, though oddly enough General Jodl in evidence before the Nuremberg Tribunal claimed that it had; he presumably had his eye on the war historians.¹³ The preparatory stages of the Western campaign can be studied in detail on the basis of ample documentary evidence; they show quite clearly that the general lines of an 'operation' only began to emerge when the Army operation order was issued and that the OKW directive did no more than give general indications. The proof of this can be seen in the facts given below.

On 21 October Keitel presented to Hitler the 'Army Intentions for Operation Yellow' (the West). This had been forwarded two days before by the Army Staff to OKW through Section L in the form of a draft operation order. (In this case the Commander-in-Chief of the Army left it to the Chief of OKW to present what was 'Army business', something which he had never done before and never did again. This was his way of showing his disagreement with the basic directive already issued by Hitler.)

Jodl himself prepared a sketch map, showing the distribution of forces, including those of the Air Force; but this had been agreed between the Army and Air Staffs without any participation by OKW. Hitler commented on these plans and added certain additional requirements.¹⁴ Keitel and Jodl went out together next day to Zossen to inform Halder of Hitler's observations and additional requirements.¹⁵

After considerable further discussion between Hitler and the senior officers of OKW on one side and the Army Commander-in-Chief and Chief of Staff on the other, the Army issued a revised operation order on 29 October.

A

The Build-up of the Headquarters

development as a considerable step forward in the process of cutting the Army staff down to size, as he had always wanted to do. He did not waste time in trying to get any further delimitation of responsibilities laid down but he had not a moment's hesitation in making full use of the springboard Hitler had now offered him and seizing every opportunity to push himself into the chain of command of the Army. The door was now wide open to those 'irresponsible backstairs influences' against which Beck had warned.

1938 The Commander-in-Chief of the Army and his Chief of Staff did not of course give way to the demands of the Supreme Command without a struggle. They could see before them the parting of the ways, roads leading in two totally opposing directions; one ideology with its roots in the dictatorial authority of the National-Socialist movement believed that it could bend the German people, indeed the entire world, to its will; the other, with its roots in the heritage of the Prussian-German military tradition of duty would not shrink even from a *coup d'état* if that would save the nation from disaster. But at the height of the autumn 1938 crisis Brauchitsch had done no more than point out 'with oaths' to the Chief of OKW where his responsibility lay; so now, in spite of all the strong words used beforehand, he could not bring himself personally to oppose Hitler's decision to attack in the West. This naturally further weakened the Army's claim to a decisive voice in war planning and it also carried with it the immediate implication that the Army must draft its plans for the operation in accordance with Hitler's concept and against its own convictions.

In these circumstances the Army confined itself to 'passive resistance' but this, together with renewed representations by Halder demanding in Jodl's words to be 'given a free hand',³² merely reinforced Hitler's determination. Finally, on 5 November 1939, the first key date for the issue of orders in final form, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, with the unanimous support of the senior commanders on the Western Front, came out openly against taking the offensive and therefore against the war plan in general. But by then things had gone so far that all Hitler did was to bring the meeting to an end in short order and in the most peremptory manner.³³ There was next a somewhat similar dramatic scene on 23 November when Hitler summoned all the Army Generals and, in the presence of equally high-ranking representatives of the other two Services, upbraided them for being beset by fears and held them up as doubters

who were always tugging offered his resignation of the year onwards prepared to accept eased for a time. The greater prospects of been postponed to that the balance of hand and the Army Army; there was to

The acute difference flared up again during stemmed from different strategy. It should have spread belief both in it would be incorrect and the Army were right through OKW Admiral Canaris as a majority of their officers certain of Halder's apparently, at any rate their devotion to the Generals Zeitzler and the Army to give proof something which even

In this connection much misjudged, was his intellectual independence originally he was full of Socialism and in this exerted great pressure General von Fritsch, thinking that it would officers.³⁴ Even before had manifested serious finally in the autumn opening up the war was exactly reversed turned him down 2

process of cutting
wanted to do. He
imitation of respon-
sitation in making
ed him and seizing
of command of the
irresponsible back-

Chief of Staff did
Supreme Command
the parting of the
ctions; one ideology
National-Socialist
man people, indeed
ots in the heritage of
y would not shrink
on from disaster. But
hitsch had done no
of OKW where his
g words used before-
oppose Hitler's de-
rther weakened the
g and it also carried
must draft its plans
cept and against its

self to 'passive resis-
tentions by Halder
hand',³² merely re-
November 1939, the
the Commander-in-
rt of the senior com-
ly against taking the
general. But by then
bring the meeting to
ory manner.³³ There
23 November when
in the presence of
er two Services, up-
them up as doubters

who were always tugging at his coat-sleeves. Brauchitsch immediately offered his resignation but this made no impression.³⁴ From the turn of the year onwards nevertheless, the Army seemed to be increasingly prepared to accept Hitler's intentions and the tension accordingly eased for a time. The real reason for this undoubtedly lay in the greater prospects of success now that the opening of the offensive had been postponed to the spring of 1940. But this did not alter the fact that the balance of power between Hitler and OKW on the one hand and the Army on the other had swung heavily against the Army; there was to be disastrous proof of this later.

The acute differences of opinion between OKW and OKH which flared up again during the build-up period of Supreme Headquarters stemmed from differing points of view regarding Hitler and his strategy. It should here be re-emphasized that, contrary to the widespread belief both in Germany and among the Allies during the war, it would be incorrect and unjust to assume that all officers of OKW and the Army were involved. As already shown, there was a split right through OKW and no fewer than two Chiefs of Sections, Admiral Canaris and General Thomas, together with the vast majority of their officers were on the side of the Army. Against this certain of Halder's successors as Chief of Staff of the Army were apparently, at any rate for a time, determined not to be out-done in their devotion to Hitler and his leadership. In 1942 and 1944 Generals Zeitzler and Guderian called on the General Staff of the Army to give proof of their belief in National-Socialist doctrine,³⁵ something which even Jodl never did to his staff.

1942
+
1944

In this connection Colonel-General von Reichenau, who has been much misjudged, was an outstanding example of one who retained his intellectual independence. There had been no doubt that originally he was fully prepared to come to terms with National-Socialism and in the crisis of January-February 1938 Hitler had exerted great pressure to have him nominated as successor to Colonel-General von Fritsch. Even Keitel and Jodl however had resisted this, thinking that it would be unacceptable to the majority of senior officers.³⁶ Even before the start of the Polish campaign Reichenau had manifested serious doubts regarding Hitler's military policy and finally in the autumn of 1939 he came out openly against the idea of opening up the war by offensive action in the West.³⁷ The position was exactly reversed two years later when, in December 1941, Hitler turned him down as successor to Brauchitsch saying 'that man's

△

The Picture Within

War
year.

he liked at Hitler's normal briefings. It was only on a few occasions that he exerted any clear and definite influence on strategy but there are plenty of indications to show that this private relationship between the Big Two of the Third Reich led to a number of disastrous consequences. When it suited him, Göring would by-pass Jodl and send his Chief of Staff direct to Hitler. The procedures adopted by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Navy and Air Force had the further disadvantage that on numerous occasions even Jodl was left in ignorance of the decisions reached by Hitler.⁴¹

As regards the Army however even the forms of words used by Hitler and his team of Generals seemed designed to indicate disregard of the Army Commander-in-Chief's prerogatives; the fact that the Army was the decisive factor in overall strategy cannot be the only explanation of this attitude.

The Commander-in-Chief and Chief of Staff of the Army as a rule only appeared for a personal discussion with Hitler when they were summoned to do so, and in these months of build-up the occasions on which this happened could be counted on the fingers of both hands. Up to the beginning of December 1939 no Army representative was present even at the meteorological conferences at which Hitler decided on the date for or the postponement of the offensive.⁴² This reserve on the part of the Army had been clear from Halder's attitude during the Polish campaign; it is hardly surprising in view of the complete antithesis between Hitler's methods and the 'Zossen frame of mind'.⁴³ Brauchitsch had always in his other high military appointments given proof of outstanding ability and a presence commanding respect, but a meeting with Hitler seemed actually to have some physical effect on him, indeed he often appeared practically paralysed. Halder was completely at one with his Commander-in-Chief but he was clearly less susceptible to atmosphere and had the confidence born of the fact that in any argument he was head and shoulders above Hitler's normal advisers and that thanks to his complete mastery of his subject and his unfailing clarity of expression, he could always overcome any objections. When however, as mentioned above, it was left to Keitel to present to Hitler the first Army operation order for the attack in the West, it became clear that passive resistance was not enough to protect the interests of the Army.

Another result of the latent tension between OKW and the Army was that, when doing business verbally with OKH, Keitel and Jodl did not deal on their own level; Keitel dealt with Halder and Jodl

△

Denmark and Norway - A Special Case

and material into Trondhjem. Commander-in-Chief Navy considers this completely impossible.

22 April

JODL: The Führer is increasingly agitated about the English landings at Andalsnes (Namsos). I point out to him the difficult position in which the English are; they have no serviceable port or airfield.

23 April

JODL: Agitation increasing. The forces in Narvik must be re-organized at once to make 3 Mountain Division battleworthy once more.

24 April

JODL: Situation seems better.

25 April

JODL: Optimism continues.

30 April

JODL: At 13.55 hours I was able to tell the Führer that communications had been established over land between Oslo and Trondhjem.³¹ The Führer is beside himself with joy. I had to sit next to him at lunch.

As a result of the above any unbiased observer must admit that the success of the Norwegian campaign owed nothing to Hitler but had been won in spite of his amateurish interventions by the combined efforts of highly trained commanders and troops. In particular it should be noted that, if Hitler had had his way, Narvik, the real key point of the entire operation, would have been needlessly evacuated only a few days after it had been occupied and after the Navy had lost almost half its strength in heavy destroyers.

This had been the first attempt on the part of the Dictator to subordinate the organization for command and leadership of an operation in war to his own personal ambition and thirst for political prestige. The end result had been satisfactory thanks to intelligent co-operation at all levels within the Wehrmacht but this could not eradicate the impression of truly terrifying weakness of character on the part of the man who was at the head of the Reich. Jodl's diary is enough to produce a striking picture of agitation and lack of balance but I can add a personal impression from these critical days. It so happened that I had to see Jodl in the Reich Chancellery and there was Hitler hunched on a chair in a corner, unnoticed and staring in

Spring
1940

A

Denmark and Norway - A Special Case

All these experiences led to no change either in the external or internal organization of the Field Headquarters which was now shortly to be constituted. As far as the organization and exercise of command at the highest level were concerned, the Norwegian campaign had been little short of a perilous enterprise but as a result of its successful outcome everyone was now ready to forget its disadvantages and dissensions and apparently, as was soon to become clear, to consider this system to be the normal rule. The most dangerous result was the effect on the position of Jodl; henceforth he 'had' to sit next to Hitler at meals and was to do so for more than two years to come; moreover he had given proof of character and thereby confirmed the confidence of the Supreme Commander in his military judgment; this was a position which laid on him great responsibilities and; to say the least, it was questionable whether this was right.

1940
on

...ared to be waiting
...the situation and in
...the same telephone
...way in order not to
...not however help
...manders of German
...to be leaders on the
...ience. The 'aston-
...nd self-assurance on
...household word. The
...Moltke's outlook and
...to an effort of will
...of Moltke's calm lay
...egree of intelligence

...was something very
...ed, if indeed any fur-
...of those days in the
...own to the lack of
...nsisting of so many
...at the height of the
...considerable 'moral
...at it was he who had
...ons to Hitler's deter-
...nd that he had had a
...on the chain of com-
...at least to Jodl that
...he started to meddle
...leadership was to be
...that the senior officers
...was another impor-
...merely to go from
...ly with new questions
...nd persisted in their
...a Section L into their
...parate and therefore
...pressures associated
...ke some contribution
...ening the resistance
...Staff.

A

CHAPTER 1

The Curtain Rises

AT THE BEGINNING of May came the 'news of victory in Norway',¹ giving the green light for the opening of the offensive in the West. Jodl had proposed that the two operations should be 'interdependent both in timing and forces employed';² Hitler, however, decided that the new campaign should open 'after an interval of a few days' and of the two his views proved to be the sounder for a considerable proportion of the Air Force was still tied down in Norway into the early part of May.

The days immediately preceding the opening of the Western offensive were uneasy ones; meteorological reports, orders and counter-orders once more followed each other with ever-increasing rapidity. It was the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Air which 'made up' the weather and his air forces and parachute formations were more dependent on good weather than were other branches of the Wehrmacht; he was therefore primarily responsible for the continual postponements. There was still no Army representative present at the discussions on the subject in the Reich Chancellery, and the opinion of the Army was not even asked for. The Army 'merely' had to keep two million men continuously ready to move at twenty-four hours' notice. By 7 May Hitler had become 'very agitated at this continual postponement because of the danger of a leak'; the next day he stated that he was still 'very agitated' and was not prepared to wait longer. All the same he allowed Göring to extract one more final postponement from him 'against his better judgment - but not a day longer', to use his own words. This meant that Hitler had in fact finally given the order to go without waiting for the essential prerequisite of favourable weather, the cause of all these months of postponement; the Chief of OKW of course backed him up in his usual dutiful manner. But luck was with him. At 9 pm on 9 May, ie half an hour before the moment which the time-table

1946

laid down as 'the final cut-off time for confirmation by the Führer of the order to attack', the Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe was able to report that 'weather on 10 May will be good'.³ This earned the Head of the Luftwaffe's Meteorological Service a gold watch.

Early on the morning of (10 May) the different groups which were subsequently to constitute German Supreme Headquarters in the field, arrived in the Euskirchen area from various directions and at various times, some by rail and some by air. The 'Führer Special' with Hitler and the usual entourage had started the afternoon before from a small station near Berlin, proceeding north; it was to turn west only after dark. I and the key officers of Section L left about midnight from an airfield near Spandau in an aircraft of the OKW 'Communications' Squadron. The remaining officers, with the clerks, typists, draughtsmen and signals personnel followed in the section's special train. At the same time the Commander-in-Chief Army, with his Chief of Staff, moved from Zossen to the 'hunting lodge' near Hitler's headquarters; he had with him only a very reduced staff consisting of the Operations Section and Intelligence Section - Foreign Armies West, neither at full strength; the remaining sections of OKH were located in Giessen and Bad Godesberg.

By 6 am the 'field echelon' of Section L was assembled in a large farmhouse in the village of Rodert just above the town of Müstereifel; only a few hundred yards away the Army could be seen streaming west on every road and track; the early morning sky was black with our aircraft. Some simple but extremely practical alterations, hardly visible from outside, had been made to the farmhouse during the preceding weeks, and as a result it provided most adequate working and living accommodation for our fifteen officers and clerks, together with the thirty or forty ancillary personnel. To everybody's disgust, however, it was found that parts of the building were occupied by members of Hitler's personal entourage, including his bodyguard, who, as we soon discovered, adopted a camp regime which resulted in a permanent hubbub day and night. Spirits were probably all the higher there since rations were charged against Hitler's household and so were unlimited; this applied also to all officers included in HQ Area 1. By contrast the field echelon of Section L was rationed on the same scale as any other Army unit. There was no contact at any level between Section L and its neighbours in the

farmhouse. They were further on, led up to the Headquarters

During the afternoon his following appeal to the officers he had majority of the men officers and other ran Throughout all the HQ Area 2.

A path, which led further on, led up to the fence to Hitler's quarters. The entourage of general concrete fortification covered a wide central point, however, a few feet square, up on a hill in which all the morning was a fine view over the spring scene made all unaccustomed surroundings.

After the war Jodl

The Führer's Headquarters concentration camp life in the Führer's for us soldiers; for a civilian one and a guest anywhere from

Although in May 1945 he was to a large extent himself drift into the description is of considerable entourage; there were to be seen, led however give a striking of the entire headquarters circle the non-military that most of them had grey uniform, often very

A

uccess

on by the Führer
waffe was able to
earned the Head
tch.

oups which were
quarters in the
directions and at
'Führer Special'
afternoon before
h; it was to turn
tion L left about
raft of the OKW
fficers, with the
l followed in the
mander-in-Chief
1 to the 'hunting
n only a very re-
and Intelligence
strength; the re-
and Bad Godes-

embled in a large
own of Münsterei-
d be seen stream-
ing sky was black
ctical alterations,
farmhouse during
st adequate work-
ficers and clerks,
l. To everybody's
ilding were occu-
cluding his body-
mp regime which
pirits were prob-
d against Hitler's
also to all officers
n of Section L was
uit. There was no
neighbours in the

farmhouse. They were never under the same roof again in any other Headquarters location.

During the afternoon of this first day in 'Felsenest' Hitler and his following appeared in Section L offices. He spoke a word or two to the officers he happened more or less to know, but as far as the majority of the members of his 'working staff' were concerned, both officers and other ranks, he was just as distant as he always was later. Throughout all the subsequent years of war he never again entered HQ Area 2.

A path, which lost itself in low scrub one or two hundred yards further on, led up from the farmhouse through a high barbed-wire fence to Hitler's quarters, HQ Area 1. Here he lived with the usual entourage of generals and aides from the Chancellery in Berlin. The concrete fortifications which served as working and living accommodation covered a wide area. Even the mess was in a pill-box. The central point, however, was a small wooden hut, no more than 9-12 feet square, up on a hill, which was the map- and briefing-room and in which all the more important conferences took place. Here there was a fine view over the mountains and woods of the Eifel, a peaceful spring scene made all the more attractive by the close quarters and unaccustomed surroundings in which we were living.

After the war Jodl told the International Military Tribunal:

The Führer's Headquarters was a cross between a cloister and a concentration camp. . . . Apart from many exalting moments our life in the Führer's Headquarters was in the long run a martyrdom for us soldiers; for it was not a military headquarters at all, it was a civilian one and we soldiers were guests there. It is not easy to be a guest anywhere for five and a half years.⁴

Although in May 1940 any such thoughts were far from Jodl's mind, he was to a large extent responsible for this situation since he had let himself drift into the 'working-staff' relationship with Hitler. His description is of course primarily applicable only to Hitler's immediate entourage; the officers of HQ Area 2, where only soldiers were to be seen, led a completely military existence. Jodl's words however give a strikingly apt description of the life and atmosphere of the entire headquarters. It was characteristic that in the inner circle the non-military were in the majority; it was also characteristic that most of them had decked themselves out in some sort of field-grey uniform, often with badges of rank of their own choosing. At

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

this period the trouble was not so much an influx of leaders of the Party intent on maintaining a proper balance against the military in Hitler's immediate circle; they were still comparatively few in number. No, in the last analysis it was Hitler himself who dominated the headquarters and was responsible for its mental outlook, its outward appearance and its atmosphere.

Hitler made great play of his experience as a soldier in the first World War; he had exerted a considerable influence on the build-up of the new Wehrmacht; since the outbreak of war he had devoted almost all his thoughts and energies to military affairs. But none of this could compensate for the fact that he failed to arouse that team spirit which is the hallmark of a soldier's existence in all countries and which demands from every member of the Service, on pain of being blackballed from the military community, single-mindedness of thought and action, confidence and loyalty, frankness and self-sacrifice. Hitler made no effort to win the confidence of the officers around him. Mercilessly he eyed their strong points and their weaknesses and he was ever ready to fulfil the threat contained in his speech to senior commanders on 23 November 1939: 'I will stop at nothing and I shall crush anyone who opposes me'. He never spoke frankly and straightforwardly; he was continually trying to deceive, to put on an act, to achieve some prestige or propaganda purpose. The following is another characteristic passage from Jodl's evidence at Nuremberg, though it gives only a partial picture: 'he would speak in one way to the politicians or to the Party and in quite another to the Wehrmacht, in one way to the SS and in quite another to the Wehrmacht or the politicians'. This was the way he acted even in the highest Wehrmacht circles; he had only one object - to guard against any threat to his régime and to enhance his personal reputation and that of the Party.

It was all this, so foreign to the normal military way of life, to which Jodl was referring when he spoke of a 'civilian Headquarters'. This was what made the Army officers in HQ Area 2 look longingly at OKH nearby; although they were directly responsible to Hitler over these, they did not have to be in direct contact with him and were 'among their own sort'. There was a good indication of what most people thought and felt soon afterwards when the senior military aide had the idea of occasionally inviting an officer from Section L to meals at Hitler's table in the Area 1 pillbox. At first the more junior officers were enthusiastic about this but later a 'detail

list' had to be made preferred to be with listen to Hitler's 'tal

The day's program very like that in Berl Army, Navy and A twenty-four hours S add situation maps. Operations Staff. G took place in the brie as before, only the Separate reports on e to Hitler direct over the Services or arriv on to Jodl. These s circle which took comings and goings.

An example of the ducted was the proce front. Between the c grown up of trying to and the system had b dangerous game now in spite of the facts th and were dealing w cussion led to opinion directives or even dir by some military hear throw, this was gene them. The best the A summoned to a brief preparatory period, conceived ideas whic could alter. Keitel's d

I was on the road I von Rundstedt's A Sodenstern, was ar quite openly about ments. I did not hav

list' had to be made out for no one would go voluntarily. They much preferred to be with their own colleagues when off duty rather than listen to Hitler's 'table talk'.

The day's programme in Felsenest, and later in other places, was very like that in Berlin. At stated times during the day and night the Army, Navy and Air Force would report; at least twice in each twenty-four hours Section L had to collect these reports, sift them, add situation maps and send them by orderly to the Chief of the Operations Staff. General Jodl then prepared the 'briefing' which took place in the briefing-room with Hitler in the chair and at which, as before, only the members of the *maison militaire* were present. Separate reports on events of particular importance were either made to Hitler direct over the telephone by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Services or arrived with Section L and were immediately passed on to Jodl. These sometimes led to special meetings of the inner circle which took place in the briefing-room amidst constant comings and goings.

An example of the extraordinary way in which business was conducted was the procedure for reporting and discussing events at the front. Between the campaigns in Poland and Norway the habit had grown up of trying to run the battle in detail from the headquarters and the system had been tried out on a small scale in Norway. This dangerous game now continued, in spite of all Halder's warnings and in spite of the facts that we were now faced with a formidable enemy and were dealing with a rapidly changing situation. Diffuse discussion led to opinions, opinions to decisions and decisions to written directives or even direct intervention in dispositions already ordered by some military headquarters; although OKH was within a stone's throw, this was generally done without any previous reference to them. The best the Army leaders could expect was occasionally to be summoned to a briefing for some special reason but, just as in the preparatory period, they then found themselves faced with preconceived ideas which only tiresome and time-wasting argument could alter. Keitel's description of this period is as follows:⁶

I was on the road literally every other day, mostly in the area of von Rundstedt's Army Group. His Chief of Staff, General von Sodenstern, was an old friend of mine and I could talk to him quite openly about everything, even the Führer's special requirements. I did not have to wonder whether he would report to OKH

A

Headquarters, which
again.

ere of tension between
ers. But on the side of
y impatient and suspi-
refused to wait and let
in the case of Narvik, he
decisions and then abdi-
develop uncontrolled.
considered his sole duty
ing all he could to smooth
possible eliminate any
was even greater. He had
Norwegian campaign and
the 'Führer's genius'
of the generals'; he did
ity' which he had pre-
now become Hitler's sole
ments stands out clearly
little aides came to the
higher level operational
views and decisions

nder-in-Chief, Colonel-
by air or road almost
personal contact with the
and important factor for
dquarters or at unit level
ers. His personal touch
in the assurance necessary
der, nor did he seem able
e listened to should be his
not put up a fight about
Chief of Staff and he had
ined in the same mould,
ther by bonds of mutual
waited long enough, the
ization would ultimately
umerous occasions during

this campaign when Hitler's nerve failed. His diary testifies to his own achievements and those of his staff and is a worthy memorial of this great campaign which will outlast our times.

In the background was Göring, always on the watch. His liaison officer had general's rank and kept him continuously up to date with the changing currents of opinion in the headquarters. As Commander-in-Chief Air and Crown Prince of National-Socialism he was determined to keep a check on any military glory which the 'reactionary' Army might gain in the eyes of the people. His train was stationed not far away and invariably at the critical moment his voice was to be heard on the telephone or his formidable person seen entering the Headquarters. As before there were generally no witnesses at his meetings with Hitler. Their outcome, however, left no doubt that he remained 'the Führer's most trusted follower', at any rate in so far as relations with OKH were concerned.⁷ In fairness, however, it should be recorded that Göring was very conscious of his position as a military man, and later on in the war frequently intervened successfully on behalf of individual Army officers whom Hitler had condemned to death or ignominious punishment for some trivial reason.

This interplay and manœuvring between the 'Great' left Section L officers little freedom of action. They did not attend Hitler's briefings; even more frequently than the Army leaders therefore they found themselves faced with ready-made decisions; in general there was little they could do to exert any significant influence upon these decisions, except when, as in the case of Dunkirk, indignation rose so high that it broke all bounds. In other less pressing situations there were still on occasions limited possibilities of 'interpretation', designed either to tone down the contents and form of an order issuing from the headquarters, or to adapt it more closely to the actual situation.

The mainspring and basis for this unobtrusive activity on the part of myself and the Army officers of Section L was the fact that on our level we maintained personal contact with the Army Staff and were on terms of confidence with them;⁸ we also visited the front whenever possible. Even on these occasions, however, we had little freedom of action for except when the aides were used, Hitler's orders and wishes were passed on by no less a person than the Chief of OKW.

The officers of Section L generally had no specific task when they

Spring
1940

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

understood and hauling the Commander-in-Chief of Sixth Army, General von Reichenau, over the coals because he was supposed to have been dilatory in releasing one of the armoured corps. Jodl notes on 16 May: 'the Führer is pressing hard for the transfer of all armoured and motorized formations from Army Group B to Army Group A'. Keitel flew straightaway to the headquarters of Army Group B to drum home Hitler's orders but the time required and the difficulties involved in these movements were considerable; Halder's notes of the same date will make this clear even to the non-military reader; he wrote: 'what we now have to do is to concentrate forces on either flank of the breakthrough; this means creating a corridor through Sixth Army area to the right flank and through Sixteenth Army area to the left flank'. A few hours later he added that the Armoured Corps detailed by Hitler should have been left to fight in its previous area in order fully to exploit the success already gained.

The next day there was an incident of another sort. Probably as a result of a long conversation with Göring the previous evening, Hitler suddenly cancelled all previously prepared orders for the institution of military government in the Netherlands. He disregarded completely the fact that this area was nothing like pacified and was still practically in the operations zone and, for purely Party and political purposes, ordered the installation of civil government on the lines of that in Poland and Norway. Section L immediately protested to the Chief of OKW against this disregard of military requirements but without success. The final sentences in Halder's diary of 17 May on hearing of this are no mere record of his impressions of this particular incident; he said: 'their behaviour in this question of military government in Holland is further proof of the complete insincerity of Supreme Headquarters in its dealings with OKH'.

This was the atmosphere when the first *serious* collision between the two occurred. The occasion was nothing less than the central feature of the entire operation, the most rapid possible breakthrough to the coast. The main body of the German armoured formations had crossed the Meuse and was pressing on westwards uninterruptedly and faster than anybody had expected; at this juncture the points of view of Supreme Headquarters and OKH diverged completely. On 16 May Halder had hardly been able to conceal his pride when he wrote: 'the breakthrough is developing on almost classical lines.... Counter-attacks by enemy armour have been smashed. The distances covered by the infantry are outstanding.' He was working

on reliable information. French forces moving in for attack'; his only armoured advance formations following in security for the south the situation again, using the follow-up force he had played a coordinated armoured operation on the flank. He clung to divisions which, although he insisted must be successful. At mid-day of 17 May Halder told the Army that 'he considered (Halder merely not at the moment') a road to Bastogne to the Commander-in-Chief of Army Group B. He said that under no circumstances at this moment should the enemy be allowed to reach the rapid thrust to the possible an absolute Somme, even if it meant west.¹

By the evening of 17 May he writes: 'A most He is frightened by is trying to hold us afresh the following that there was only the smallest delay; unusually early involvement with Brauer Hitler. Jodl notes: carried out the instructions as possible. The Army were summoned at the necessary measure

△

The Campaign in the West

on reliable information and was quite clear in his mind that the French forces moving up from the south were 'too weak at present to attack'; his only thought therefore was to continue the rapid armoured advance as vigorously as possible. In his view the formations following in echelon could provide completely adequate security for the southern flank. The next morning, after considering the situation again, he concluded that 'we can secure this front later, using the follow-up forces'. Hitler thought quite differently. Although he had played a considerable part in the bold conception of the armoured operation, he now became obsessed with the protection of the flank. He clung to the idea of a 'pearl necklace' of infantry divisions which, although they had to march and had horse transport, he insisted must be in position before the armoured attack could proceed. At mid-day on 17 May he told the Commander-in-Chief of the Army that 'he considered the principal danger to be from the south' (Halder merely notes in his diary: 'I can see no danger whatsoever at the moment') and hurried off himself that same afternoon by road to Bastogne to emphasize his preoccupations to the Commander-in-Chief of Army Group A, Field-Marshal von Rundstedt. There he said that under no circumstances must there be any form of setback at this moment since that would be a dangerous morale-raiser for the enemy. At the moment decision depended not so much on a rapid thrust to the Channel as on the ability to secure as quickly as possible an absolutely sound defence on the Aisne and later on the Somme, even if it involved temporary delay of the advance to the west.¹

By the evening of 17 May, therefore, Halder had become worried; he writes: 'A most unfortunate day. The Führer is terribly nervous. He is frightened by his own success, is unwilling to take any risks and is trying to hold us back.' Once more Halder examined the situation afresh the following morning and once more came to the conclusion that there was only one solution - to carry on the operation 'without the smallest delay; every hour is precious'. A little later, at the unusually early hour (for HQ Area 1) of 10 am, he found himself involved with Brauchitsch in a 'most unpleasant argument' with Hitler. Jodl notes: 'it has been a high-tension day. OKH has not carried out the instruction to build up the southern flank as rapidly as possible. The Army Commander-in-Chief and General Halder were summoned at once and given the most explicit orders to take the necessary measures'. Without even waiting for OKH to issue the

6940

★

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

orders, Keitel once more hurried off by air to Rundstedt's headquarters to impress upon his Chief of Staff the necessity of carrying out Hitler's instructions at once. Jodl, clearly unwilling to be left out of things, took it upon himself to issue a supplementary order, instructing '1 Mountain Division and the rear elements of Fourth Army to turn south' - an unpardonable but typical interference in army business.² Halder returned to the hunting lodge furious; still in the heat of the moment, he wrote:

★ they have a completely different conception in the Führer's headquarters; the Führer is full of an incomprehensible fear about the southern flank. He rages and shouts that we are going about it the right way to ruin the entire operation and are running the risk of defeat. He entirely refuses to carry on with the operation westwards.

By late afternoon, however, all this had once more been overtaken by events. In addition to the new *Directive no. 12*, an 'official record' setting out the results of the morning's discussion was sent to OKH, further to underline the determination of the Supreme Commander - a most unusual procedure which had never been employed before. Yet at 6 pm the same day Hitler was talked round by Halder and now gave permission for the advance to continue. The Army Chief of Staff acknowledged this result with the words 'so the right thing is going to happen after all', but he added that it was happening 'amid general irritation and in a form which would make it look as if it was the work of OKW'.³ Events had moved so fast that we in Section L only heard of the incident after it was all over.

Hitler's complete lack of balance is well illustrated by Jodl's diary of the next few days; he was determined to retain the power he had arrogated to himself but, having no depth of knowledge or experience, his moods and emotions swayed him from one extreme to the other and the diary registers them like a thermometer. For instance, on 19 May there was 'great concern' in OKW about Franco-British armoured attacks from the north, although Halder considered that they fitted in exactly with his concept of the operations and he 'welcomed them'; the result was that these two high-level headquarters passed on completely contradictory demands for air support. On the evening of 20 May, by which time, only ten days after the opening of the campaign, the mouth of the Somme had been reached at Abbeville and several enemy armies to the north were facing encirclement,

there was military headqu side himself wit its leaders.' On uneasy because enough'. Jodl h up to 1.30 am'.

The next day drama of Dunki conduct of oper showing that he The influence h come of the cam was not to the be and already bel personal experie

Once more the side Hitler, with Brauchitsch and tion L. Once mo the fount of all k their point of vic numerous 'unple recognize that tl forces on the left halted on the exp up the whole mi sentences: 'on th and motorized for between Bethune although they are while, Army Groi was 'moving up t enemy who has wi therefore be pern Meanwhile, the er forces we had suri the next few days.

Just like Halder tion L were flabb

* dreams and ~~concerns~~

(Possibility of D.T. being told to
issue contradictory impulses.) ??

A

The Campaign in the West

ment, there was a scene of rejoicing in 'Felsenest' unusual for a military headquarters. Jodl describes it as follows: 'the Führer is beside himself with joy. He pays high tribute to the German Army and its leaders.' On the evening of 21 May, Hitler is again 'somewhat uneasy because the infantry divisions are not pushing forward fast enough'. Jodl himself observed that 'he remained in the map-room up to 1.30 am'.⁴

The next day saw the beginning of the events which led to the drama of Dunkirk. Daily, even hourly, Hitler was interfering in the conduct of operations, thus giving the lie to his solemn 'tribute' and showing that he had no confidence in the leadership of the army. The influence he exerted at this moment was decisive for the outcome of the campaign, perhaps even for that of the entire war and it was not to the benefit of Germany. The course of events is well known and already belongs to history but one or two sidelights from my personal experiences in the headquarters may round off the picture.

Once more there were the usual contestants in the struggle: on one side Hitler, with Keitel and Jodl and above all Göring; on the other, Brauchitsch and Halder fully supported by the army officers of Section L. Once more Hitler and his supporters thought that they were the fount of all knowledge and went ruthlessly into action to impose their point of view and their will upon OKH. On 25 May, after numerous 'unpleasant discussions', Halder was finally forced to recognize that the decision was unalterable, saying: 'the mobile forces on the left flank who have no enemy in front of them, are to be halted on the express wish of the Führer'. The next day he summed up the whole miserable situation in the following bitter, sarcastic sentences: 'on the orders of Supreme Headquarters, the armoured and motorized formations are now rooted to the spot on high ground between Bethune and St Omer and are not allowed to attack although they are in a position to take the enemy in rear'. Meanwhile, Army Group B, which consisted entirely of infantry divisions, was 'moving up through Belgium so that it can run up against an enemy who has withdrawn with caution and is still full of fight; it will therefore be permitted to make some slow and costly progress'.⁵ Meanwhile, the enemy had made rapid preparations to evacuate the forces we had surrounded and get them across the Channel during the next few days.

Just like Halder and those around him, the army officers of Section L were flabbergasted by Hitler's orders when they heard of

tel to
impulsos.) ??

them - which they did, curiously enough, only through OKH. They seemed entirely incomprehensible. Without a moment's hesitation, I and Lossberg set off on the path 'up there' in order, as a first step, to get some idea of the situation. Jodl obviously did not want to see us and did not appear entirely convinced himself; he explained that he, Keitel and Hitler had all learned enough about the marshy plain of Flanders in the first World War to know that armour could not be employed there. Tanks would be confined to the narrow roads and shot up one after the other, and therefore in view of the losses they had sustained already, would not be available for the second phase of the offensive in France. What had still to be done in Flanders could confidently be left to the Luftwaffe. Göring had given Hitler an assurance that his air forces were perfectly capable of completing the encirclement of the enemy on the seaward side. Apparently what had happened was this: late in the afternoon of 23 May, Göring was sitting at a heavy oak table beside his train with his Chief of Staff (General Jeschonnek) and his Chief Signals Officer, when the news arrived that the enemy in Flanders was almost surrounded. Göring reacted in a flash. Banging his great fist on the table, he shouted: 'this is a wonderful opportunity for the Luftwaffe. I must speak to the Führer at once. Get me on.' In the telephone conversation which followed, he used every sort of language to persuade Hitler that this was a unique opportunity for his air force. If the Führer would give the order that this was an operation to be left to the Luftwaffe alone, he would give an unconditional assurance that he would annihilate the remnants of the enemy; all he wanted he said was a free run; in other words, the tanks must be withdrawn sufficiently far from the western side of the pocket to ensure that they were not in danger from our own bombing. Hitler was as quick as Göring to approve this plan without further consideration. Jeschonnek and Jodl rapidly fixed the details, including the withdrawal of certain armoured units and the exact timing for the start of the air attack.⁸

This being the state of affairs, it soon became clear that it was entirely useless for me to emphasize that I had spent many holidays on the Belgian coast in the years before the war and therefore had personal knowledge of the fact that the terrain in Flanders had altered considerably since 1918. I expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of the Luftwaffe at night or in bad weather but this produced no reaction either. The memory of this conversation still rankles but in the light of the results of subsequent research, two points from it

stand out as remarkable belief current in many was in agreement with in view of the enormous staff officers at the time, overcome the opposition hinted at political motives. British Expeditionary Force, there is nothing contrary, on the 26 May he on any longer and has to get things clear for the This makes it clear that orders given by Field-Marshal von Rundstedt nothing of OKH - had objects were entirely different that Rundstedt had mentioned to let them close up raised no objection to interrupt the course of Field-Marshal von Run was held back 'solely and who feared that it would phase of the campaign; pointing out that it was campaign to a successful headquarters later, Hitler rapid agreement with I Force escape.⁸

The armour was even noon of 26 May but, as the evacuation of the action of the Luftwaffe is difficult.

To complete the picture impressions of subsequent typical of the atmosphere

There was no consistency but it was probably on n

ough OKH. They
 ent's hesitation, I
 r, as a first step, to
 not want to see us
 explained that he,
 the marshy plain of
 our could not be
 narrow roads and
 of the losses they
 the second phase of
 in Flanders could
 d given Hitler an
 of completing the
 apparently what had
 May, Göring was
 his Chief of Staff
 er, when the news
 surrounded. Göring
 table, he shouted:
 I must speak to the
 version which fol-
 Hitler that this was
 er would give the
 Luftwaffe alone, he
 ould annihilate the
 a free run; in other
 r from the western
 n danger from our
 approve this plan
 d rapidly fixed the
 ured units and the

ie clear that it was
 ent many holidays
 and therefore had
 n in Flanders had
 ibus as to the effec-
 r but this produced
 ion still rankles but
 two points from it

The Campaign in the West

stand out as remarkable: Jodl made not a single reference to the belief current in many quarters that Field-Marshal von Rundstedt was in agreement with Hitler's orders; yet he must have known that in view of the enormous respect in which Rundstedt was held by all staff officers at the time, there could have been no better argument to overcome the opposition of his subordinates; equally he never even hinted at political motives which might lead Hitler to wish to let the British Expeditionary Force go.⁷ As far as Rundstedt's views are concerned, there is nothing on the subject in Halder's diary; on the contrary, on the 26 May he notes: 'Rundstedt too is clearly not hanging on any longer and has gone forward to Hoth and Kleist in order to get things clear for the further advance of the mobile formations.' This makes it clear that although in some respects the views held and orders given by Field-Marshal von Rundstedt and his staff – to say nothing of OKH – happened to coincide with those of Hitler, their objects were entirely different. Instead, everything points to the fact that Rundstedt had merely temporarily halted the armoured formations to let them close up and reorganize. OKH would certainly have raised no objection to this but Hitler seized on it as an excuse to interrupt the course of operations at the decisive moment. In fact, Field-Marshal von Rundstedt stated after the war that the armour was held back 'solely and exclusively on an explicit order from Hitler who feared that it would not be in sufficient strength for the second phase of the campaign; that his (Rundstedt's) headquarters objected, pointing out that it was more important to bring the first phase of the campaign to a successful conclusion; finally, that when he visited the headquarters later, Hitler stated that he had hoped to come to some rapid agreement with England if he let the British Expeditionary Force escape.'⁸

The armour was eventually allowed to go again early in the afternoon of 26 May but, as is well-known, this was too late to prevent the evacuation of the bulk of the British and French forces. The action of the Luftwaffe merely made this operation somewhat more difficult.

To complete the picture of this period, there follow one or two impressions of subsequent phases of the western campaign; they are typical of the atmosphere and methods of the headquarters.

There was no consistency in Hitler's attitude to his Italian allies but it was probably on military grounds alone that, shortly after the

he abandoned
member of Italian
then a note from
Italy proposed
dictator Hitler
ys - an attitude
xis. The reason
effect upon the
ce, scheduled to
in anyway and
at this time Hal-
of the Army had
some time in the
more urged that

Hitler replied
if he was carried
d by the Wehr-
ally or to have
KW was able to
er's ostensible or
more clearly than
question of pre-
n requiring co-

June, 'parallel
bined command
in agreement on

d on 5 June. It
rence of opinion
ollowed the well-
i the immediate
st be the destruc-
wever, the Com-
a meeting with
llows: 'he wants
ve France of her
' was so complete
i simultaneously;

but Hitler could never subsequently be convinced that 'the achievement and - most important of all - the retention of a territorial objective presupposes the defeat of the enemy's armed forces' and that 'so long as this military issue is undecided... the attainment of territorial aims in the form of economically valuable areas remains problematical and their long-term retention a sheer impossibility'.¹⁴ Once again the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, his Chief of Staff and senior commanders received no support from any quarter during this argument; Jodl said nothing, Keitel and Göring agreed with Hitler, the latter probably because he was technical Director of the Four Year Plan.

The headquarters' stay in 'Felsenest' ended on 3 June. Before leaving Hitler ordered that the entire area should be preserved as a 'national monument'; every room was to be kept unchanged, every name-plate was to remain upon its door. I and my companions had certain qualms about this move to turn the first location of the headquarters into a national memorial. Could we be all that sure that the part played by Hitler and his military staff in the great victory in France merited it? The operation had in fact been the brain-child of General von Manstein, but as no more than a Corps Commander he had, as he himself said, 'in effect been fated to be little more than an onlooker for most of the first phase of the campaign in the West'.¹⁵ Hitler's preservation order did not cover the OKH 'hunting lodge', although they had in fact been the architects of the victory.

An army of OT workers* was busy on the new headquarters' site in the small village of Bruly de Pêche in southern Belgium. When the main body of Section L officers arrived by air, the last touches were still being put to the bunker constructed for Hitler himself; the garden was being laid out and gravel paths put down; the 'holy of holies' even included a little fountain. The village had been cleared of its inhabitants and when Hitler arrived two hours later it was like a morgue. The Third Reich was fond of 'up to the minute programmes' and here, in war-time, a considerable task, for which only eight days were available, had been completed on the dot. The map-room was in the local school, Section L offices were in wooden huts but living accommodation was in a country house nearby, since the

* OT stands for 'Totd Organization' so named after its first director, Dr Todt. This was a semi-official organization of the Hitler period charged with major construction work such as the Autobahn, the Siegfried Line, etc. It was similarly employed during the war.

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

village itself was occupied by Hitler's immediate entourage. OKH was located some miles away in the neighbourhood of Chimay.

At some time during the few days before the campaign ended, I myself witnessed a remarkable conversation between Hitler and Goring which took place in the open in the village square. They were discussing the British air attacks on the residential areas of certain German cities, which had just begun to have some effect. Goring was talking big on the lines of his previous warnings to the enemy against such adventures; he was not prepared to tolerate this any longer and wanted to 'give them back ten bombs for every one of theirs'. Without hesitating for a second, Hitler expressly forbade anything of the sort. He said he thought it quite possible that the British Government was so shaken by Dunkirk that it had temporarily lost its head, alternatively that the reason for the attacks on the civil population was that the British bombers had inaccurate bomb sights and were flown by untrained crews. In any case he thought we should wait for a time before taking counter measures. This was the sort of attitude which the Reich had adopted in the international negotiations during the thirties and which governed the orders issued before the beginning of the great air offensive against England. As always in matters concerning the Air Force, OKW was merely a spectator of this encounter between Hitler and Goring and took no part in the argument.

In the middle of June, the staff found itself suddenly faced with a task for which it was totally unprepared, the drafting of the Armistice Agreement with France. On 17 June, as soon as it was known that the French had asked for an armistice, Hitler set off for Munich for a meeting with Mussolini, leaving no instructions behind him. We were assailed with suggestions from all sides but came to the conclusion that we could find no better basis than the terms laid down by the Allies at Compiègne in November 1918. The picture changed when Hitler returned on 19 June; he laid down as a principle that the utmost caution should be used; he had already impressed this on the Italians in Munich. Nothing must be included which would jeopardize the cessation of hostilities and therefore no demands should be made other than those essential to ensure that France could not resume hostilities. He let it quietly be known that as a result his demands in the final peace treaty would be that much higher. As a result of this policy and because of the haste in which the agreement was prepared, there was an omission which was later to

prove disastrous security precaution Africa.

After the great negotiators show the winds. Hitler France with two in the morning c anybody, he got and other arch although the pla holding a large-capital was now Goring would no piece of writing c intoxicating day Section L available and wrecks in th

OKH was no moved to Fontaine groups of Supreme in the northern B prepared before Hitler had decided primarily so that line. The members on the Black Forest been barred from Hitler's household inflicted on him I we did.

A

prove disastrous and which ran counter to Italian wishes – adequate security precautions were not included in regard to French North Africa.

After the great day of 21 June¹⁴ at Compiègne where the French negotiators showed much dignity, the headquarters was scattered to the winds. Hitler went off to visit first World War battlefields in France with two old comrades from his company of that time. Early in the morning of one of these splendid summer days, without telling anybody, he got an expert to take him on a tour of the great buildings and other architectural beauties of Paris. On the other hand, although the plans for it were well advanced, he gave up the idea of holding a large-scale parade to symbolize the fact that the French capital was now to be occupied for the remainder of the war; Göring would not take responsibility for defence against air attack, a piece of writing on the wall of which those who thought at all in those intoxicating days of victory took due note. Some of the officers of Section L availed themselves of the first opportunity to visit the ruins and wrecks in the Dunkirk area.

OKH was now allowed by Hitler to go where it liked and it moved to Fontainebleau. From 25 June onwards the scattered groups of Supreme Headquarters gradually collected together again in the northern Black Forest area in one of the groups of fortifications prepared before the outbreak of war and named 'Tannenberg'. Hitler had decided on a short stay here before going back to Berlin, primarily so that he could visit the great forts of the French Maginot line. The members of Section L lived and worked in a near-by hotel on the Black Forest highway. All visitors had of course previously been barred from the hotel and we received a special instruction from Hitler's household to compensate the proprietor for the loss thus inflicted on him by making the fullest possible use of his cellar. This we did.

△

CHAPTER 3

Transition from West to East

PAST DEAD CENTRE

The bustle of the Armistice negotiations with France was soon over and the OKW Operations Staff officers found themselves once more in a vacuum which, as the days went by, seemed to them less and less reconcilable with their ideas of what work in a forward planning staff should be. We knew of course, that the 'siege' of the British Isles was in progress; in the middle of June we had ourselves drafted orders reducing the strength of the Army to 120 divisions in order that the forces and resources thus released might be made available to the other two Services for the struggle against England, now the one remaining enemy.¹

This question of the reduction of the Army merits a short digression. The order included a note to the effect that the paragraphs dealing with the armoured and motorized divisions of the Army did not apply to Waffen-SS formations. This was a development to which General Jodl had already drawn attention in his diary on 25 May 1940, as follows: 'the plan for an unlimited expansion of the SS is disturbing'. When I happened to see Halder alone about the middle of June he remarked sarcastically that I had better start looking round for another job since the Army would be abolished any minute. During the winter 1939-40, Hitler had let fall a chance, but undoubtedly intentional, remark to the effect that he only intended to make use of the Waffen-SS as an 'Armed State Police'; I included this in an official instruction but was immediately summoned by Keitel and told to withdraw it. In October 1940, the 'Reichsführer SS [Himmler] once more pressed for a considerable increase in the strength of the 'Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler'. Section L thereupon made a detailed proposal to Jodl with the object of clarifying the relationship between the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS and preventing the build-up of a military organization not under

command of OKW as follows:

- 1 Confirmation that the Waffen-SS are to remain a part of the German Army
- 2 Confirmation that the Waffen-SS are to replace the personnel of the OKW.
- 3 Waffen-SS to take over their military duties
- 4 Those parts of the Waffen-SS to have the right to wear the German military uniform.

This memorandum was signed by the 'Reichsführer SS'.

To return to the question of the view of the weakness of the Luftwaffe, therefore, that the OKW Operations Staff, to and wish, and insisting on future strategy in sight, we could have the most effective and powerful, lying compact.

But where to turn? Apart from the isolation of the continent of Europe, the Mediterranean, the Italian ally; in an French and British nothing to do their objective which of lay much closer home raised some weeks between Section L

Rodert. We had discussed whether it would not be better to drive straight across the Channel on the heels of the English and leave the rest of France to look after itself for the moment. The idea had merely been raised in the enthusiasm of the moment and dropped just as quickly. Now, however, it raised its head once more and this time it could not be pushed aside; with it came the thought that it was perhaps a serious omission not to have examined the problem long before this.³

Armed with one or two half-prepared plans, I took the first opportunity of walking the few hundred yards from our Black Forest hotel to HQ Area 1 group of forts. There I got a most lukewarm reception from Jodl. He never liked being bothered by suggestions from his staff if they diverged in any way from the set course of his strategy, but in this case he appeared to be very much in two minds. It seems probable that he himself thought on the same lines as we did, but did not want to let out the fact that Grand Admiral Raeder had brought up this subject only shortly before, that Hitler had shown little interest in it and in fact had pushed it aside without further consideration.⁴ Jodl's unenthusiastic attitude seemed so incomprehensible to me that on the way back I went to see the Foreign Ministry Representative to the Headquarters, thinking there might be some political reason behind it. There I was given some information in most guarded terms about diplomatic soundings of the attitude of London which might perhaps make any military action against England unnecessary. This information however produced no satisfactory military reason for the German Supreme Command apparently to be stuck at dead centre. Other thoughts crowded in upon me spontaneously, ideas such as those of the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano, who wrote after the meeting in Munich: 'Hitler is now the gambler who has made a big scoop and would like to get up from the table risking nothing more.'⁵

Nevertheless, we did not give up in Section L. We checked that once again we had the agreement of OKH⁶ and in addition we felt sure that we could count upon OKM. The first result of our efforts, though only a moderately important one, was the signature on 28 June of an OKW instruction to the effect that in order to mislead the enemy 'all available information media' should spread the word that we were preparing a landing in Ireland to draw the net round England tighter and reinforce the 'siege'.

Meanwhile Jodl also was anxious to get future intentions clarified.

On the day after Hitler's own appreciation of the English and leave the rest of France to look after itself for the moment. The idea had merely been raised in the enthusiasm of the moment and dropped just as quickly. Now, however, it raised its head once more and this time it could not be pushed aside; with it came the thought that it was perhaps a serious omission not to have examined the problem long before this.³

Armed with one or two half-prepared plans, I took the first opportunity of walking the few hundred yards from our Black Forest hotel to HQ Area 1 group of forts. There I got a most lukewarm reception from Jodl. He never liked being bothered by suggestions from his staff if they diverged in any way from the set course of his strategy, but in this case he appeared to be very much in two minds. It seems probable that he himself thought on the same lines as we did, but did not want to let out the fact that Grand Admiral Raeder had brought up this subject only shortly before, that Hitler had shown little interest in it and in fact had pushed it aside without further consideration.⁴ Jodl's unenthusiastic attitude seemed so incomprehensible to me that on the way back I went to see the Foreign Ministry Representative to the Headquarters, thinking there might be some political reason behind it. There I was given some information in most guarded terms about diplomatic soundings of the attitude of London which might perhaps make any military action against England unnecessary. This information however produced no satisfactory military reason for the German Supreme Command apparently to be stuck at dead centre. Other thoughts crowded in upon me spontaneously, ideas such as those of the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano, who wrote after the meeting in Munich: 'Hitler is now the gambler who has made a big scoop and would like to get up from the table risking nothing more.'⁵

Nevertheless, we did not give up in Section L. We checked that once again we had the agreement of OKH⁶ and in addition we felt sure that we could count upon OKM. The first result of our efforts, though only a moderately important one, was the signature on 28 June of an OKW instruction to the effect that in order to mislead the enemy 'all available information media' should spread the word that we were preparing a landing in Ireland to draw the net round England tighter and reinforce the 'siege'.

Meanwhile Jodl also was anxious to get future intentions clarified.

Jodl's staff knew no this memorandum, views of the Chief of doing their utmost to ing in England, known to be the most effective ing off and concluding ever, the landing was c of other measures prin

Hitler finally approved OKW orders of 2 and general long-term preparation days later, laid d order, this time an OK 1940, headed *Conduct o* other things this laid d was to put out of action necessary conditions for

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

(b) the Italian offensive against the Suez Canal is either unsuccessful or postponed until the autumn, there is a *possibility* that the Führer *might consider* the detachment of certain armoured forces to the Italians to assist in this attack or in its resumption.¹⁰

July 1940

Probably as a result of what he had learned from this incident and in response to renewed representations from OKH pressing for some indication of intentions, Jodl submitted a fresh 'Appreciation of the Situation' to Hitler the next day, 13 August. Once more he gave entirely his own point of view saying: 'under no circumstances must the landing operation fail. The political consequences of a fiasco might be much more far reaching than the military.' In the same vein he added that in his view unless all the necessary conditions were fulfilled, including those concerning the naval situation, 'the landing must be considered a desperate venture, something which might have to be undertaken in a desperate situation but on which we have no necessity to embark at the moment'. Jodl continued: 'England can be brought to her knees by other methods' and then proceeded to propose certain other possibilities for a real common war effort with Italy against the British Empire instead of the present unprofitable 'war in parallel'; for instance Italian Air Forces and submarines might be brought round in the greatest possible strength to tighten the investment of the British Isles: in addition to the advance against Egypt, preparations might be made in agreement with Spain and Italy for the capture of Gibraltar.¹⁷

*

In so far as they appeared to lend support to a landing in England, Jodl's staff did their best to take over these ideas and push them forward. Hitler however, received all these proposals with equal lack of enthusiasm and in cases where they had anything to do with the Mediterranean, only considered them after considerable delay and then let them drift into the background just as he was doing with the landing in England. At the beginning of September 1940 he gave instructions that the occupation of the larger groups of islands in the Eastern Atlantic should be examined - Madeira, the Canaries, the Azores and Cape Verde - and that the 'possible occupation of Portugal' should be considered; this looked more like tactics designed to turn everyone's attention away from Operation Sea Lion than serious intentions. Some plans were produced by OKM and given a first critical examination by the OKW Operations Staff; Jodl offered no

110

* Hitler must already be thinking of the Russian campaign to come and the usefulness of not being at war w England at such a time.

objection and subject, with the agenda:

Meanwhile a single factor w England: Hitler The rapidity equalled only are still with us

The headquarters Hitler's speech hope of a peace together again special train At the Reichstag, among them t Major-General indicated that: We all imagine unusual visitati following our v at individual t pected, Jodl w closed and then had decided to shevism by a su earliest possible

The effect of possible, even initial questions to be concluded the last 'force o of forcing Engl other means. T mean that by o on two fronts v avoid? And if t was to be done ingly serious ef

A

Transition from West to East

Success

is either unsuccessful
the detachment of
in this attack or in

on this incident and
pressing for some
Appreciation of the
once more he gave
circumstances must
quences of a fiasco
itary.' In the same
necessary conditions
val situation, 'the
something which
ation but on which
t'. Jodl continued:
methods' and then
for a real common
stead of the present
ian Air Forces and
st possible strength
in addition to the
made in agreement

17
anding in England,
and push them for-
s with equal lack of
ing to do with the
siderable delay and
was doing with the
mber 1940 he gave
ups of islands in the
4, the Canaries, the
occupation of Por-
e tactics designed to
ea Lion than serious
A and given a first
taff; Jodl offered no

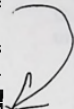
objection and in fact issued certain additional instructions on the subject, with the result that this useless and fruitless activity remained on the agenda for months.¹⁸

Meanwhile a development had occurred which more than any other single factor was destined to put paid to the plans for a landing in England: Hitler's thoughts turned suddenly against Soviet Russia! The rapidity with which this frightful decision was taken was equalled only by the immensity of its consequences, some of which are still with us today.

The headquarters had spent a short period in Berlin and after Hitler's speech to the Reichstag of 19 July, in which he held out little hope of a peaceful agreement with England, had bit by bit collected together again in the area of Berchtesgaden; Section L was in its special train *Atlas* in Bad Reichenhall Station. During the sitting of the Reichstag, a number of military honours had been conferred, among them the promotion of Jodl to full General straight from Major-General. We were all surprised therefore when, on 29 July, he indicated that he wished to speak to the senior officers of Section L. We all imagined that, although we had not done very much, this unusual visitation must be concerned with some special recognition following our victory in the West.¹⁹ Four of us were present²⁰ sitting at individual tables in the restaurant-car. Instead of what we expected, Jodl went round ensuring that all doors and windows were closed and then, without any preamble, disclosed to us that Hitler had decided to rid the world 'once and for all' of the danger of Bolshevism by a surprise attack on Soviet Russia to be carried out at the earliest possible moment, ie in May 1941.

The effect of Jodl's words was electric. Our consternation was, if possible, even greater when we realized from his answers to our initial questions that the struggle against England was not necessarily to be concluded first but that on the contrary, victory over Russia, the last 'force on the continent', was supposed to be the best method of forcing England to make peace if this had not proved possible by other means. There was almost a chorus of objections - did not this mean that by our decision we were bringing upon ourselves the war on two fronts which up to now we had been fortunate enough to avoid? And if the bulk of the army was to be let loose eastwards what was to be done about the air war which was already having increasingly serious effects upon our cities? In any case why this sudden

1940



be thinking
to come
being at
a time.

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

change when only a year earlier the 'pact of friendship and non-aggression' had been concluded with Moscow and celebrated with such enthusiasm and when, so far as anybody knew, the provisions in the agreement for the delivery of Russian war material to Germany had been carried out punctually and fully? Jodl countered every question and had an answer to everything although he convinced none of us. Two of his answers stand out in my memory: first, when he repeated Hitler's view and probably his own also, that the collision with Bolshevism was bound to come and that it was better therefore to have this campaign now, when we were at the height of our military power, than to have to call the German people to arms once more in the years to come; secondly, when he said that at the latest by the autumn of 1941 the full strength of the Luftwaffe, brought to a new pitch of efficiency by further victories in the east, would once more be available for employment against England. At the end of an hour of bitter argument it became clear what we had to do - produce a draft of a preparatory order for the immediate transport, movement and accommodation of the bulk of the Army and Air Force to the occupied areas of western Poland (where communications incidentally were poor). Under the heading 'build-up in the east' this order was included in the records of the prosecution at Nuremberg as the first document dealing with 'aggression' against Soviet Russia.²¹

What was the background to this sudden reversal of all our planning? Shortly after Jodl's disclosure, we happened to discover that Hitler had originally been determined to launch the attack in the late summer of 1940. The most urgent representations from Keitel and Jodl, set out in a memorandum which I have myself seen, had been necessary to convince the Supreme Commander that the time and space factors alone, together with the weather conditions, rendered this plan totally impracticable. The service which the senior officers of OKW thus rendered should not be under-estimated, although there is every reason to suppose that they were thinking of no more than a temporary postponement. Nevertheless, it did offer other and more potent political and military voices the opportunity of using the time thus gained to range themselves against this ghastly development. As far as anybody knows, however, nothing of the sort occurred.

To complete the picture, it is worth mentioning certain other important developments of this period (in the order of their occurrence),

of which I only bet Hitler had already as early as the spring von Rundstedt on Sodenstern who was England was ready with Bolshevism.²²

Halder's diary of

22 May 1940. Commander and raised thinks that if he 26 June 1940. The policy questions. 'bian question car

At the beginning Ambassador in M Winston Churchill, Government to the urged Russia to cha Further entries in

3 July 1940. (Reco tions Section.) T England and ... it is how to deal R recognize German 13 July 1940. (Aft the forefront of th to make peace; lil still has some hope 22 July 1940. (Rec Chief of the Army impressions of a d day by the followi dealt with. We mu 30 July 1940. (An worked out with cannot reach a dec England will ally

of which I only became aware after the war. As already mentioned, Hitler had already hinted at this possibility to his immediate circle as early as the spring of 1940. In a conversation with Field-Marshal von Rundstedt on 2 June 1940 recorded by the late General von Sodenstern who was present, Hitler said that now that he imagined England was ready for peace, he would begin to settle the account with Bolshevism.²²

Halder's diary of this period illustrates Hitler's double talk:

22 May 1940. Commander-in-Chief had a discussion with the Führer and raised the question of the attitude of Russia. The Führer thinks that if he insists Russia will limit her demands to Bessarabia.

26 June 1940. The attitude of Russia is in the foreground of foreign policy questions. The general opinion seems to be that the Bessarabian question can be solved without war.

At the beginning of July 1940 Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador in Moscow, handed Stalin a memorandum from Winston Churchill, the contents of which were passed by the Soviet Government to the German Embassy in Moscow a few days later; it urged Russia to change sides and act against Germany.

Further entries in Halder's diary:

3 July 1940. (Recording a conversation with the head of his Operations Section.) The most pressing problems at the moment are England and ... the East. As regards the latter, the main question is how to deal Russia a military blow which will force her to recognize Germany's preponderant role in Europe.

13 July 1940. (After a conversation with Hitler.) The question in the forefront of the Führer's mind is why England is still unwilling to make peace; like us, he thinks that the answer is that England still has some hope of action on the part of Russia.

22 July 1940. (Recording a conversation with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.) The latter appears to have summed up his impressions of a discussion he had had with Hitler the previous day by the following instruction: 'The problem of Russia must be dealt with. We must begin thinking about this.'²³

30 July 1940. (An extract from an appreciation of the situation worked out with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.) If we cannot reach a decision against England, the danger remains that England will ally herself with Russia; the question then is whether

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

we should carry on a war on two fronts, one of which would be Russia. Answer: Better remain friends with Russia.²⁴

Finally – 31 July 1940 some of Hitler's statements in the Berghof:

Russia is the factor by which England sets the greatest store. ... If Russia is beaten, England's last hope is gone. Germany is then master of Europe and the Balkans. ... Decision: As a result of this argument, Russia must be dealt with. Spring 1941.*

These few extracts show unmistakably that Hitler's determination to turn against Russia was from the outset an unconditional and 'unalterable' decision – to use his own oft-repeated phrase. It is also clear that the decisive period during which he was forming this decision was approximately the middle of July 1940, ie about the same time at which the military managed to get him to agree the orders for the landing in England. The real background to his decision undoubtedly lay in his permanent, deep-rooted and deadly hatred of Bolshevism.

The relative importance of the two decisions is now crystal clear. It was already unmistakable to all those involved by the summer of 1940. Thus the dead centre in German strategy was passed; we were not nearing the end of the war; we were starting a new phase.

DISSENSIONS NEW AND OLD

Once more some of the few who were in the know, whether members of Section L or not, found themselves faced with the overpowering question of how to counter Hitler's fresh intentions, how to avoid this new and apparently limitless extension of the war both in time and space. There was no need to study the problem further; no one could doubt for an instant that 'it was better to keep friends with Russia' or that an attack on Russia carried with it a fearful threat for our nation and our country. What we needed at this moment was a soldier at the head of the Wehrmacht, someone who would have given us confidence, who would have shown some understanding, to whom we could have gone with military arguments and who could then have used his personal authority and that given him by the solid backing of the Wehrmacht to oppose the Dictator and counter

* All underlinings in original.

this decision grounds; but ler had been s had himself t Wehrmacht a OKW, turned

Section L c Operations St him to chang political and : Keitel who wa upon Jodl. Nev Officer in Sec: what were the if the Wehrma unconquered. Commander-in-plans²⁵ and wa merely confirm to stress that F consider that v British Isles; for Russia.²⁶

This was no i ments. As a res that we must d Sea Lion. This : Russian advent all the far-reach ceed merely as a tinued to give th the plan for a l gained adequate against any furth heard him say th ing for Germany them in thousan seemed to lend s up the idea.

There is no do

Success

of which would be
Russia.²⁴

in the Berghof:

the greatest store. ...

c. Germany is then

As a result of this

941.*

der's determination
unconditional and
ed phrase. It is also
was forming this
1940, ie about the
t him to agree the
background to his
-rooted and deadl

s now crystal clear.

l by the summer of
ras passed; we were
a new phase.

; whether members
the overpowering
s, how to avoid this
r both in time and
rther; no one could
riends with Russia'
arful threat for our
his moment was a
e who would have
e understanding, to
nts and who could
given him by the
ictator and counter

Transition from West to East

this decision which he had taken upon political and ideological grounds; but there was no one. Now we began really to see why Hitler had been so determined to eliminate any such possibility, why he had himself taken over the position of Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht and at the same time, supported by the senior officers of OKW, turned that organization merely into his own 'working staff'.

Section L could not work other than through the Chief of the Operations Staff. But there was not the slightest possibility of getting him to change his mind, particularly on a question of such wide political and strategic significance; there was even less hope with Keitel who was beginning to show himself more and more dependent upon Jodl. Nevertheless, at the beginning of August, the Senior Naval Officer in Section L set off for Berchtesgaden to point out to Jodl what were the likely long-term effects upon the position of Germany if the Wehrmacht now turned east, leaving England's sea power still unconquered. This step seemed all the more necessary, since the Commander-in-Chief Navy had not yet even been told of Hitler's plans²⁵ and was not yet intended to know. The meeting, however, merely confirmed what we already knew: Jodl used this opportunity to stress that Hitler rated British sea power very high and did not consider that we were yet strong enough to strike decisively at the British Isles; for this very reason, therefore, we must 'go round' via Russia.²⁶

This was no more convincing than had been Jodl's previous statements. As a result, we in Section L came gradually to the conclusion that we must do all we could to keep the way open for Operation Sea Lion. This seemed now to be the only possibility of avoiding the Russian adventure. It hardly seemed possible that Hitler had allowed all the far-reaching preparations for a crossing of the Channel to proceed merely as a threat and as bluff. In a number of remarks he continued to give the impression that he would still be ready to agree to the plan for a landing if only it could first be shown that we had gained adequate air superiority; this would at least have secured him against any further danger from British naval and air forces. I myself heard him say that he was prepared to see German soldiers die fighting for Germany but that he would not be responsible for sending them in thousands to the bottom of the sea without firing a shot. This seemed to lend support to the theory that he had not altogether given up the idea.

There is no doubt that as things developed, Hitler's interest in the

A

Summer
1940

A

Transition from West to East

20 Jan '41

An attack on the British Isles remains the ultimate aim. In this case however, Germany is like someone who has only one shot in his gun; if he misses, the situation will be worse than before. We could never attempt a second landing since failure would mean the loss of so much equipment. England would then not have to bother further about a landing and could employ the bulk of her forces where she wanted on the periphery. So long as the attack has not taken place however, the British must always take into account the possibility of it.²⁸

Operation Sea Lion was thus itself the victim of the *coup de grâce* which it was supposed to administer to the British Isles.

As the prospects of early large-scale operations gradually receded, the headquarters had once more split up into scattered groups. On 29 August, just after the first British air attacks on Berlin, Hitler had returned to the capital and taken up residence as before in the Reich Chancellery with his immediate entourage. In order to retain its mobility, the field echelon of Section L remained for the moment in its special train in a siding at the Grunewald Station. As time went on and winter approached, we began to look for permanent staff quarters which could provide both working and living accommodation. By the middle of November we were installed in the barracks of the Cavalry School at Krampnitz near Potsdam, completed just before the outbreak of war; as a result, we were about an hour by road from the Reich Chancellery. Section L remained there during the early months of the new year, while Jodl and Keitel stayed with Hitler in Berchtesgaden. OKH had remained in Fontainebleau until the decision on Operation Sea Lion had been made and had then returned to its huts in Zossen. OKM remained as before in its peacetime location on the Tirpitz Embankment in Berlin; OKL had returned to its group of forts in Wildpark near Potsdam.

In general, therefore, the conditions in the autumn of 1940, were the same as before the beginning of the campaign in France. Communications between the scattered groups of the headquarters and the headquarters of the Services were maintained by couriers, specially selected officers or officials. As before, Section L collected reports from the Services on which were based Jodl's daily briefings in the Reich Chancellery or in the Berghof. The Commanders-in-Chief of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force were summoned only

ports or to receive instructions at these meetings he frequented. There were only a few to ensure that strategy was

shape and may well have been that at the head of the machine; to anyone it was clear that Supreme Command was the only method. In the first stage dealing with individual cases covered considerable ground, no committee bringing the Navy and Air Force, and none of them had even a three Commanders-in-Chief on special occasions and then which ruled out any real role for the Navy and Air Force in adequate resources, the war games from which the campaign in the Wehrmacht to perdition - on the part of the Reich, though obviously less than that of the OKW Operations strategic section, by the end of Berchtesgaden; and occasional air trips by

direction of the Wehrmacht therefore existed, as a very period for the landing level had lacked the multiplicity of different

concerning the importance of the title itself was (himself) and at the same time employed his position

Transition from West to East

as military leader. The occasion was the problem of the equipment and employment of the Fleet Air Arm which had led to many arguments between the Navy and the Air Force. Although the Operations Staff had examined and set out exhaustively the pros and cons, Hitler made no firm decision; instead he gave vent to a long-winded speech, extracts from which are as follows:

Differences of opinions such as this between Services prove once more the necessity for a strong OKW. If there were no superior co-ordinating authority responsible for taking a decision there would, for instance, be a danger in this case, that research into the use of torpedoes from aircraft would not be further pursued and might even be stopped altogether. From the point of view of the war as a whole it is completely immaterial whether airborne torpedoes are used by the Air Force or the Navy; the important point is that air torpedoes should be used by the Service that can make the best use of them.

Another lesson of arguments such as these is that Supreme Headquarters must keep a firm hold on things in order to ensure that the capabilities of all three Services are used to the best advantage. It is the job of OKW to do this. This is all the more true today since the Führer's authority means that in the last analysis a decision can always be made.

Looking into the future increasing authority for OKW is desirable. The Führer's place might one day be taken by a man who might be the best possible politician but who may not have so much military knowledge and ability. He would have to have a very strong OKW, otherwise there would be considerable danger of the forces of the three Services being wasted in various directions instead of being concentrated on one single objective. In that case the Wehrmacht would never be able to give of its best and that would be a position for which no one would wish to be responsible in war when the existence of the Reich is at stake.²⁹

Up to December 1940 I and the officers of Section L, just like Jodl, had little to do with preparations for the Eastern campaign, far less in fact than in the case of the earlier great campaigns. In any case we in Section L were still doing all we could to further those plans which it seemed might keep the Wehrmacht concentrated in the West. OKW Directive no. 18 has already been referred to; the first drafts were completed in July and August 1940 and when it was finally

Fall
1940

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

May
1941
Recd

the attitude of France in North and West Africa might mean for us, Ribbentrop interrupted me with the memorable comment: 'you don't have to worry about all this, my Führer! If anything happens in Africa, General Rommel has only to turn his armour round to bring that scum to heel. We don't need the French for that.' He took his hand out of his pocket for a moment and waved it across the map of the Mediterranean spread out in front of Hitler, indicating the whole area from the Egyptian-Libyan frontier across Tunis, Algeria and Morocco right down to Dakar! I was fortunately spared the necessity of having to answer this myself for Hitler asked me 'just to tell the Foreign Minister' what sort of distances we were dealing with in Africa, what communications were available in these areas for the proposed movements of armoured formations and what other obstacles there might be. Hitler at least showed that he had a somewhat better grasp of military matters than his Foreign Minister, but that was as far as he went.

During the next few months great events took place; the French lost Syria which they could never have held even with German support, and on the German side came the great initial successes in Russia; all this threatened to push the agreements totally into limbo. It was not until August-September 1941, during a temporary lull in operations in the East, that Section L was able to get a new instruction issued to the Armistice Commission in Wiesbaden to re-start the negotiations on the fulfilment of the protocols. Little progress was made, for our negotiators were continually looking over their shoulders towards Italy and were forbidden to make any real concessions such as would have enabled the French to undertake the tasks proposed for them. The German Ambassador in Paris did contrive to organize one final meeting in Berlin at the end of December 1941; France was represented by the new Commander-in-Chief in North Africa, Marshal Juin, and on our side Göring was supposed to conduct the negotiations. The meeting was however, entirely overshadowed by the serious German crisis in Russia and the entry of the United States into the war. The distinguished French visitors were kept waiting more than an hour while Göring was persuaded to let himself be hurriedly briefed by me on the military aspect of the negotiations; during the conversation with the French which followed he kept apparently going to sleep. This was no doubt intended to demonstrate Hitler's lack of interest in the whole business; he always said that if things were going well, there was no need

to negotiate and he did not wish France emerges in Goebbels' diar

22 January 1942
Africa but it is
7 March 1942. 'I
circumstances')
an active hand
does not want
military and f
Europe. Here
political instin-
26 April 1942.
moment.

Under these c
came rapidly to

THE MEDITERR

But we have ant
Since the issue o
solution through
nought. This sit
The real reason
direction of the
outside world ex
it was. It must b
suffered by our
Similarly Gener
on Gibraltar, no
but because the
this was the rea
to Madrid to co
Jodl to Madrid
came off.⁴⁶ It k
that 'England c
probably have p
to all the other

The only exception of any significance was the fact that in the summer of 1940 he ordered Section L to work out on their own the basic factors governing an operation against Soviet Russia, but this was, as he admitted, merely to familiarize him with the geographical and other military conditions before the Army leaders presented their proposals to Hitler.¹ At the beginning of September Section L was ordered by Jodl to inform the office of Admiral Canaris that the 'eastern area' would be much more heavily occupied in the next few weeks and give the Admiral certain instructions for concealment.² In addition in the Autumn of 1940 the Operations Staff had something to do with the despatch of Army and Air Force 'military missions' to Rumania which, as everybody knew, were connected with the preparations for the Eastern campaign. This took Rome completely by surprise and was described by Mussolini as a German 'occupation' of Rumania. He used it as the final excuse for his attack on Greece. Ciano's diary of 12 October 1940 records him as saying: 'this time I am going to pay him (Hitler) back in his own coin; he will find out from the papers that I have occupied Greece'. These words are only quoted as a further illustration of the degree of mutual confidence existing between the two allies. The Russians naturally did not look upon the despatch of German troops to Rumania with any favour. On 13 November Molotov asked Hitler whether he would like it if Russia despatched a military mission to Bulgaria; Hitler could nevertheless justifiably point out that 'the Rumanian Government had expressly asked Germany to send a military mission'.³

On 12 November 1940, the day before Molotov's arrival in Berlin, the famous OKW *Directive no. 18* dealing with 'Strategy in the Immediate Future' was issued; this confirms the state of affairs I have just described in regard to the preparations for the eastern campaign. It merely says:

Political discussions for the purpose of clarifying the attitude of Russia in the immediate future have already begun. Regardless of the outcome of these conversations all preparations for the East for which verbal orders have already been given will be continued. Further directives will follow on the subject as soon as the basic operational plan of the Army has been submitted to me and approved.⁴

General Jodl was therefore to a certain extent right when, during cross-examination in Nuremberg in 1946, he stated:

I was not th
Soviet Unioi
witness Paul
orders of this
General Staf

It matters lit
claimed that hi
to put Hitler's
be used by the
these events sho
the set-up of St
measured up to

INTERFERENCE

It might be tho
designedly avoi
operations for th
by subsequent
of their detaile
initially gave t
made certain co
which he was le
tions were to pr
carried out.' Th
L to turn what
following the u
Operations Sec

The Führer i
east since the
moment and
that she will a

The first dra
Paris; it had ce
second draft to
engaged upon a
and that it sho
particular consi

regard to the eastern campaign and in whatever special desires of Hitler he may have taken some hand, he cannot in any single instance have based his views on any detailed studies made by his staff.

Jodl
Jan 14/1
His normal method of working was to rely upon himself alone and the further and longer he was divorced from Section L the more marked this tendency became. He did not appear to realize that the undoubted authority which he now had stemmed almost entirely from the fact that he was now a permanent member of Hitler's entourage and not from his position as Chief of the OKW Operations Staff; in theory he supported the organization but in practise allowed it to wither.

During January and February the forthcoming Russian campaign gradually absorbed the efforts of the entire Wehrmacht; yet in the peculiar existence which I and the officers of Section L led in our offices in Krampnitz near Berlin, we were hardly touched by it all. During this period the division of the high-level staffs into those concerned with the East and those concerned with the other theatres of war began to make its appearance, an arrangement which was later to have such unfortunate consequences; during this period also, the disadvantages for the staff inherent in its permanent separation from its Chief became particularly evident. The information which we could get from General Jodl, who was always a man of few words, or from some hurried note by one of the aides,¹³ was so inadequate that, for instance, on 18 January during one of my weekly visits to Berchtesgaden I had to ask Jodl 'whether the Führer was still firm in his intention to carry out Operation Barbarossa'. I think it was on this occasion, after Jodl had replied that Hitler was still determined to carry out the eastern operation that he indicated his aversion to what he regarded as questioning and worrying with the unforgettable words: 'the Russian colossus will be proved to be a pig's bladder; prick it and it will burst'.¹⁴ Jodl exaggerated here even more than Hitler who is supposed to have said at a conference on 9 January: 'the Russian Armed Forces are like a headless colossus with feet of clay but we cannot with certainty foresee what they might become in the future. The Russians must not be underestimated. All available resources must therefore be used in the German attack'.¹⁵

I and the officers of Section L were not necessarily in agreement with these views in 'high quarters'. As before we took it upon ourselves in dealing with the few jobs that came to us in connection with the eastern campaign to work in the closest possible collaboration

* all the stories of how
the Russians hated Stalin.

with the staffs of the
of our activities were
do with what should
strategic staff. For ins
heads of the Organiza
Munch and von Tipp
in a number of fields
ments of the eastern c
parts and fuel. We als
and other basic mate
draw up a 'time-ta
During these months
Russian campaign b
tegic staff was to ens
the war against Eng
tories in Western Eur
Closely related to thi
all possible informati
the 'movement agair
military history' desi
tions for the invasior

From the beginnin
on the activity of all
middle of the month
swing, Hitler once n
the Army; he simpl
flank of the entire fr
sidered that the con
tackled from the rea
northern flank of A
area of Lublin by a
whether Jodl had a
from discussing it a
such 'suggestions' by
made known this de
with the Army leade
apparently they rais
Hitler in operations
upon the whole basis
diary shows clearly

A

Commander's determination can be seen by the very great of Army Group South during

as taken at this juncture, one d organization at the highest oted, it was a decision not by ief of the Army. In OKH t at their exclusion from the ew it was this which caused point to declare that 'he was rs' concerning the proposed ainst the Russian White Sea

heatre of war' was set up in ad in many respects been a in-Chief of the Army of his other words to Hitler, his mmand over a considerable land theatre of war. Shortly aign OKW had proposed to Marshal Mannerheim, that s, including German forces, refused. The result was that ed, the Chief of the OKW job of Chief of Staff of the Operations Section. Neither embling the competence and parable Army organizations undertaking the direction of se of that word; everything s, supply and rationing had

ular command organization terminable argument. One as certainly not the best and tain that had there been a rmy, he would have done all in Norway under his com- actly the reverse. It would

seem that the Chief of Staff of the Army did not agree either with his Commander-in-Chief's action or with the objectives allotted to the troops in Norway which originated with Hitler. On 14 May 1941 he noted in his diary: 'the whole undertaking is merely an expedition; it is not an operation of war. It is a pity to squander forces by using them in this area.'

THE ALLIES

Because of the campaign in the Balkans the attack on Russia had to be postponed from the middle of May to 22 June. Before the attack began one of the special tasks reserved to OKW was to get in touch with our friends and allies to persuade them to make common cause with us in the attack in the East. In this case also however, the possibilities of independent initiative on the part of the staff were very limited.

In the first place Hitler would only allow even to be considered as participants those countries which were either neighbours of Russia and therefore in a position to assist the German advance, or had some account of their own to settle with the Soviets. The initial choice was therefore limited to Rumania and Finland. He considered that at a later stage it might perhaps be possible to include Hungary and Slovakia. Sweden also came into the picture early on as being capable of furnishing indirect support, for instance by allowing troop transports to cross her territory towards Finland. As far as the principal ally, Italy, was concerned, the order was that our intentions must be kept secret. The strictest instructions were laid down regarding the timing and form of approaches to all other states; the Eastern campaign was regarded as a preventive war to be opened by a surprise attack; in any case the principles upon which Hitler conducted any military coalition are well known.¹⁹

The Finns were considered particularly reliable in spite of the fact that they were not really allies of Germany but were in the somewhat equivocal position of 'comrades in arms'; it was only with them that short 'General Staff discussions' were held at the beginning of June. In accordance with the special command organization applicable to Finnish territory these discussions were primarily the business of the OKW Operations Staff. On this occasion also General Jodl could not help opening the discussions by the phrase that the war was already won and now had only to be

*
Winter
'41
(Jan, Feb)

As H. They are soft & must warm
The Russian will leave them.

ons were concluded,
the questions which
as gained contact in
dealt with Marshal
rther discussions the
through the senior
concerned or through
pose²² who, on the
er generally entitled
ers of the ... Armed
ch the natural and
ent of a permanent
ork out a common
iary of 29 June (one
the results achieved;
acts with allied and
their own account:

as' will be ready to

ization of the Corps
too strong.

otorized brigade.

in accordance with

with the allies was
similarly restricted
operations; in other
and proposals which
of their movement
d by Hitler. In view
of broad strategic
within the province
e only occasion for
ased on the 'Three-
would have moved
possibility however,

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

did not enter into the calculations of either side. That this was so on the Japanese side was made very clear when, in the middle of April 1941, the Japanese Foreign Minister took the opportunity of his return journey from a prolonged stay in Berlin to sign a treaty of neutrality with the Soviet Union in Moscow. This was entirely unexpected but on the German side people consoled themselves with the thought that, having thus secured herself in the rear, Japan would be able to act all the more vigorously against the British in the Far East. This meant that the two allies could continue to agree that victory over England remained the final and most important objective. Even after the opening of the campaign against Russia little thought was given to the possibility of direct Japanese assistance as proved by the fact that, after a period of disillusionment, the old confidence in an imminent collapse of the Soviets revived in the autumn of 1941. The overweening self-assurance in German headquarters was illustrated by the phrase coined when Japan was thought to have made an offer of assistance: 'we don't need anyone just to strip the corpses'.²³

Just as the political side had previously prevented the Wehrmacht exercising any influence on relations with Italy, so it was now excluded from anything to do with the development of the Japanese alliance; as far as is known however, no representations against this were made. The highest military circles - and this applies not merely to the senior officers of the Wehrmacht - apparently shared Hitler's view that the campaign against Russia would probably go quickly. This does not alter that fact that in basic strategic questions such as these the Operations Staff was in no position to express any differing views since it had come to consider itself merely as the military working staff of Hitler. In all questions concerning military co-operation with Japan the Navy was the Service most intimately concerned, but throughout this period any ideas on the subject which emerged either from OKW or OKM dealt exclusively with the support of Japan in her forthcoming struggle against England and possibly also against the United States. That part of OKW Directive no. 24 of 5 March 1941 dealing with this subject was based upon a memorandum from OKM and an attached study by Section L; it laid down basic instructions the last sentence of which read: 'no mention whatever of Operation Barbarossa will be made to the Japanese'.²⁴



FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

There were a number of other tasks which, under Jodl's direction, fell to the lot of Section L during the final preparatory period for the Russian campaign; we had to collect the results of reconnaissance by the Army, Navy and Air Force for the usual daily briefings; we had to put over to OKH repeated 'desires' by Hitler for major or minor alterations in the plans for the move forward or in the initial objectives; finally we had to run the 'OKW theatre of war' in Finland through the Corps Headquarters Norway which had been placed in command in that area. All Hitler's initiatives were the product of his own ceaselessly working brain and as far as anybody knows they were immediately and without further consideration transformed into orders both by his immediate entourage (ie primarily by Jodl) and also by the headquarters to which they were addressed. The following are examples:

(194)

On 6 March General Jodl handed to me 'new instructions from the Fuhrer' laying down:

The operation against Petsamo in Finland to be extended to include the capture of Murmansk.

To this end Dietl's Mountain Corps to be reinforced by a mobile group including heavy tanks.

The harbours of Murmansk and Archangel to be mined.

The approaches to the Pripet Marshes in Central Russia to be mined.

Anti-aircraft defence of the Rumanian oilfields to be reinforced.

Hitler's instructions on 16 June:

*

Owing to the very great width of the front the date of the attack in the East not to be dependent on weather conditions.

The division on the northernmost flank of Army Group North not to attack but to remain on the defensive; the centre and left flank of Ninth Army (Army Group Centre) to be reinforced from the reserves to guard against Russian flank attacks.

72 Infantry Division in Rumania to be made 'mobile' (ie motorized) to guard against possible landings on the Black Sea coast.²⁸

Hitler was therefore breaking all the rules governing the activity

* Cover to A. H. in an epiphany.

either of the Head culminating point o in the Reich Chancel of Army Groups, A Naval and Air Force of the senior officers o of OKW, together w Hitler in complete de arrival of a very large purposes Hitler's pei down which of the Chancelleries were t should arrive. The Chamber of the Old divided by sectors o moned by name to s Hitler in a casual m lunch to which all we 'wide-ranging politic reasons for the attac lapse of Russia wouk as any outside observ mood.²⁸

Among other prep ible mention must be most comprehensive formation and requir tion led to numerou and the inter-depend the West and the Nor a second time when paign in the Balkans. discussed with the o frontiers and comm governing factors w desire to allow Rus enter Germany up t intention was that th across the German fi Finally Section L

h, under Jodl's direction, preparatory period for the results of reconnaissance by daily briefings; we had Hitler for major or minor and or in the initial objective of war' in Finland which had been placed in fives were the product of as anybody knows they consideration transformed age (ie primarily by Jodl) they were addressed. The

ne 'new instructions from

land to be extended to

be reinforced by a mobile

angel to be mined.

s in Central Russia to be

oilfields to be reinforced.

ont the date of the attack other conditions.

lk of Army Group North enuive; the centre and left (tre) to be reinforced from ank attacks.

made 'mobile' (ie motor- on the Black Sea coast.²⁵

les governing the activity

Jefferson

either of the Head of a State or of a Supreme Commander. The culminating point of this procedure was the 'Great Conference' in the Reich Chancellery in Berlin on 14 June 1941. All commanders of Army Groups, Armies, Armoured Groups and the comparable Naval and Air Force commanders were assembled and in the presence of the senior officers of the High Commands of the three Services and of OKW, together with their immediate subordinates, made to give Hitler in complete detail their tasks and intentions. This involved the arrival of a very large number of senior officers and for concealment purposes Hitler's personal office issued detailed instructions laying down which of the various entrances to the Old and New Reich Chancelleries were to be used and the times at which everybody should arrive. The presentations took place in the Parliament Chamber of the Old Reich Chancellery; those taking part were divided by sectors of the front into individual groups, were summoned by name to appear at stated intervals and were greeted by Hitler in a casual manner. The conference broke off at 2.0 pm for lunch to which all were invited; at the end of the meal Hitler made a 'wide-ranging political speech' in which he explained once more the reasons for the attack on Russia and stated yet again that the collapse of Russia would lead to England giving up the struggle. As far as any outside observer could judge all those present were in confident mood.²⁶

Among other preparatory measures for which OKW was responsible mention must be made of the 'time-table'. This was the last and most comprehensive document of the series; it was based upon information and requirements from the three Services and its compilation led to numerous problems owing to its comprehensive nature and the inter-dependence of the measures dealing with the East, the West and the North. The whole time-table had to be worked over a second time when the attack was postponed, owing to the campaign in the Balkans.²⁷ In addition a number of questions had to be discussed with the office of Admiral Canaris such as the closing of frontiers and communications in the areas bordering on Russia; governing factors were the necessity to achieve surprise and the desire to allow Russian trains carrying valuable war material to enter Germany up to the last moment; as far as I remember the intention was that the last goods train from Russia should be allowed across the German frontier at midnight 21-22 June.²⁸

Finally Section L had one peculiar task; it was instructed to

assemble information on all frontier violations and similar probings by the Russian Army and Air Force during recent months in the form of notes to the Foreign Ministry, some of which were to be back-dated. According to their importance from the point of view of international law these reports were to be signed by me in the case of minor incidents, by General Jodl in the case of moderately serious incidents and by the Chief of OKW in the case of incidents of major importance. It was not difficult to guess the purpose behind this; it was made crystal clear on 19 June when the Foreign Ministry liaison officer to OKW told me that: 'yesterday evening the Führer instructed the Foreign Minister to address to him, on the basis of the OKW reports of Russian frontier violations received to date, a final appeal on the lines that the menace of Russian movements makes any further delay dangerous'.²⁹ As far as I remember these 'special reports' were based on actual happenings of which there were plenty.³⁰

The conclusions which Hitler now proceeded to draw from this 'game in which everybody had his part to play' were far beyond anything justified by the facts. Although there was little else to be expected, those of us who were intimately involved were seized with a feeling of discomfort and disquiet. All these preliminaries seemed to raise the spectre of 'an unjust war' - something which had never entered into the calculations of an officer whose whole career was founded upon the concept of 'the justice of his cause'. Admittedly it was later established that the Soviets were at a much higher state of military preparedness than anyone had thought, as proved by the vast numbers of prisoners captured during the battles on the frontiers and the newly constructed airfields in the frontier zone which were found to be fully occupied; this could not however altogether erase the persistent impression of injustice. We could only comfort ourselves with the thought that, although we had to admit that they were not very obvious, there were probably 'reasons of State' which of course were a law unto themselves and which were perhaps in some degree justified by previous Soviet armed incursions into Finland and Rumania.

THE 'CRIMINAL ORDER'

Even these standards could not be applied to Hitler's requirements as regards the so-called 'special matters'. I refer here to those

orders which
Operations
It seems to
regarding t
orders, all-
based prim
and, like th
of anyone
production
and other
survivors of
a moment

1 The D
ity wa
the G
ideal'
was o
be co
cover.
2 The li
sentat
innate
based
and G
(and
acts a
it was
revolt
Gover
code c

There is
advance in
Command
unlimited
tional area
German o
responsible
higher ha

Accepted
Theil
Gey

△

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

orders which were later labelled 'criminal' and with which the Operations Staff and Section L necessarily had something to do. It seems to me to be necessary at this point to go into some detail regarding the circumstances surrounding the production of these orders, all the more so since the descriptions so far published are based primarily upon the judgments of the Nuremberg Tribunals and, like those Tribunals, have taken little account of the evidence of anyone like myself directly concerned. I propose to follow the production of these orders step by step, producing full documentary and other proof. Before starting on this process however, both the survivors of those days and the present generation should pause for a moment and get two facts into the forefront of their minds:

- 1 The Dictator was now at the height of his power and his authority was unfettered; he was supported almost unanimously by the German people; he was as firmly obsessed by a 'crusading ideal' as were some of his later opponents;²¹ as a result he was open to no counter-argument; his intentions could only be countered with any prospect of success by working under cover.
- 2 The limited possibilities open to an officer of making representations and the conflict of duty with which he was faced. His innate background was one of discipline, law and honour, based on the historical example of the leaders of the Prussian and German States; now in the midst of a life and death war (and this is no attempt to minimize the well-known criminal acts and propensities of the Hitler regime, though, be it noted, it was internationally recognized), he found himself suddenly in revolt against orders given by the Head of his State and his Government because those orders were incompatible with his code of military ethics.

There is a further extraneous consideration: in the case of an advance into Russia it was more difficult than anywhere else for the Commander-in-Chief of the Army to give up his so-called 'right of unlimited authority'; it was not conceivable that in the 'operational area' or the connected 'rear areas' there should be any other German organization exercising powers for which they were not responsible to the Army independently of C.-in-C. Army and the higher headquarters to whom he had delegated authority. This meant

Spring 41

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

that the Commander-in-Chief of the Army was forced to come to the necessary agreements with those superior authorities to whom were responsible the Special Detachments of 'SD'* and police which Hitler forced upon the Army; but they did not belong to the Wehrmacht and the Commander-in-Chief had no idea what were the real tasks of these 'Special Employment' organizations.

With the knowledge we possess today the starting point of the chain of events, from the point of view of both substance and time, seems to be the comments made by General Jodl on 3 March 1941 on the draft of *Instructions on Special Matters attached to Directive no. 21 (Operation Barbarossa)*; this had been sent to him by Section L as a piece of routine staff work which normally preceded any campaign; it was usually headed *Special Instructions*. He made a few introductory remarks to the effect that he had 'shown the Führer the draft' which he had in fact previously somewhat altered himself. He then summarized Hitler's 'directions' for the 'final version' as follows:³²

The forthcoming campaign is more than a mere armed conflict; it is a collision between two different ideologies. In view of the size of the area involved, this war will not be ended merely by the defeat of the enemy armed forces. The entire area must be split up into different states each with their own government with which we can then conclude peace.

The formation of these governments requires great political ability and must rest upon well-thought-out principles.

Any large-scale revolution gives rise to events which cannot subsequently be expunged. The socialist ideal can no longer be wiped out in the Russia of today. From the internal point of view the formation of new states and governments must inevitably be based on this principle. The Bolshevik-Jewish intelligentsia must be eliminated as having been the 'oppressor' of the people up to now. The old bourgeois and aristocratic intelligentsia, in so far as it still exists among the émigrés, does not come into the picture either. It would be rejected by the Russian people and is basically anti-German. This applies particularly to the ex-Baltic States.

Furthermore we must under all circumstances avoid allowing a nationalist Russia to appear in place of Bolshevik Russia, for history shows that this will also once more become anti-German.

* SD - Sicherheitsdienst - Security Service.

The E

Our object is the sum of mili-
tary operations upon us.

This is a task

Jodl then comes from the Führer

- 1 The Army be no deeper be set up in be appointed daries of w the task of machinery should be be responsible for purely r of operation OKW. The matters wh economy, s forces will.
- 2 Frontiers v operations. to the Reich police the 2 This may b be liquidate having any with any l forces.
- 3 In Section Hungary : that, if the to ask for that effect in touch w of the An sentatives

* Hitler might as they say & by his side

o come to the
o whom were
police which
to the Wehr-
were the real

point of the
ice and time,
March 1941
Directive no. 21
ction L as a
y campaign;
introductory
draft' which
fe then sum-
llows:³²

ned conflict;
view of the
d merely by
rea must be
riment with

at political
s.
cannot sub-
er be wiped
of view the
ly be based
ia must be
ople up to
a, in so far
the picture
nd is basi-
e ex-Baltic

-allowing a
Russia, for
ti-German.

Spring 41 The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

Our object is to construct as soon as possible and using the minimum of military force, socialist states which will be dependent upon us.

This is a task so difficult that it cannot be entrusted to the Army.

Jodl then continued:³³ 'in accordance with these instructions from the Führer the Directive must be re-drafted as follows':

- 1 The Army must have an operational area. This must however be no deeper than is necessary. No military government should be set up in rear of this area. Instead Reich Commissars should be appointed for defined regions of considerable size, the boundaries of which should follow ethnographical lines. It will be the task of the commissars rapidly to build up the political machinery of the new states. Alongside the commissars, there should be Wehrmacht Territorial Commanders'; they will be responsible to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army only for purely military questions directly connected with the conduct of operations; for all other matters they will be responsible to OKW. Their staffs will include organizations to deal with matters which are clearly the province of the Wehrmacht (war economy, signals, internal security, etc.). The bulk of the police forces will be responsible to the Reich Commissars.
- 2 Frontiers will only be closed where they abut on the zone of operations. If it proves necessary to employ organizations responsible to the Reichsführer SS* in this area as well as the Secret Field Security police the approval of the Reichsführer SS must be obtained. This may be necessary since all Bolshevik leaders or commissars must be liquidated forthwith. There is no question of courts martial having anything to do with these matters; they should not deal with any legal matters other than those internal to the armed forces.
- 3 In Section III of the draft instructions (for Rumania, Slovakia, Hungary and Finland) there should merely be an indication that, if the Commander-in-Chief of the Army finds it necessary to ask for any special powers in these countries, a request to that effect should be forwarded to OKW which will then get in touch with the Foreign Ministry. There can be no question of the Army making 'direct application' to German representatives in these countries for such powers.

* Himmler.

* Hitler's rumination is that
right after the summer of 1940.
They (the Russians) will be socialist
by habit but without their leaders.
We will see their

☆

* This is a report. Himmler's idealistic idea, which has more political power.

Spring 41

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

'The draft should be finalized as soon as possible and re-typed in double spacing to allow the Führer to make further alterations. You are authorized to get in touch with OKH. There is no need for the moment to discuss with Secretary of State Dr Stuckart (the Reich Ministry for Interior) or Backe (Reich Ministry for Food).³⁴ The *Instructions on Special Matters* were thereupon re-drafted by Section L and signed by the Chief of OKW on 13 March 1941; they are given textually below. They may serve as an example of the so called *OKW Special Instructions* normally issued at the beginning of a campaign but in this case they covered a considerably broader field in accordance with Hitler's instructions and had also had to be altered fundamentally, primarily in so far as concerned the reduction in the area of the operations zone. It should also be noted that even in its final form there is no mention of the 'Bolshevist-Jewish intelligentsia' or of the 'Bolshevist leaders and commissars' particularly referred to by Hitler.

Oberkommando der Wehrmacht

WF St/Abt L (IV/Qu)

44125/41 g. K. Chfs

Top Secret

By Hand of Officer only

Ref: WF St/Abt L(1) No. 33408/40

g. K. Chfs dated 18 December 1940

HQ in the Field

13 March 1941

Copy No. 4 of 5

Instructions on Special Matters (Annexe to Directive No. 21) (Operation Barbarossa).

I. The Operations Zone and Plenary Powers

1. At latest four weeks before the beginning of operations OKW will issue instructions bringing into force for the areas of East Prussia and Poland the powers of command and regulations for supply appropriate to an operational zone. These will be valid within the Wehrmacht only. OKH will put forward their requirements in good time in agreement with Commander-in-Chief Air.

It is not proposed to issue a declaration constituting East Prussia and Poland an operations zone. Commander-in-Chief Army is however authorized by virtue of the Führer's decrees of 19 and 21 October 1939 (which have not been published) to take such measures as are necessary to ensure the fulfilment of his military task and to safeguard his forces. This authority may be delegated

The Ea

to Commander
structions will
instructions of c

2. Russian t
as soon as the p
each with thei
Instructions. As

(a) As the Arm
neighbouri
tions zone

Commande
powers and
manders-in-

(b) In order to
tion the Rei
special task
stem from t
two opposin
tasks the Re
own respons
overriding p
in-Chief Arr
gated by him
operations ar
out his task.
the Reichföh

(c) As soon as th
a rear bound
of the opera
tration. It w
Army Group
(Baltic), Cen
areas the poli
Commissars
Führer.

3. In order to c
areas in rear of the
be appointed who
The Wehrmach
representative of t

Spring 44 A

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

to Commanders-in-Chief of Army Groups and Armies. These instructions will have precedence over any other obligations and instructions of civilian authorities.

2. Russian territory occupied in the course of operations will, as soon as the progress of operations allows, be split up into states each with their own government in accordance with Special Instructions. As a result:

- (a) As the Army advances across the frontiers of the Reich and of neighbouring states the depth of the resulting Army operations zone should be kept to the minimum. In this zone Commander-in-Chief Army is authorized to exercise plenary powers and is further authorized to delegate these to Commanders-in-Chief of Army Groups and Armies.
- (b) In order to prepare the political and administrative organization the Reichsführer SS has been given by the Führer certain special tasks within the operations zone of the Army; these stem from the necessity finally to settle the conflict between two opposing political systems. Within the framework of these tasks the Reichsführer SS will act independently and on his own responsibility. This is however without prejudice to the overriding plenary power hereby accorded to Commander-in-Chief Army and the authorities to whom it may be delegated by him. The Reichsführer SS is responsible that military operations are not affected by any measures necessary to carry out his task. Details will be settled direct between OKH and the Reichsführer SS.
- (c) As soon as the operations zone has reached a sufficient depth a rear boundary will be laid down. The occupied area in rear of the operations zone will have its own political administration. It will be divided ethnographically and follow the Army Group boundaries. It will initially consist of North (Baltic), Centre (White Russia), South (Ukraine). In these areas the political administration will be transferred to Reich Commissars who will receive their instructions from the Führer.

3. In order to deal with military problems in the administered areas in rear of the operations zone Wehrmacht commanders will be appointed who will be responsible to the Chief of OKW.

The Wehrmacht Territorial Commander will be the senior representative of the Wehrmacht in the area concerned and will

Spring 4/

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

have all military powers of command. He will be charged with the duties of a Territorial Commander and will have the prerogatives of an Army or Corps Commander.

In this capacity he will be responsible for the following:

- (a) Close co-operation with the Reich Commissar in order to support him in his political role.
- (b) Exploitation of the country and protection of economic assets of value to the German economy (see para. 4 below).
- (c) Exploitation of the country for supply of the forces in accordance with the requirements of OKH.
- (d) Military security throughout the area against insurrection, sabotage and enemy parachute attacks; airfields, supply routes and supply installations are of particular importance.
- (e) Road traffic regulations.
- (f) Regulations for the accommodation of the Wehrmacht, police and prisoners-of-war organizations in so far as these are located in the area.

As far as the civilian authorities are concerned the Wehrmacht commander is authorized to take such measures as are necessary to carry out his military tasks. In this case his instructions will take precedence over all others including those of the Reich Commissar.

Subsequent instructions will be issued on procedures, appointments and allocations of the necessary forces.

The moment at which the Wehrmacht commander will take over command will be laid down as soon as the military position allows a change in the command organization to be made without adverse effect on operations. Up to this point the authorities installed by OKH will remain operative on the same basis as laid down for the Wehrmacht commanders.

4. The Führer has charged the Reichsmarschall* with the coordination of the economic administration both in the operations zone and the administrative zone; the latter has delegated this task to the head of the Armaments Office. Special Instructions will be issued by OKW (Armaments Office).

5. The bulk of the police forces will be responsible to the Reich Commissars. Requirements for the detachment of police forces to the operations zone will be forwarded in good time by OKH to OKW Operations Staff - Section L.

* Göring.

The E

6. Special attitude of the ability of Court

II. Movement of

7. Special in Staff before the necessary to res and the use of

8. When op Russian frontie to the move communication units under the Führer's instr will be the resp to ask, where führer SS.

The closing alities and rep of the headqu and headquar the OKW Ope C.-in-C. Army authority.

Requests for C.-in-C. Army the Reichsführ

III. Instructions

9. Special a in collaboration requirements o of special powe of operations a
10. Special tection of the t been granted.

Further inst

11. Special States will be i

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

3. Co-operation between groups or detachments of the Security Police (or SD) and the commander in the communications zone (see para. 1(b) above).

[Text as in para. 2 above merely substituting the appropriate headquarters and organizations.]

4. Division of responsibility between Special Detachments (Sonderkommandos), Field Detachments (Einsatzkommandos) and Field Sections (Einsatzgruppen) on one side and the Secret Field Security police on the other.

Questions of political security within the Army and the immediate protection of the troops remain the task of the Secret Field Security Police alone. Any problems of this nature are to be transferred forthwith by the Special Detachments, Field Detachments or Field Sections to the Secret Field Security Police; similarly the latter are to transfer to the Special Detachments, Field Detachments or Field Sections without delay any problems falling within their province. On all other questions the agreement of 1 January 1937 will apply (see para. 1 above).

Signed.....

None of those officers who took part in the discussions or in the drafting of these orders had the smallest inkling that under cover of these agreements and by virtue of a secret instruction from Hitler to Himmler the 'Field Sections of the SD' would proceed, immediately the campaign had begun, to the systematic mass murder of Jews in the rear areas of the Eastern front.

The first occasion on which Hitler openly demanded unlawful action from the Wehrmacht was on 30 March 1941. On that date he made a speech lasting almost two and a half hours to some 200 to 250 senior officers, consisting of the Commanders-in-Chief of the three Services and the senior Army, Navy and Air Force commanders selected for the Eastern campaign together with their senior staff officers.³⁸ The meeting took place in a large conference room at the Ebertstrasse end of the Great Hall of the New Reich Chancellery; the hall was entirely full and those present were seated in long rows of chairs according to rank and seniority. The object was clearly the same as that of Hitler's similar 'appeals' on 22 August and 23 November 1939 prior to the Polish and Western campaigns ie to indoctrinate the higher-level commanders and their senior staff officers with his views on the probable course of the forthcoming

The East

campaign. But in the assembled company there arise from the East 'struggle between terms. He was under great gulf between man officer corps.' silence broken only through a door in when he departed it not a word was spoken.

It was this speech Order and to the decision in the 'Barbarossa' As far as the *Commissars of the Wehrmacht* and officials were to the armed forces therefore to be regarded as war. When captured Sections of the SD troops. As regards down on 3 March troops; he now develops principles: first, the German soldier need or of disciplinary in attack by the inhabit with with the utmost out court martial proceedings by his conviction of crime'; as regards inhuman cruelties Army had moved in mania. Starting from convince his audience place for soldierly comradeship. This was a be beaten in the field time.

March 41



The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

campaign. But in this case he also intended to indicate to the assembled company the special requirements which in his view would arise from the Eastern campaign as a result of its character as a 'struggle between two opposing ideologies'. He spoke in forceful terms. He was undoubtedly aware that ideologically there was still a great gulf between him and this assembly of the cream of the German officer corps. They sat there before him in stubborn silence, a silence broken only twice - when the assembly rose first as he entered through a door in the rear and went up to the rostrum, and later when he departed the same way. Otherwise not a hand moved and not a word was spoken but by him.

It was this speech by Hitler which gave birth to the *Commissar Order* and to the decree concerning the use of court-martial procedure in the 'Barbarossa' area, known for short as the *Barbarossa Order*. As far as the *Commissar Order* was concerned the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht laid it down in his speech that Soviet commissars and officials were to be treated as criminals whether they belonged to the armed forces or to the civilian administration. They were not therefore to be regarded as soldiers nor to be treated as prisoners of war. When captured they were to be handed over to the Field Sections of the SD or if this was not possible, shot on the spot by the troops. As regards the *Barbarossa Order*, Hitler had already laid it down on 3 March that courts martial were to deal only with the troops; he now developed this theme further and enunciated two principles: first, that in his dealings with 'hostile inhabitants' the German soldier need not be bound by the letter of the laws of war or of disciplinary instructions but that on the contrary 'any type of attack by the inhabitants against the Wehrmacht' should be dealt with with the utmost severity, including summary execution without court martial procedure. He justified these instructions primarily by his conviction that Bolshevism was as he put it 'a sociological crime'; as regards the commissars and officials he pointed out the inhuman cruelties of which they had been guilty when the Red Army had moved into Poland, the Baltic States, Finland and Rumania. Starting from this point he used every turn of phrase to convince his audience that, when fighting the Soviets, there was no place for soldierly chivalry or 'out-of-date notions' of military comradeship. This was a struggle in which not only must the Red Army be beaten in the field but communism must be exterminated for all time.

March '41

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

Many have subsequently expressed the view that Hitler's fulminations should have led some of those present to give vent to some protest or adverse reaction after he had departed. There is nothing to show that anything of the sort happened; I was myself present and none of the contemporary accounts so far published make any mention of such a thing. Halder, for instance, made full notes of what went on and he ends merely by giving the sense of Hitler's final words: 'one of the sacrifices which commanders have to make is to overcome any scruples they may have'; in the margin he has written, obviously to remind himself: 'order by C.-in-C.' Immediately thereafter follows the entry: 'mid-day: everybody present at lunch - afternoon: conference with the Führer'. Subsequent entries make it clear that both the lunch and the conference took place with a restricted circle of 'Army Group commanders and some of their subordinates'; the only name appearing is that of Guderian abbreviated 'Gud'. As regards the conference Halder merely notes: 'nothing new'. It may therefore be taken as certain that none of those present availed themselves of the opportunity even to mention the demands made by Hitler during the morning. It was generally realized of course, that, as had frequently been proved before, open opposition generally did more harm than good. The real reasons however for this lack of reaction on the part of the most senior officers of the Army were probably that the majority of them had not followed Hitler's long diatribe in detail, that others had not grasped the full meaning of his proposals and that others thought it better first to look into these questions more deeply or to follow normal military practice and await the reaction of their superiors. Even the late Field Marshal von Bock, who later emerged as an opponent of the *Commissar Order* and whose observations in his diary are usually particularly outspoken, makes no special comment on the meeting or the restricted conference which followed. I personally was present only for Hitler's speech in the morning.

In his evidence before the International Military Tribunal Field Marshal Keitel simply stated: 'at any rate they did not do so [address the Führer] after that discussion'.³⁹ He may, of course, merely have meant that he had no knowledge of any reactions or objections to Hitler's plan. His words can however, equally well be taken to mean that as Chief of OKW, whose job it would have been to translate Hitler's requirements into orders and thereby elaborate and confirm them, he took no action. This interpretation does not

The East

however fit in with either during or sub: that it can be regard agitated period - th just been captured, events were on the i had flown to Englan little doubt therefor intentions being fo over an incontestab gave me any instru quite contrary to t every nod and wish. to refer to the dema

The conspiracy c seemed to be fulfilli dated 6 May set t from 'the Comma 'General Officer s Section)'; it was ad for General Warlim *General Instructions fi execution of the task a Army area', conta were, following the* It then continued:

Political authorit menace to the se quered territory.

If such person: hended they will powers of punish nesses (officer or tured or appreh missar). If adequ the officer will fe carried out.

The political) the category of

wh' 41

March 41 

process

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

Hitler's fulmina-
ant to some pro-
re is nothing to
self present and
hed make any
de full notes of
of Hitler's final
ve to make is to
he has written,
' Immediately
esent at lunch -
entries make it
k place with a
l some of their
(Guderian ab-
r merely notes:
in that none of
even to mention
it was generally
ed before, open
he real reasons
he most senior
ty of them had
others had not
others thought
ply or to follow
their superiors.
er emerged as
rations in his
sical comment
ollowed. I per-
orning.
Tribunal Field
did not do so
nay, of course,
ny reactions or
equally well be
ould have been
reby elaborate
tation does not

however fit in with the picture presented by the Chief of OKW either during or subsequent to the war and it does not therefore seem that it can be regarded as in any way valid. This was a particularly agitated period - the Balkan campaign was in progress, Crete had just been captured, negotiations with France had just been started, events were on the move in North Africa and the Middle East, Hess had flown to England and the *Bismarck* had been sunk; there seems little doubt therefore that all these upheavals contributed to Hitler's intentions being forgotten in a conspiracy of silence. It is more-over an incontestable fact that in this case neither Keitel nor Jodl gave me any instructions to prepare drafts of the resulting orders - quite contrary to their normal practice of hanging upon Hitler's every nod and wish. As far as I was concerned I took good care never to refer to the demands made by Hitler even in casual conversation.⁴⁰

The conspiracy of silence had lasted more than five weeks and seemed to be fulfilling its object when a memorandum from OKH dated 6 May set things going again. This appeared to emanate from 'the Commander-in-Chief of the Army' and was headed 'General Officer specially employed by C.-in-C. Army (Legal Section)'; it was addressed 'to Chief OKW - Section L - personal for General Warlimont'. It consisted of the draft of an order entitled *General Instructions for dealing with political leaders and for the co-ordinated execution of the task allotted on 31 March 1941.*⁴¹ Section 1, entitled 'the Army area', contained a general description of what commissars were, following the lines of Hitler's remarks in his speech of 30 March. It then continued:

Political authorities and leaders (commissars) constitute a special menace to the security of the troops and the pacification of conquered territory.

If such persons are captured by the troops or otherwise apprehended they will be brought before an officer who has disciplinary powers of punishment. The latter will summon two military witnesses (officer or NCO rank) and establish that the person captured or apprehended is a political personality or leader (Commissar). If adequate proof of his political position is forthcoming, the officer will forthwith order his execution and ensure that it is carried out.

The political leaders (commissars) in Russian units belong to the category of political officials. It is of particular importance

March 4/1



The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

that they should be immediately detected and segregated since they will be the ones primarily responsible for continuing propaganda if sent back to Germany as prisoners of war. They should be liquidated if possible at prisoners-of-war collecting points or at the latest on passage through the transit camps. The same applies to commissars in the civil administration and the Party and other political personalities with whom the troops may come in contact. Political leaders in economic and technical organizations need only be apprehended in those individual cases in which they take some action against the Wehrmacht.

Political leaders and commissars who are captured will not be sent to the rear.'

The 'General Officer specially employed' was subordinate not to the Chief of Staff of the Army but direct to the Commander-in-Chief. Halder's diary however, makes it clear that, because of its special importance, he had seen the draft of this order. The relevant entry for 6 May states:

'Conference with General Müller (specially employed) and the Judge Advocate General:

- (a) Issue of an order on the lines of the Führer's last speech to General officers. The troops must be aware that the Eastern campaign is an ideological struggle.
- (b) Questions of the competence of courts martial.

As the recipient of this memorandum in OKW my reaction was one of pained surprise. Up to now Hitler's verbal instructions had been known only to a restricted circle of senior officers, most of whom had undoubtedly forgotten about them long ago. Now here was the Commander-in-Chief of the Army apparently thinking it necessary to put these instructions in writing and issue them as a definite order to the troops together with 'detailed instructions for their execution'. The original of the Army memorandum exists and my immediate reaction stands out clearly from the note thereon in my own handwriting which was in cautious terms and reads: 'it remains to be seen whether a written instruction of this sort is necessary.

Must be shown to and discussed with Chief OKW. Issue instructions of our own?'⁴²

I handed this comment on as a basis for consideration to the Working Group in Section L most immediately concerned - 'Ad-

ministra
'normal
general'
text to c
tions an
necessar
draft he
certain
trying to
the issue
followin

1 Th
Sec
of t
the
vin
Re
lat
to
ret
2 I l
Q:
a j
sib
Ge
C.
Re
th:
we
thi
th:
so
ad
be
th
th
en
mo
dc

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

ministration'. At the same time I took the Army draft out of the 'normal channel' in spite of the fact that in accordance with the general 'office instructions' it should have been my job to check the text to ensure that it was in agreement with Hitler's verbal instructions and submit the document to the addressee (Keitel) with any necessary comments. I did not even tell Keitel or Jodl that the Army draft had arrived and used the time thus gained to work with certain members of the Administration Group who thought as I did, trying to find ways and means which would make it possible to avoid the issue of a written order of this sort. With this in mind I took the following action:

- 1 The army draft was handed for further action to the Legal Section of OKW. The reason for this was that the Legal Section of OKH had clearly had a great deal to do with the drafting of the text; I also felt that legal arguments were more likely to convince the Chief of OKW than any protestations of mine.

Result: Telephone call from the Chief of the Legal Section, the late Dr Lehmann, to the effect that Keitel had forbidden him to have anything to do with the subject. The Army draft was returned to Section L on 9 May.⁴³

- 2 I had a confidential conversation with General Wagner, the QMG of the Army, who was of the same seniority as myself and a personal friend, in order to see whether there was any possibility of getting the Army draft order withdrawn. It was General Wagner who shortly before had been detailed by C-in-C. Army to carry out the negotiations with Heydrich. Result: Wagner refused categorically. He gave as his reason that, as a result of his impressions of his talk with Heydrich, he was convinced that it was necessary to submit a draft order on this subject to Hitler. If this was not done, there was a danger that Hitler would send the SD right up into the forward areas so that it could be used to carry out his wishes.⁴⁴ Wagner added however, that OKH was determined that there should be no excesses and for this very reason had prepared an order for the maintenance of discipline. It would be distributed down to the smallest units in the army. Finally he advised me most emphatically 'to keep my nose out of this business'.⁴⁵ This meant that the idea of suppressing the order had to be abandoned.

May 14)

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

3 I next decided to try to make use of a document which had just come to the knowledge of Section L - *Memorandum no. 3* from 'Reichsleiter' Rosenberg to Hitler. In this Rosenberg who was 'Minister for the East' - designate, explained that he would be unable to build up a civil administration in the occupied areas if he could not make use of the civil commissars and officials. His proposal was that only 'senior and very senior' officials should be liquidated in accordance with Hitler's instructions.

OKW in general and Section L in particular had nothing to do with the institution of civil government in the East. Having now however been reassured by what I had heard from Wagner concerning the forward Army areas, I felt that the Wehrmacht might be able, by supporting Rosenberg's ideas, to introduce some better procedure than the simple persecution of commissars and officials who did not happen to belong to the Red Army.

These investigations took approximately a week. It was only after they were completed and when, as far as one could judge, they offered considerable possibilities of preventing the *Commissar Order* being carried out, that I drafted an 'office minute' dated 12 May. This began as follows:

I. OKH has submitted a draft instruction attached as Annexe 1. I then summarized the salient points of the Army draft and concluded with the following comments by Section L:

II. As against this, *Memorandum no. 3* by Reichsleiter Rosenberg visualizes that only the senior and most senior officials should be liquidated since officials working in the administration of provinces, communes and economic enterprises are essential for the administration of occupied territory.

III. It will therefore be necessary for the Führer to decide what the governing principles should be.'

As regards para. II above Section L proposes that:

- (1) officials who take action against the troops should be liquidated as being guerillas.
- (2) officials who are guilty of no hostile action should initially be left undisturbed. Only as we penetrate further into the country will it be possible to decide whether the remaining

The Eastern

- officials should
Special Detail
in a position to
(3) Political officials
the proposals of
leaders of war
camp stage. I:

This minute I purposed of the Army draft but I would get more use in perspective - should be emphasized but was merely intended to influence the noted that in the case of individual officers of themselves up as means an order of this nature it by manipulating them I need hardly add that anything but an enemy I was in a position since later found that the worked out a consideration of the total time reported that in fact they had been. Not all officers were unprepared and at least claim this: they for doing 'in order justice and humanity

As regards the case be noted: the member of the Party have some effect upon either with Rosenberg considerably further the orientation of rank:

May 41

A

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

officials should be left where they are or handed over to the Special Detachments (of the SD) in so far as the latter are not in a position to take them over themselves.

- (3) Political officials in units should be handled *in accordance with the proposals of OKH*. They should not be recognized as prisoners of war and should be liquidated at latest at the transit camp stage. In no case should they be sent to the rear.⁴⁶

This minute I purposely sent not to Keitel who was the addressee of the Army draft but to Jodl from whom I thought that in this case I would get more understanding and support. In order to get this note in perspective - or before too hasty a criticism of it is made - it should be emphasized that a 'minute' was not a draft of an order but was merely intended to summarize a problem and where possible influence the views of the superior officer. It should also be noted that in the circumstances there was nothing to be gained by individual officers coming out in open opposition and so offering themselves up as martyrs; the only effective procedure in the case of an order of this nature from Hitler was to do all one could to sabotage it by manipulating the content and drafting of the resulting orders. I need hardly add that this sort of game of verbal hide-and-seek was anything but an enjoyable process, even when successful. In this case I was in a position similar to that of the commanders in the field who later found that there was only one way out of this situation; they worked out a complicated procedure whereby, after careful consideration of the total number of prisoners taken, they from time to time reported that a certain number of commissars had been shot; in fact they had been neither counted nor segregated, still less shot.⁴⁷ Not all officers were so unfortunate; but those who found themselves unprepared and against their will faced with this situation can at least claim this: they did not act as they have often been reproached for doing 'in order to save face' but in obedience to the rules of justice and humanity which their conscience dictated to them.

As regards the contents of the minute the following points should be noted: the reference to Rosenberg, who was a highly placed member of the Party, was primarily made in the hope that it would have some effect upon Hitler; I had never had any other connections either with Rosenberg or his office. My own proposal went considerably further than that of Rosenberg; I proposed that no differentiation of rank should be made between officials and that they

May 6, 42

A

Success

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

against guerrillas
German troops.
I added the last
at this point I would
it a freer hand; in
to gain acceptance

L for the moment
the case. As far as I
that I saw Jodl's
put to the Führer
will take reprisals
thing as a matter
ational Tribunal⁴⁸

to indicate to Field
possibly still cir-
... I was of the
whether the com-
ected them to act
use of reprisals.

ther in the Reich
took place as a re-

iness was when I
ed negotiations in
ch was in its usual
in of the *Commissar*
owed that my own
n included almost
paragraphs in the
also noted that the
e was no necessity
Jodl or OKW. I
randum addressed
was to avoid the
at for reports from
ood. Furthermore,
tion of the written

order 'to Commanders-in-Chief of Armies or Air Fleets'.⁵⁰ My view was that as a result all those who thought the same way as I did would be given a further handle to get round the order. As far as my own immediate superiors were concerned, Keitel and Jodl, not a word on the entire subject passed between us either before or since.

This is the unvarnished and, so far as one can see today, complete account of the production of the *Commissar Order*. It will be seen that the only part played in its drafting either by me as Chief of Section L or by any of my officers was to contribute to a considerable watering down.⁵¹ This account both of the chain of events and of the attitude of those involved is a good example of the sort of thing which happened on a number of other occasions in connection with orders of a similar nature when given by Hitler. Just as happened however to a certain extent in this case, his instructions regarding the powers of courts martial in the East were prepared by other sections of OKW in Berlin without any participation by Section L; even Jodl could only exert his personal influence through occasional conversations with Keitel. As far as the military staffs in Supreme Headquarters were concerned, apart perhaps from Hitler's immediate entourage, when further important instances of this type of thing occurred, they were either left in complete ignorance or came to know of them only when they received the final version of the order already signed by Hitler.⁵²

The same is true of the further course of events concerning the *Commissar Order*; as far as I know this was dealt with subsequently only by the inmost circles and by them only on two occasions.⁵³ On 26 September 1941, ie after the campaign had been in progress some three months, a memorandum arrived from OKH dated 23 September, again signed by General Müller, which stated that the experience of the campaign showed that 'the previous instructions for the handling of commissars should be re-examined'.⁵⁴ Jodl sent this back with the manuscript comment: 'the Führer is averse to any alteration in the orders already issued for dealing with political commissars'. Then on 6 May 1942, ie a year to the day after the production of the first Army draft of the order, the official diary of the Historical Section of OKW carries the entry:

the Führer gives instructions that in order to increase the readiness to desert or to capitulate of Soviet Russian troops who have been surrounded, authorization is given temporarily and as an

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

experiment for a guarantee to be given in such cases that the lives of commanders, commissars and *politruks** will be spared.⁵⁵

As far as I remember this instruction of Hitler's was the result of personal representations by Field Marshal von Kluge. In effect it meant that the *Commissar Order* had been formally cancelled.⁵⁶ Meanwhile it must be assumed that in spite of all efforts to the contrary the order was carried out in certain areas during the first weeks of the Eastern campaign, although not a single report on the subject was ever submitted to Supreme Headquarters. On the other hand there is no doubt that in fact the order had lost all practical significance at the latest by the beginning of the serious winter crisis of early December 1941.

But even during the early period of the Russian campaign it is clear that in the areas in which the Wehrmacht was fighting or in occupation this order was only carried out to a very limited degree. There can be no more convincing proof of this than the fact that in the height of the summer of 1941 vast numbers of commissars of every grade and category were to be found in the prisoner-of-war camps; I did not know of this at the time, nor how Hitler found out about it; I did not know either of his *Instruction for the handling of Soviet Prisoners of War* which was clearly the sequel to his discovery.⁵⁷

As far as one can see this fresh order was primarily intended to make up for that which had not been done in the forward areas by 'segregating' commissars and officials in the prisoner-of-war camps. In the post-war period it has been held in certain quarters to be an integral part of the original *Commissar Order*. That is incorrect. In fact, there was only one man, Hitler, who was both officially and personally involved in the authorship and drafting of both orders; his unhappy Chief of OKW was also involved but only as a recipient. The addressees in the two cases were completely different; the first order was addressed to the Field Headquarters, the second to the Wehrmacht Prisoner-of-War Service. Probably as a result of his experiences with the fighting troops, Hitler cut this Service also out of the chain of command and in the second order merely instructed it to open the gates of the camps to Himmler's minions. As far as the fighting troops were concerned the result was quite different; it was realized that the unlawful treatment meted out to commissars

* *Politruks* were the lowest level political commissars in units. The word 'commanders' appears to be an error for 'officials'.

A

The Eastern

in the prisoner-of-war and that he would fight to the last round 1942 order regarding watered down, thou

One point must be in my memories: even that in North Africa gentlemen', an observer did the opposite. The bulk of the German were many transfers the truth to say that contrived to maintain in spite of the unpardonable actions, not merely mander'.

A

The Eastern Campaign - The Preparatory Period

in the prisoner-of-war camps would soon become known to the enemy, and that he would then draw the conclusion that his troops must fight to the last round. It was probably this which led to the June 1942 order regarding prisoner-of-war camps being considerably watered down, though it was never cancelled.

One point must be made in conclusion of this murky chapter in my memories: even in military circles the observation is often made that in North Africa and Italy the German Army 'fought like gentlemen', an observation which implies that the Army in the East did the opposite. This is a completely unjustified disparagement of the bulk of the German Army. Quite apart from the fact that there were many transfers of divisions between East and West, it is nearer the truth to say that the German soldier of the second World War contrived to maintain his traditional dignity in the East as elsewhere in spite of the unparalleled strain to which he was subjected by the actions, not merely of the enemy, but of his own 'Supreme Commander'.

A

CHAPTER 5

The Eastern Campaign - From the Start of the Campaign to the Winter Crisis

June 22, 41

THE NEW FIELD HEADQUARTERS

The Army moved across the frontier at first light on 22 June. This time Hitler did not adopt the procedure he had followed in the West in 1940, but waited some thirty-six hours to see the course of events before ordering the move of the headquarters to East Prussia. It was not until midday the following day, the first day of mobilization in the Soviet Union, that the various echelons of Supreme Headquarters got on the move eastwards by air and rail. The field echelon of Section L, the strength and organization of which was unchanged, left at 1445 hours from Berlin-Grünwald for an unknown destination; the following morning at 0345 hours it reached its appointed place in the Forest of Görlitz, a few miles east of Rastenburg.

The detraining point was a halt on a local line and only a few hundred yards away we found the new HQ Area 2. It was entirely surrounded by high barbed-wire fencing and was hardly visible from the road; the majority of the offices were in wooden huts around a simple country inn, in normal times a visiting spot for the people of Rastenburg. It looked as if the regulations governing the Berlin Ministries had been followed as regards size of rooms, numbers of windows and furnishing. Even more remarkable was a semi-underground construction looking like a long railway sleeping car with a row of doors side by side; this proved to contain additional offices and sleeping accommodation for the officers; I even had a double room. The concrete walls were covered with wooden panelling painted in cheerful colours; there were built-in cupboards, glazed basins and baths with water laid on, central heating and every type of electrical gadget - hardly compatible with one's normal picture of a 'field' headquarters. I was the first, a few nights later, to get out of this

Eastern Campaign

catacomb; initially still in the station: begin with the project a simple type of construction soon followed my example.

In addition to the 'Führer Guard Battalion' HQ Area 2; this project as Headquarters C each other; nevertheless completely among types about.

On the other side was HQ Area 1 which from 'State, Party' meant Keitel, Jodl newly appointed 'head' some wooden huts administrative offices in concrete bunkers more small rooms. In the entire area which bunker lay at the extreme north, since he disliked 'Wolfschanze' (Wolf's Den) people round the camp.

OKH was about Angerburg; Göring of relationships at the time never once visited OKH both official typical difference between when the Army leader grey, extremely ant still fit for service. ever, it was in a sense the most modern construction with white-coated occupied a hundred remained in Berlin,

** his we*

A

Eastern Campaign - From Start of Campaign to Winter Crisis

catacomb; initially I installed myself in the special train which was still in the station nearby; later I moved into the old inn where to begin with the proprietor was still living, and where we established a simple type of officers' mess. The other members of Section L soon followed my example and moved into the office huts.

In addition to the field echelon of the staff, parts of the so-called 'Führer Guard Battalion' of the Army were also accommodated in HQ Area 2; this provided the sentries and its commander did duty as Headquarters Commandant. We saw and had little to do with each other; nevertheless in this part of the headquarters we were completely among our own sort and there were no non-military types about.

On the other side of the road and about half a mile to the east was HQ Area 1 where were to be found Hitler and his entourage from 'State, Party and Wehrmacht'; on the military side this meant Keitel, Jodl and the aides, as before, and in addition the newly appointed 'historian', Colonel Scherff. Here there were also some wooden huts which served as conference room, mess and administrative offices. In general the inhabitants lived and worked in concrete bunkers which were above ground and contained two or more small rooms. Newly constructed roads and tracks criss-crossed the entire area which was sheltered by thick trees. Hitler's hut and bunker lay at the extreme northern end, all windows as usual facing north, since he disliked the sun. He was also responsible for the name 'Wolfschanze' (Wolf's Lair), still used by the Poles when showing people round the camp which has now become one of the local sights.

*
Summer
141

OKH was about an hour away by road, in the woods near Angerburg; Göring and his staff also were not far off. It is indicative of relationships at the highest levels that in more than three years I never once visited OKL, whereas I was continually in touch with OKH both officially and off duty. This reminds me of another typical difference between the two of a somewhat different sort: when the Army leaders visited 'Wolfschanze' they came in a small, grey, extremely antiquated railway carriage which was no doubt still fit for service on this local line. When Göring came, however, it was in a snorting Diesel train of at least three or four of the most modern coaches, brightly painted and blazing with light, with white-coated attendants and every modern comfort; it occupied a hundred yards or more of the single track line. OKM remained in Berlin, but during one of the early months of the cam-

* his weak eyes.

A

Eastern Campaign - From Start of Campaign to Winter Crisis

overriding determination to exercise his authority, the glaring inadequacies of his self-taught generalship and his incapacity to subordinate to well-tryed military principles his own wishful thinking, based on politics, economics, and prestige desiderata. His permanent entourage in HQ Area 1, believing as they did that he had second-sight and could not go wrong, egged him on rather than restraining him; moreover he was actually confirmed in his determination to play the part of supreme military leader by the fact that in Norway and Northern Finland he was in direct command; the buffer of OKH did not exist there and he could run affairs as he pleased. Meanwhile, the 'OKW theatres of war' placed upon the OKW Operations Staff an ever-increasing burden which, merely from the organizational point of view, it was in no position to carry, and which increasingly diverted it from its true purpose - that of providing a high level Wehrmacht staff. A number of other increasingly serious difficulties arose as a result of the progressive disintegration of the Army command organization but neither these nor the realization of the effects upon OKW were enough to stop Hitler going his own way in this matter as in all others.

THE FIRST PHASE

The first phase of the eastern campaign may be taken as covering approximately two to three weeks, ie up to early July 1941. It was marked by an unusual measure of accord between OKW and OKH. The great victories in the frontier battles and the rapid gains of territory, at any rate in the centre and north, made even the most persistent sceptics think alike and gave rise to hopes such as those voiced by Halder in his diary of 3 July:

Looked at overall we can already say that we have carried out our job of smashing the bulk of the Russian Army this side of the Duna and Dnieper. I believe that a certain captured Russian general was right when he said that east of the Duna and Dnieper we have only got to deal with scattered forces which will not of themselves be strong enough to offer any serious resistance to German operations. I am therefore not exaggerating when I say that the campaign against Russia was won in fourteen days. Of course it is not at an end yet. Owing to the extent of the territory and the stubborn resistance of the enemy, who is using everything he has got, that will take us many weeks yet.⁴

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

With the hind-sight of today such comments by Halder may appear astounding to many people; they should however be set alongside a passage from Winston Churchill's speech in a secret session of the House of Commons on 25 June 1941; he then said: 'in a few months, or even less, we may be exposed to the most frightful invasion the world has ever seen'.⁵ This shows that the Head of the British Government was clearly reckoning upon an early victory for Germany in the East and that, like Hitler, he also looked upon the German advance into Russia as a way round via the back-door to the *coup de grâce* against England.

July 41
Hitler himself stated to his immediate entourage on 4 July: 'to all intents and purposes the Russians have lost the war' and congratulated himself on what a good thing it was 'that we smashed the Russian armour and air forces right at the beginning'. The Russians' he went on 'can never replace them'.⁶ His appreciation of the situation therefore agreed generally with that of the Army. Accordingly during these early weeks he did not meddle with the conduct of operations in the East apart from certain pressure and nagging at OKH to get them to close the great 'pocket' more rapidly and securely, and later, just as in the West, being beset by 'fear' for the flanks of the armoured thrusts which had driven far ahead.⁷ Similarly Hitler left the Luftwaffe alone, particularly since once its initial 'operational' activities against airfields and other targets deep into Russia had been completed, it was in general used only for 'tactical' tasks in close co-operation with OKH and Headquarters of Army Groups.

May 1942
The campaign seemed to be going quickly and successfully and so in this case also there was little opportunity for the Supreme Commander or his staff to do any real job of overall direction. Meanwhile, just as in the West, Hitler was already drawing far-reaching, premature conclusions and busying himself with the resulting follow-up action. As early as the beginning of July, after discussions with the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, he gave the Chief of OKW detailed instructions for 'the distribution of personnel and equipment' and in particular for the Army's 'tank programme'. Two orders were issued which may be summarized as follows: the Army to be 'considerably' reduced numerically with the exception of the armoured and motorized divisions which should be increased to thirty-six and eighteen respectively by 1 May 1942 - in both cases including the SS divisions. The building programme for the Navy

Eastern Can

to be restricted war against E: America'; large

There were to his complete their salient po armoured force sions still in Ge East must be ap ammunition a geared to its fu and above this: tank guns and Division). At t concentrate up anti-aircraft an Army.

All too soon i point of view th more they had course of the E

THE SECOND P

Hitler's instruc tion of the war final form by Se and on paper, of the Services. were already oc The discussions central problem been left unsol wanted to 'div Leningrad and of the enemy; t strength of the focal point of I referred to the jectives' but ha

Success

by Halder may
ld however be set
speech in a secret
941; he then said:
posed to the most
his shows that the
ning upon an early
tler, he also looked
ound via the back-

ge on 4 July: 'to all
'ar' and congratu-
at we smashed the
inning'. The Rus-
appreciation of the
of the Army. Ac-
meddle with the
tain pressure and
at 'pocket' more
est, being beset by
igh had driven far
particularly since
airfields and other
as in general used
OKH and Head-

successfully and so
he Supreme Com-
direction. Mean-
wing far-reaching,
e resulting follow-
ussions with the
chief of OKW de-
el and equipment'
ume'. Two orders
the Army to be
exception of the
be increased to
12 - in both cases
me for the Navy

Eastern Campaign - From Start of Campaign to Winter Crisis

to be restricted to that 'immediately necessary for the conduct of the war against England and, if she should enter the war, against America'; large-scale increase of the Luftwaffe.

There were certain additional instructions which bore witness to his complete confidence in the outcome of the Russian campaign; their salient points were: the Eastern Front must make do with the armoured forces it already had and apart from two armoured divisions still in Germany, any further reinforcement of the armour in the East must be approved by Hitler. The manufacture of new weapons, ammunition and equipment for the Army must 'forthwith' be geared to its future reduced strength; any orders to industry over and above this should be cancelled. This did not apply to tanks, anti-tank guns and tropical equipment (the latter for 4 Armoured Division). At the same time the 'explosives' programme should concentrate upon the requirements of the Luftwaffe (bombs and anti-aircraft ammunition) at the expense of the requirements of the Army.

All too soon it was destined to become clear that from the strategic point of view these orders far anticipated the course of events; furthermore they had a serious and prejudicial effect on the subsequent course of the Eastern campaign.⁸

THE SECOND PHASE

Hitler's instructions for equipment requirements for the continuation of the war against the British Commonwealth were put into final form by Section L after various exchanges of view, both verbally and on paper, with the relevant branches of the High Commands of the Services. Meanwhile at the daily briefings in HQ Area 1 people were already occupied with the second phase of the eastern campaign. The discussions were carried on principally by Hitler and Jodl; the central problem around which they revolved was that which had been left unsolved in December of the previous year: Hitler still wanted to 'divert considerable mobile forces northwards' to capture Leningrad and Kronstadt and so completely clear the Baltic area of the enemy; the Army plan however was to concentrate the entire strength of the Wehrmacht on the capture of Moscow as being the focal point of Russian resistance. The directive on Barbarossa had referred to the possibility of 'the simultaneous pursuit of both objectives' but had stated that 'this could only be done in the event of

a surprisingly rapid collapse of Russian resistance'; remarkably enough this idea was never mentioned in spite of the extremely favourable view generally taken of the situation. On the contrary, in view of the fact that south of the Pripet marshes the front was hanging far back, an idea was resurrected which had previously only been discussed in the innermost circle, that of diverting forces from the centre southwards.⁹

As was his habit General Jodl asked for no advice or support from his staff, in spite of the fact that on 4 July he stated that 'the forthcoming decision will probably be the most difficult of the whole war'; moreover there were several indications that he had not made up his own mind. He realized however that the views of the Army were entirely at variance with those of Hitler and was apparently not prepared this time to carry the responsibility of being Hitler's sole adviser. Contrary to his normal practice therefore he acted entirely correctly in this case, in that he tried to bring OKH back into the discussions in good time. On 5 July he commented: 'the moment is approaching when the decision must be taken on the future conduct of operations, in particular on the further employment of the armoured forces. Since this decision may be decisive for the whole war - is perhaps the only decisive decision in this war - General Jodl considered it essential that Commander-in-Chief Army should discuss his views and intentions with the Führer before laying down further objectives.'¹⁰

In OKH they apparently saw no reason to raise this question again at this time; even more than in December 1940 they now hoped that it would automatically be solved by the future march of events. Halder for instance, when Hitler called on him on his birthday on 30 June, noted that by bringing up armoured formations from Army Group Centre it might perhaps be possible to 'clear up the whole situation in the north' before the bulk of the infantry divisions were concentrated in the Smolensk area for the decisive attack on Moscow. After a discussion with Hitler on 8 July Halder did not exclude a temporary diversion southwards; a few days later he explained to Brauchitsch:

July 11
July 14

I am not at all that wedded to the idea of the two armoured groups in Army Group Centre pressing on eastwards. I can well visualize the necessity of diverting considerable portions of Hoth's forces (Armoured Group 3) to the north and Guderian's (Armoured

Group 2) to the s
Kiev. In both cas
Guderian should t
necessary freedom

For a time therefor
finding a compromise
OKH having to gi
Moscow; but as the
divergence between
Hand in hand with
basic fault in Hitler's
without having studie

14 July we find Halder
Führer in matters the
is becoming a scourge
in the second ten day
until it eventually rea
affecting the entire h
Hitler issued orders, w
world was concerned.

The first OKW di
issued on 19 July and
with the proposals w
Hitler a few days pre
begun however, the
sultation with OKH,
23 July, intended to
The objectives in the
Kharkov and the low
Army Group North ha
to do soon, OKH wa
cluding Armoured Gr
action in the Smolen
ordered to send a num
Dietl's corps in the ar
fancy continued: 'this
to intervene in the fight
ordered air attacks on
objectives of the can

Success

stance'; remarkably
ite of the extremely
a. On the contrary,
rshes the front was
hich had previously
at of diverting forces

o advice or support
y he stated that 'the
difficult of the whole
hat he had not made
e views of the Army
and was apparently
ity of being Hitler's
therefore he acted
to bring OKH back
he commented: 'the
ust be taken on the
the further employ-
ion may be decisive
e decision in this war
Commander-in-Chief
ith the Führer before

se this question again
they now hoped that
re march of events.
him on his birthday
red formations from
ible to 'clear up the
the infantry divisions
re decisive attack on
July Halder did not
a few days later he

two armoured groups
s. I can well visualize
ions of Hoth's forces
iderian's (Armoured

Eastern Campaign - From Start of Campaign to Winter Crisis

Group 2) to the south - perhaps to drive down even as far as Kiev. In both cases however the prerequisite is that Hoth and Guderian should first break through eastwards and so get the necessary freedom of manoeuvre.¹¹

For a time therefore it seemed that there were possibilities of finding a compromise between the opposing points of view without OKH having to give up, even temporarily, its real objective, Moscow; but as the enemy resistance gradually stiffened the total divergence between the two points of view became ever clearer. Hand in hand with this went an almost classic instance of the basic fault in Hitler's leadership, the desire to command in detail without having studied the background adequately. As early as 14 July we find Halder writing: 'this perpetual interference by the Führer in matters the circumstances of which he does not understand, is becoming a scourge which will eventually be intolerable'. Starting in the second ten days of July this situation got worse and worse until it eventually reached the proportions of a quarrel increasingly affecting the entire headquarters; only at the end of August, when Hitler issued orders, was it settled and then only so far as the outside world was concerned.

The first OKW directive of the Eastern campaign (no. 33) was issued on 19 July and appeared to be more or less in consonance with the proposals which the Army leaders had made verbally to Hitler a few days previously. Before the resulting movements had begun however, the Supreme Commander, without further consultation with OKH, issued a 'supplement to Directive no. 33' dated 23 July, intended to ensure finally that his wishes were executed. The objectives in the south were now to be, not only Kiev, but Kharkov and the lower Don, Caucasia and the Crimea; as soon as Army Group North had reached its objectives, which it was expected to do soon, OKH was to order it to send 'considerable forces, including Armoured Group 3 back to Germany'. Similarly as soon as action in the Smolensk area was completed, the Luftwaffe was ordered to send a number of dive bomber groups to Finland to assist Dietl's corps in the area of the North Cape. This flight of strategic fancy continued: 'this will also reduce the temptation for England to intervene in the fighting along the Arctic coast'. The Directive also ordered air attacks on Moscow; these had nothing to do with the objectives of the campaign but were regarded as reprisals for

A

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

Russian bombing of Bucharest and Helsinki. Neither at this time nor later did the Luftwaffe achieve anything of operational importance either against Moscow or against Leningrad, though according to OKW Directive no. 35 of 6 September there was to be 'a large-scale attack' on the latter.¹²

Jodl having apparently done what he could to stop this dispersal of forces, it was unlikely that the verbal representations made by the Army immediately thereafter would have any effect. Halder noted:

Sept 4/1
He (Hitler) has decided on his objectives and sticks to them without considering what the enemy may do or taking account of any other points of view. This means that von Bock will have to give up his armoured groups and advance on Moscow with infantry alone. In any case the Führer takes no interest in Moscow at the moment, only in Leningrad'.

When Brauchitsch returned from a tour of the front all he did was to call up Keitel and protest that Hitler's instruction could not be carried out in the immediate future since 'the necessary prior conditions had not been fulfilled'. This obviously achieved even less than Halder's protests.

Even Hitler however had to change his mind in the next few days as a result of the increasing resistance of the Red Army along almost the entire front and the urgent necessity for a period of rest and recuperation for the armoured and motorized forces. This only took place after 'long-winded and sometimes violent arguments with the Army leaders over missed opportunities for encirclement'. Moreover Hitler now began increasingly to take the command of operations into his own hands. He declared: 'the Russians will not be beaten by large-scale victories because they simply do not recognize that they have been beaten. They must therefore be smashed piecemeal by small tactical operations.' Halder was prepared to agree that there might be something in Hitler's views but nevertheless he wrote: 'this line of thought looks to me like the death knell of the mobile operations we have conducted so far'; he even thought he could see the spectre of static warfare raising its head. It was on this occasion that Halder found that Hitler 'simply rejected his arguments regarding the importance of Moscow without producing any real reasons against them'.¹³

As always Jodl was the only representative of the OKW Operations Staff present during these discussions with the Army; either

Eastern Co

while they were Hitler he appears to put in his own argument but on his own forces could be this argument as possible to the Donetz Basin next day, from centre of large-scale operations.

So, on the other hand his Command now ordered, the decisive of however we in work straight directive - no.

The development of the Army Group 2nd and 3rd their units in tasks and objectives.

The more detailed Army Groups 1 forces, whereas formations but thereupon wrote

This solution the frightful if the entire of the Führer's more!¹⁴

In fairness it must be lessness must be circumstances n

me some satisfaction to recall that for once Jodl made common cause with OKH, and that in the end it was his feel for the psychological moment that carried the day in bringing Hitler round to a more sensible point of view. For the moment however we had done no more than set the stage for a resumption of the offensive on Moscow. For a time there was calm but new doubts soon began to appear as to how firm these decisions were. During the next few days Hitler made a series of visits to the headquarters of Army Groups, and on several occasions started propagandizing his own plans and ideas – entirely in character and undoubtedly with the intention of undermining from below the point of view of OKH. On 21 July when visiting Field Marshal von Leeb in Army Group North he characterized Moscow as ‘merely a geographical idea’ and adduced the ‘Slav national character’ as a new factor leading him to count upon an early collapse of the Soviets. On 4 August at Headquarters Army Group Centre he put the attack on Moscow third in order of importance in his plans. He stated that it was much more important to deprive the Russians of ‘their vital areas’: first Leningrad and the Baltic coast with its highly developed industry, supposed to include the only factory capable of producing heavy tanks; secondly the Donetz basin with Kharkov, the ‘essential basis of the Russian economy’, the loss of which would result in the ‘certain collapse of the entire enemy economy’. He let fall an admission at this point, obviously intended as a criticism of the military intelligence service, that ‘the decision to attack Russia would have been considerably more difficult’ if he had been informed beforehand of the large numbers of tanks and aircraft which the enemy possessed. He expressed similar views on 6 August when visiting Field Marshal von Rundstedt at Headquarters Army Group South. Yet certain remarks he let fall in Supreme Headquarters during the period between these two visits convinced the Commander-in-Chief of the Army that Hitler was now fully aware of the importance of Moscow.¹¹⁵

Halder was at the centre of all these cross-currents. On 7 August he had a personal discussion alone with Jodl – something which had not happened for as long as anybody could remember. Halder no doubt hoped thereby to broaden the newly developed understanding between the two. He started with the basic question: ‘do we want to beat the enemy or go after economic objectives?’ To this Jodl replied that ‘the Führer thinks we can do both at the same time’. Halder thereupon developed his idea that nothing should be detached for

Leningrad which ‘the question of Ukraine we must not, we shall in autumn’. To do forces in the so ‘operations air which he meant convinced that he led Army.¹¹⁶

Subsequent to first move was appreciation of with the Oper usual with the : was strongest of most important ing, followed by into the areas o must be subor later date. The with the infantu the flanks.

By this mean on 12 August a ment to the at some of which Centre was onl been entirely , against Lening restricted to th tion of the valu idea’, then foll before the con traffic centre a his defeated fo As Halder was Uman, Army objectives – th the forces it al

August 15 (approx) '41

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

The OKW Operations Staff had hardly had time to get used to the idea that it had really done something, when a few days later there were some local setbacks in Army Group North. Although Halder and Army Group Headquarters considered them unimportant, they led to 'great agitation on the part of the Supreme Commander' and as a result to fresh direct interventions by Hitler. His instructions to OKH laid down that, since no other reserves were available, a number of individual armoured divisions from Army Group Centre should forthwith be despatched to the north to deal with the enemy breakthrough in the area of Staraia Russa. Once more there was complete lack of consideration of the 'pre-requisites' to which reference has so often been made. Field Marshal von Bock called Hitler's order an 'impossible demand', since the armoured divisions concerned were in some cases engaged on maintenance and therefore incapable of movement, and in others were essential for the defence of Army Group Centre.

Halder thereupon put all possible pressure upon his Commander-in-Chief; but the latter was evidently weary of struggling and was unwilling to 'go against the decisions of higher authority'. He finally contented himself with saying: 'let someone talk to Jodl about it'.¹⁸

In view of this continual vacillation at the top the Operations Section of OKH under Heusinger adopted an unusual procedure – undoubtedly with Halder's knowledge. They prepared an *aide-mémoire* on the future conduct of operations addressed initially to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army; on the same day, 18 August, Section L under my direction submitted to Jodl a new appreciation of the situation.¹⁹ Both these documents expressed the views of the middle range of general staff officers, the 'young Turks'. They produced once more every argument for keeping Moscow as the objective, based in the case of the Army *aide-mémoire* on the situation in the East and in that of Section L on the overall situation; they also stressed again that Army Groups North and South already had adequate forces to carry out the other tasks allotted to them.

I cannot now remember whether or how Jodl made use of this submission from his staff. The Commander-in-Chief of the Army sent his Operations Section's *aide-mémoire* on to Hitler and allowed its author to discuss it with Jodl in Wolfschanze. Heusinger's book of memoirs is characterized by a certain 'poetic licence' but there are some passages in his account of this interview on 20 August which are of importance not so much for their bearing on the immediate

Eastern Camp

subject as for the quarters. For inspros and cons, h

Moreover he same path as fears that the Bolshevism.

To which Heusi:

And that is e: We must defe then everythin

And Jodl replies

That's what y will be: Ther beating the R Kiev.

Heusinger the of which would but only somew *aide-mémoire* he f

I will do what are well thou We must not against his ir right. You ca:

Heusinger concl

Unfortunately Dunkirk. And a decisive opj

It seems highly rejected the Arn at any rate on procedure whic together in Hal him over to Hit

Success

time to get used to a few days later North. Although dered them unim-rt of the Supreme entions by Hitler. no other reserves red divisions from hed to the north to of Staraia Russa. ration of the 'pre-ade. Field Marshal demand', since the engaged on main-and in others were

on his Commander-struggling and was uthority'. He finally to Jodl about it'.¹⁸ top the Operations unusual procedure - prepared an *aide-essed* initially to the e day, 18 August, a new appreciation ed the views of the ung Turks'. They ng Moscow as the ire on the situation situation; they also South already had tted to them. ll made use of this Chief of the Army itler and allowed its eusinger's book of ence' but there are n 20 August which on the immediate

Eastern Campaign - From Start of Campaign to Winter Crisis

subject as for the picture they give of the atmosphere of the headquarters. For instance, after having gone over the well known factual pros and cons, he records Jodl as saying:

Moreover he (Hitler) has an instinctive aversion to treading the same path as Napoleon. Moscow gives him a sinister feeling. He fears that there might there be a life and death struggle with Bolshevism.

To which Heusinger replies.

And that is exactly why Moscow is the direction we must take. We must defeat the enemy forces. That must be the object and then everything else will fall into our lap.

And Jodl replies:

That's what you say. Now I will tell you what the Führer's answer will be: There is at the moment a much better possibility of beating the Russian forces. Their main grouping is now east of Kiev.

Heusinger thereupon raised the question of the winter, the onset of which would occur shortly in the northern and central sectors but only somewhat later in the south; asking Jodl to support the *aide-memoire* he finally got him to agree that:

I will do what I can. But you must admit that the Führer's reasons are well thought out and cannot be pushed aside just like that. We must not try to compel him to do something which goes against his inner convictions. His intuition has generally been right. You can't deny that!

Heusinger concluded:

Unfortunately he's not been right all the time! I remember Dunkirk. And we are afraid that once again we are going to miss a decisive opportunity.²⁰

It seems highly probable that by 21 August Hitler had already rejected the Army *aide-memoire* after discussion with Keitel and Jodl; at any rate on that day the two OKW generals adopted the old procedure which had not been used for some time and appeared together in Halder's office in the Angerburg camp, in order to win him over to Hitler's point of view or at least to damp down opposi-

Aug 21, 41

The Period of Overwhelming Military Success

A

tion. It appears that, when finally driven into a corner during this meeting, Jodl fell back upon the view he had expressed to Heusinger – that he could produce no concrete objections to the Army point of view 'but the Führer had a sixth sense'. That was merely another way of expressing the boundless faith in the 'Führer's genius' of which he had so often given proof before and to which any rational thinking was entirely subordinated. Halder merely comments drily that in face of such an attitude 'any logical arguments were useless'.²¹

Jodl was compelled that same evening to put Hitler's new and now final orders in the form of a written instruction to OKH. This memorandum opened as follows: 'the Army proposal of 18 August for future strategy in the East is not in accord with my views'. It then repeated the view that Moscow was not the most important objective but that it was more important, before the onset of winter, to reach the Crimea and the Donetz basin in the south and 'cut off Russian oil supplies from the Caucasus area'; in the north to invest Leningrad closely and effect a junction with the Finns. There was then a new requirement: 'forthwith to make use of the exceptionally favourable operational situation to carry out a concentric operation from the inner flanks of Army Groups South and Centre, against the Soviet Fifth Army in the area of Kiev'.

Bock's Army Group (Centre), which OKH had proposed should be maintained at full strength and made primarily responsible for the attack on Moscow, was to remain on the defensive with such forces as were left to it, until, as the last paragraph of the instruction expressly laid down, all the conditions for a further advance on Moscow as in the *Supplement to Directive no. 34* had been fulfilled. The 'attractive possibilities of operations from the centre' had therefore won the day over the central strategy around which the whole eastern campaign had been planned.²²

When this 'Führer's instruction' reached the camp at Angerburg next day Halder's immediate reaction was: 'this instruction is decisive for the outcome of this entire campaign'. The effect on the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and his Chief of Staff of this answer to their *aide mémoire* was therefore pretty depressing, but on the very same day Hitler rubbed salt into the wound by sending them a 'study' which he had himself drafted. Although we had now been at war for a full two years he proceeded to read the Army leaders a lesson on the handling of 'mobile formations' which he said should be used as 'an operational weapon in the hand of the

Eastern Cam

Supreme Comr
able asperity f
Luftwaffe sayi
logic and energ
'generally gra
further ado'. F
necessary grip
allowed his se
influence on st
more Halder's
and clear:

In my view
is intolerabl
Führer proc
and no one
OKH as n
campaign a
tions now re
has been tre
Commande
office and p

He had howe

Commande
he would n

As a result
General Gudi
change his m
took place on
all agree how
the most like
Army and fo
Whatever the
to change H
Battle of Kie
was a tactica
on 30 August
Army during
tained that t

A

to a corner during this expressed to Heusinger as to the Army point of that was merely another the 'Führer's genius' of to which any rational merely comments drily arguments were useless'.²¹ to put Hitler's new and instruction to OKH. This a proposal of 18 August with my views'. It then most important objective onset of winter, to reach th and 'cut off Russian e north to invest Lenin- Finns. There was then a e of the exceptionally it a concentric operation and Centre, against the

OKH had proposed should primarily responsible for the defensive with such a graph of the instruction for a further advance on g had been fulfilled. The the centre' had therefore d which the whole eastern

the camp at Angerburg was: 'this instruction is paign'. The effect on the m Chief of Staff of this pretty depressing, but on o the wound by sending d. Although we had now ceded to read the Army ile formations' which he upon in the hand of the

Supreme Commander' just like the Luftwaffe. Then with considerable asperity he made a totally unjustified comparison with the Luftwaffe saying that Göring had acted on this principle 'with logic and energy', whereas the Army was apparently not capable of 'generally grasping these ideas and acting upon them without further ado'. He even reproached Brauchitsch with 'not getting the necessary grip'; by this he meant that the Commander-in-Chief allowed his senior subordinate commanders to have too great an influence on strategy; I myself often heard him say this later. Once more Halder's entry in his diary for this day, 22 August, is forceful and clear:

In my view the situation resulting from the Führer's interference is intolerable for the Army. These individual instructions by the Führer produce a situation of order, counter-order and disorder and no one can be held responsible but he himself personally. OKH as now constituted is engaged on its fourth victorious campaign and its reputation should not be sullied by the instructions now received. In addition the way the Commander-in-Chief has been treated is a scandal. I have accordingly suggested to the Commander-in-Chief that he should ask to be relieved of his office and propose that I should also be relieved at the same time.

He had however to add immediately thereafter:

Commander-in-Chief refuses because he considers that in practice he would not be relieved and there would therefore be no change.

As a result of efforts by Halder a last attempt was made, via General Guderian, to see whether Hitler could possibly be made to change his mind. There are various accounts of the meeting which took place on 23 August in the headquarters at Wolfschanze. They all agree however that Guderian, who was considered by OKH as the most likely to be successful, was the sole representative of the Army and found himself faced by Hitler and his entire entourage. Whatever the course of the discussion may have been²² it did nothing to change Hitler's determination. During the next few weeks the Battle of Kiev resulted in the well-known large-scale victory - but it was a tactical success only. As a result a private meeting took place on 30 August between Hitler and the Commander-in-Chief of the Army during which there was a 'reconciliation'. Brauchitsch maintained that this cancelled Hitler's insulting 'study'. For those who

A

CHAPTER 2

The Winter Crisis 1941-42

A SUDDEN TURN OF EVENTS

On 2 December 1941 the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht set off on a rapid flight to the First Panzer Army in the southern sector of the eastern front, witch-hunting after the supposed failures on the part of commanders which had led to the withdrawal from Rostov. He completely bypassed OKH and apparently had not the smallest conception that he personally might have had any responsibility for what had happened.¹ It was on this day that OKH began to receive reports of a completely unprecedented nature; Army Groups Centre and North reported simultaneously that the troops were at the end of their tether; Army Group Centre added that nowhere would they be able to withstand a concentrated counter-attack such as had occurred during the attack on Moscow; temperatures of minus 30-35°C were paralysing the troops and making weapons unusable. The possible consequences of this imminent 'danger of a severe defeat' were described as limitless; there was even talk of a 'most serious crisis of confidence' - and that in the crack divisions of Guderian's Panzer Army. Field Marshal von Bock reported 'disagreements with his Army commanders' necessitating the intervention of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.²

The majority of these reports from Commanders-in-Chief and their staffs reached OKH by telephone; they were probably not transmitted to Supreme Headquarters word for word.³ There is however no doubt that Field Marshal von Brauchitsch and his Chief of Staff did all they could to give Hitler an unvarnished picture of the situation. Nevertheless after a 'conference with the Führer' on 6 December Halder notes: 'he (Hitler) refuses to take any account of comparative figures of strengths' and insists that 'our superiority is proved by the number of prisoners taken etc.'. Other entries in Halder's diary of this date dealing with different subjects show that

★

The Turn of the Tide

HQ Area 2, seemed to be caught up in an ecstasy of rejoicing; the few who, even at this moment, felt they could see further, became ever lonelier. The sudden entry of our Far Eastern ally however, gave rise to no official instructions. We did not even know why, immediately afterwards, Hitler and his entourage, including Generals Keitel and Jodl, took the train for Berlin. The reason was soon clear. During the afternoon of 11 December he appeared before the Reichstag and, in the full glare of publicity, declared war on the United States of America. This produced the following memorable telephone conversation:

Jodl, calling me from Berlin (I was just finishing lunch and discussing this latest development with certain officers of the staff): 'You have heard that the Führer has just declared war on America?'

Myself: 'Yes and we couldn't be more surprised.'

Jodl: 'The staff must now examine where the United States is most likely to employ the bulk of her forces initially, the Far East or Europe. We cannot take further decisions until that has been clarified.'

Myself: 'Agreed; this examination is obviously necessary, but so far we have never even considered a war against the United States and so have no data on which to base this examination; we can therefore hardly undertake this job just like that.'

Jodl: 'See what you can do. When we get back tomorrow we will talk about this in more detail.'

This and no more was the beginning for our headquarters of German strategy against America which was to reach its end on the banks of the Elbe in May 1945.

The *Directive on Co-operation with Japan* dated 5 March 1941 has already been mentioned; it laid down that 'the common aim of strategy must be represented as the swift conquest of England in order to keep America out of the war'. By the same instruction the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy had been charged with 'the co-ordination of operational plans' (which dealt only with the war at sea) and Hitler had never failed to stress to him even after Roosevelt's 'order to shoot', the importance of avoiding anything which might give cause to the United States to enter the war.⁵ Any Chief of the OKW Operations Staff worthy of the name would certainly have told his staff in good time to get busy with the questions thrown up

by this co-
primary job
this not beer
inclinations,
influence on
United States

As things
was little mo
war which wa
found many
Japanese Agree
his Foreign M
Moreover the
1942, to the J
little more th
'never before
far separated
in war'; from

provided w
offers our
will have p
forced cont
and thus di
results.

He consid
to carry out
however Ribb
ties in the East
to attack Russ
that once the
must one day
'for Germany
go under in fa
main enemy.
sians'.⁷

Although w
OKW Operat
Canaris, rapid
object would l

* D. T. -
in him
equal
and

by this co-operation but Jodl still apparently thought that his primary job was to act as a second Chief of Staff of the Army. Had this not been so the data collected, combined with Hitler's own inclinations, might perhaps have enabled him to exert enough influence on decisions so as at least to postpone participation by the United States in the war in Europe.

As things were Hitler's declaration of war on the United States was little more than an empty gesture (apart from the submarine war which was rapidly extended to the east coast of America where it found many worthwhile targets).⁶ The same was true of the *German-Japanese Agreement on Combined War Strategy* which Hitler authorized his Foreign Minister to sign on the day of his Reichstag speech. Moreover the ideas which he put forward shortly after, on 3 January 1942, to the Japanese Ambassador, General Oshima, were based on little more than wishful thinking. He started from the premise that 'never before in history have two such mighty military powers so far separated from each other - Japan and Germany - stood together in war'; from this he drew the conclusion that:

provided we co-ordinate our military operations in detail, this offers our strategy the possibility of exerting a leverage which will have powerful effects on the enemy, since he will thereby be forced continually to change the focal point of his operations and thus disperse his forces without prospect of achieving decisive results.

He considered further that: 'the United States would not dare to carry out offensive operations in the Eastern Asian area'. It was however Ribbentrop who put his finger on the immediate possibilities in the East when he said that 'Japan may perhaps be in a position to attack Russia in May'. Oshima also considered it a natural sequel that once the 'New Order in East Asia' had been established 'Japan must one day defeat Russia'. Hitler however still maintained that 'for Germany the most important point was that Japan should not go under in face of the Anglo-Saxon powers. England remains our main enemy. We shall certainly not go under in face of the Russians'.⁷

Although we had no very sure grounds for saying so, we in the OKW Operations Staff, in agreement with the office of Admiral Canaris, rapidly came to the conclusion that the Americans' primary object would be to defeat Germany. Pending further information,

* D.T. - He was delighting again in himself as a major strategist equal to Alexander, Hannibal and Napoleon

△

The Turn of the Tide

however, we did not think that the time had yet arrived when major US forces were likely to appear in the European or African theatres. Japan was the better prepared for war, we argued, and this fact would initially weigh in favour of the Axis powers, particularly if, as seemed likely, the Japanese were prepared to contain considerable Russian forces in the Far East in spite of their non-aggression pact with Moscow.

On 18 January 1942 the Chief of OKW and the plenipotentiaries of the comparable Italian and Japanese Chiefs of Staff signed in Berlin *Military Agreements between Germany, Italy and Japan* stemming from the December political agreement. This was headed *Secret Official Document*, an expression not employed in military circles; this shows clearly that it was compiled under the direction of the Foreign Ministry and most probably by the Military Commission of the Three-Power Pact. As already pointed out, this Axis organization had never been informed of German strategic intentions; the only concrete results therefore that emerged from these agreements were the definition of certain chop-lines for the war against merchant shipping at sea and the enunciation of principles for co-operation in general military subjects such as signals, supply, technical and equipment problems. Any disclosure of strategic objectives was avoided by broad-brush enumeration of all possible theatres of war round the globe. England and the United States were the only enemies considered; no mention was made of Russia.⁸

Vis-à-vis Japan this document was characterized by the same degree of deception and insincerity as had become the rule for relations with Italy. The OKW Operations Staff had no part in its drafting and did not even see it. Subsequent German-Japanese military contacts were limited to occasional visits by Japanese officers to German Supreme Headquarters when Hitler himself received the Ambassador, General Oshima, while Keitel and Jodl occupied themselves with his subordinates. No Japanese officer ever entered HQ Area 2 where the real military work of the headquarters went on.

Fifteen months later, even Hitler had changed his views regarding relations with Japan. At his briefing on 5 April 1943 the following conversation took place:

JODL: The Japanese are convinced that during 1943 the European Theatre will remain the focal point.

HITLER: Tha
JODL: The ev
successful.
HITLER: You
believe a w
JODL: One ca
people who
looking as i
HITLER: They
got some l
Japanese d
can't raise
inhabitants
Anyway we
thing I can'
tanks or no
ONE OF THE
tanks as the
HITLER: They
they were v
said nothing
they are wi
haven't said
plans for so
they tell us
south I shall
something i
happen in t

This conversation
the common war
situation in the M
of considerable B
with our own sub
drive the English
end of January 19
loaded in Japanes
given considerab
if not indispensa
in Europe. On t

A

d yet arrived when European or African we argued, and this powers, particularly red to contain con- of their non-aggres-

the plenipotentiaries of Staff signed in and Japan stemming s was headed Secret military circles; this action of the Foreign Commission of the Axis organization intentions; the only these agreements were ar against merchant es for co-operation in technical and equip- tives was avoided by res of war round the e only enemies con-

terized by the same become the rule for aff had no part in its at German-Japanese visits by Japanese when Hitler himself while Keitel and Jodl Japanese officer ever of the headquarters

d his views regarding al 1943 the following

g 1943 the European

HITLER: That doesn't please us so much.

JODL: The evacuation of Guadalcanal (by the Japanese) has been successful.

HITLER: You mustn't believe what the Japanese say. I don't believe a word of it.

JODL: One can't believe them simply because they are the only people who tell you something in apparent good faith and looking as if they were telling the truth.

HITLER: They lie to beat the band; everything they say has always got some background motive of deception. What have the Japanese done recently? Look at it! It's ludicrous that Japan can't raise more than thirty infantry divisions. Japan has more inhabitants than Germany. She could raise 120 divisions. Anyway we don't know how many she has really. The only thing I can't make out is the tank problem. Have they modern tanks or not?

ONE OF THE AIDES: They've told us just as little about their tanks as they have of their aircraft.

HITLER: They said nothing about their ships and suddenly there they were with the heaviest capital ships in the world. They said nothing about aircraft carriers and all of a sudden here they are with the largest number of aircraft carriers. They haven't said a word, I tell you not a word. If they've really got plans for something we shall never hear about them, and if they tell us that they have got plans for an operation in the south I shall be inclined to conclude that they are going to do something in the north rather than that anything is going to happen in the south.⁹

This conversation hardly does justice to the considerable services to the common war effort rendered by the Japanese. For instance, the situation in the Mediterranean theatre was eased by the withdrawal of considerable British naval and air forces to the Far East and this, with our own submarine and air reinforcements, enabled Rommel to drive the English back to the western approaches of Tobruk at the end of January 1942. In addition German 'blockade runners' were loaded in Japanese ports with raw materials, particularly rubber, and given considerable assistance on their voyage - an important, if not indispensable, contribution to the continuance of the war in Europe. On the other hand, in spite of numerous attempts

A

The Turn of the Tide

that military discussions with the French should be resumed. It is known that this 'survey' never got further than Jodl and Keitel. It was revised again in December and this, as far as I know, was the last occasion on which an appreciation of the overall situation contained any mention of the Eastern Theatre.³⁵

The first thunderclap struck the headquarters the day after its return to Wolfschanze; Rommel reported that after an eight-day battle at El Alamein, he was in imminent danger of defeat. By the evening of 2 November Rommel could see no alternative to the total annihilation of his army other than to begin a withdrawal on his own initiative and contrary to all orders from Rome and Rastenburg. Hitler could do nothing other than issue messages of 'iron determination'; that same evening his well-known radio message sped across the ether; it said:

I and the German people have been following with the utmost confidence the exploits of your leadership and the courage of the German and Italian troops under your command during your heroic defensive battle in Egypt. In your present situation you can have no thought other than to hold on, not to give way an inch and to throw every man and every weapon into the battle. In spite of his superiority the enemy must now be at the end of his tether. This will not be the first time in history that the stronger will must triumph over the big battalions. You must show your troops that they have no alternative other than to triumph or to die.³⁶

This appeal by Hitler caused Rommel temporarily to countermand the withdrawal which had already begun and the result led to most serious subsequent losses. In HQ Area 2 it had a peculiar sequel. At about 0300 hours on 3 November the Operations Staff Duty Officer received Rommel's message that his withdrawal had been begun approximately five hours earlier. In HQ Area 2 we did not know of Hitler's message; it was therefore hardly surprising that the Duty Officer did not realize that Rommel's message produced anything very new and did not therefore immediately warn one of the senior officers in accordance with the standing instructions for all important information. The Duty Officer was a major on the reserve, about fifty years old and a most worthy chap both in the service and in civil life. About twelve hours later he was to be seen emerging ashen grey from Hitler's hut. He had been trying to convince Hitler that con-

trary to h
HQ Area
escaped b
the ranks
normal m
bility upo
steps of H
even being
punishme
way after
Jodl was q
several ye
supreme la
made cons
at least cu
4 Novembe
to say that
and beggin
message fir
after the tr
over.³⁷ It a
incensed o
Schmundt
laying dow
greatest ca
Schmundt t

Rommel
civil life wa
explain the
more or le
remained in
it again and
that Romme
only hope of
chain of eve
was not in th
since 'triumph
'die' was left
the battle in
availability

ther him or his staff
Operations Staff
at Stalingrad; for
the briefing confer-
ence and the Chiefs
of the situation in the

on occasion or that he
both most unlikely
makes it crystal clear
little influence over
Stalingrad. This is also
briefing conferences, the
extracts of those held
1943, the day following

any heated arguments
principal adviser for the
based on records for
with my own memory.
and weeks Zeitzler dis-
tinguished in private with
normal times and that no
also remember quite
pressed over the steady
and, for instance, for
the staff on to the 'res-
toration' (by the middle
the daily ration was 2½
gar and one cigarette);
the more convincingly
ast this however, in the
posals that Sixth Army
evacuate Stalingrad and
the Air Force General,
along with Field Marshal
Army Group Don', the
reasonably favourable'
from the conference
speaks of great 'confi-

dence' in the plans for the relief of Stalingrad by means of a counter-attack by 'Hoth's armoured group' from the area of Kotelnikovo – completely overlooking the fact that nothing like the number of supply sorties promised by Göring had been carried out.⁴

On 12 December, the day of the start of this counter-attack, Hitler treated himself and his audience to a repetition of his thesis that: 'we must under no circumstances give it (Stalingrad) up. We should never get it back again.' He then returned to the argument of the loss of 'heavy equipment' and Zeitzler agreed with him saying: 'we have a vast amount of army artillery there'. Hitler immediately re-emphasized his determination, using even stronger words: 'we can never replace what we have there. If we give it (Stalingrad) up, we in fact give up the whole object of this campaign.'⁵

There is a further point regarding the shorthand records. It will be remembered that in Jodl's instructions of 29 November the name Stalingrad never appeared – it almost seems as if people were shy to use the word; in the records it will be noted that the situation at Stalingrad, the focal point of the whole war at the time, was never dealt with at the beginning of the discussions but that every other conceivable subject, some extremely trivial, was considered first, taking up hours of the discussions and pages of the records.

On 18 December the Italian Eighth Army collapsed, a decisive factor in the fate of Stalingrad; less than a month later, on 15 January, the Hungarian Second Army disintegrated and on the same day the German ring round Leningrad was broken; all this led to the greatest anxiety in the headquarters not only concerning each event itself but for the general effect they might have on our allies. Many of us asked ourselves then (and many may ask themselves today) whether this did not imply that, in the light of the rapidly changing situation, the fate of Stalingrad and the hundred thousand men there should not have been considered afresh every day and before everything else. On 15 January 1943 when our own front had already been driven far back and the Russian stranglehold round the city was growing tighter, Hitler instructed the State Secretary in the Aviation Ministry, Field Marshal Milch, to 'employ all his resources to supply the Sixth Army'; it was no more than an empty gesture.

Many have tried to justify the catastrophe by stating that only because considerable Russian forces were tied down in Stalingrad was it possible to withdraw the southern flank of the Eastern Front.

A

Setting Sun

This may have been so – the uncertainties of war are such that no one can be certain. But this cannot in any way compensate for or erase the serious mistakes of leadership made by Hitler during the previous weeks and months. Nor can it justify the fact that, rigid and obstinate as always, he refused the commanders whom he appointed at the last moment the resources and powers essential to enable them to cope with the situation, in particular power of command over the considerable forces in the nearby area of the Northern Caucasus and over the Sixth Army itself. On the evening of 22 January, urged on by Manstein, 'General Zeitzler put the question whether Sixth Army should now be authorized to capitulate'; Hitler refused and once more demanded that 'the army should fight to the last man'. On 28 January, disregarding alike those who were alive and fighting and those who had died, he took the first steps towards 'the reconstitution of Sixth Army'.⁸ Yet this was the man who, when the end came on 31 January, exploded with indignation and heaped abuse on the heads of the commanders. Though he had himself long since given up, in his view no one else was entitled to do so! His comprehension of military matters was no better than his understanding of morale; at the briefing conference on 1 February he demanded: 'we must let the commander in the northern pocket have something (meaning a radio message) telling him that he is to hold the pocket under all circumstances. The pocket must be held to the last man.'⁹ This could not stop the end coming there also the next day.

The discussion of 1 February (see pp. 300 and 535), a discussion which I shall never forget, is in many ways of particular interest. It is a good example of Hitler's attitude, which was subsequently to be repeated over and over again. On 1 February he was insisting that the Donetz Basin must 'under all circumstances be held', this time basing himself on economic arguments. He even went so far as to state that unless the resources of this area were available 'he could not carry on the war'.⁸ So it went on again and again until the end came in the heart of Berlin.

Fragment no. 29⁹

Evening session, 1 December 1942 in Wolfsschanze

ZEITZLER: Nothing special to report from Manstein's group at Kotelnikovo.

There was a sharp attack today on the Chir front; it extended

from Chir s
and Schmi
Colonel Ts.

There w
was to be a
progress be
or two tan
Division to

There w
shot up. Al
that of Col
tions held.

In Fiebig
was penetr
There's an
40 Guards
have hither
The prison
three night
thinning ou
his break-in
heavily att
were flown

Going fu
Group havi
noon Grou
heavily bor
subsequent

Nothing
was attacke
Some priso
attack the
salient; one
to be in pos
about it w
started on 1
brought up
on to the fi
the division
(the map s

X

Setting Sun

behind the left flank of Pasubio Division. The Luftwaffe has made one anti-aircraft battery available which has also been posted in rear of Pasubio Division. That is all that we can do for the moment.

Five days ago I sent the Italians an anti-aircraft specialist. He discovered a new depot containing 9,000 hollow charge rounds. He got them across to the Italians together with the German Pioneer Training Detachment, so that they can now produce some small German assault detachments armed with both normal ammunition and explosives.

JODL: The military commander in France reports: yesterday was comparatively quiet. No apparent change in the attitude of the population. No incidents with demobilized French troops.

There was a burglary at a town hall in the department of Seine-et-Loire. The French police managed to arrest six armed criminals, all members of a terrorist group.

HITLER: Good! The police are good. We should make use of them and work with the police only. Himmler knows his police. He may use somewhat questionable methods but gradually he gets the people under control. That way we form firm links with the police!

JODL: They give a very good impression.

HITLER: The police are more unpopular than anybody else in the country and so look for support to some more powerful authority than their own State; that means us. The police are certain to go on urging us not to leave the country.

JODL: The number of French workers engaged to work in Germany passed the two hundred thousand mark a few days ago.

HITLER: That's increasing then. To begin with these people have got nothing and then they say to themselves that at least they'll be out of danger. They don't want war. Why should they? They all feel: whatever may happen the whole war has been a lot of nonsense.

JODL: May I now refer to the command set-up in Africa. This is of course a question of organization. The Italian attitude is 'leave well alone'; but before long they'll be saying 'of course we must command in this theatre'. So far they've done nothing about this.

HITLER: In the first place we're the only people who are doing

anything there
of attacking,
around.

JODL: That's what
taken over control
about it.

HITLER: They c
divisions down
they come to
in the two in
divisions we
They're not
got to go it al
transport. Bu
we've laid ha
we wouldn't
there's been

KRANCKE: The
HITLER: They
whole thing.

BODENSCHATZ
defence thou
KEITEL: And :

I would l
terday we g
HITLER: I thi
thing abou
home to ev
the most in
not accordi
he is faced
using brute
success. Th
re-establish
which we
programm
position in
to use his
individual
I am for it

anything there at the moment; secondly if there's any question of attacking, you can be sure there won't be any Italians around.

JODL: That's why they don't refer to the fact that we have quickly taken over command in that theatre. They haven't said a word about it.

HITLER: They can't do, what's more. We shall have four motorized divisions down there, and if you count in the paratroopers, etc., they come to about a division. That means five divisions. Count in the two infantry divisions and that makes seven. With seven divisions we are more or less carrying on the war by ourselves. They're not fighting. From the equipment point of view we've got to go it alone there. The Italians are of course doing the sea transport. But we can make some shipping available now that we've laid hands on the French. If we hadn't beaten the French we wouldn't have had any shipping. Once the situation up there's been cleared up. . . .

KRANCKE: Then we can give them Tunis and we can take Algiers.

HITLER: They can be responsible for the administration of the whole thing.

BODENSCHATZ: We must be responsible for the anti-aircraft defence though.

KEITEL: And supply too!

I would like to refer to the anti-guerilla war too. Only yesterday we got an order ready about that.

HITLER: I think we must have a preamble here. The essential thing about anti-guerilla warfare – one must hammer this home to everybody – is that whatever succeeds is right. Here's the most important point: if someone does something which is not according to instructions but which leads to success or if he is faced with an emergency with which he can only deal by using brutal methods, then any method is right which leads to success. The object must be to exterminate the guerillas and re-establish order. Otherwise we shall get to the same position which we had at home with the so-called emergency defence programme. As a result of that instruction we finally got to the position in Germany where no policeman and no soldier dared to use his weapons. It was such an elastic instruction that the individual said to himself: 'if unfortunately I kill this chap, then I am for it! If he kills me, I am for it too. But how can I judge

it so that I put him out of action without hurting him and at the same time don't get put out of action myself?' That was the famous elastic paragraph in the emergency defence law and the result was that in fact anybody who had a weapon was for it whether he was a policeman or a soldier - odd, wasn't it. The most ridiculous example was the incident at Zabern. But the police had lots of incidents. On the one hand was the order 'do that', on the other hand if they did, they were going to break the emergency defence laws.

So I think we want a paragraph here; 'notwithstanding all the above, the annihilation of the guerillas is an overriding duty. Therefore anything which assists in the annihilation of the guerillas will be considered right and conversely anything which does not contribute to the annihilation of the guerillas will be considered wrong.' Then everybody will be free to act. Anyway in a lot of cases what's the chap to do! What are they to do when the bastards push women and children in front of them? I saw this myself in Chemnitz; those Red bastards held children in front of them and then spat at us. We could not retaliate. God help us if we'd done anything to the children!

It's the same thing with the anti-guerilla war. If they push women and children in front of them the officer or NCO must be authorized, if necessary, to shoot them down ruthlessly. The only thing that matters is that he should make a job of it and wipe out the gang. We must give absolute support to the man who's carrying the gun. It's all very well to give him general instructions; but then you must support him absolutely so that the poor devil doesn't have to say: 'I shall be held responsible for this later.'

What do you propose to do: let's say the bastards go into a house and barricade themselves in it and there are women and children in the house. Is the chap to set the house alight or not? If he sets it alight he will burn innocent people as well. No question about it! He must set it alight. It is no good saying: 'the ordinary soldier mustn't do this, it must be an officer'. No! When the poor devil's there with six or seven men what's he to do? That was the tragic position the police were in, that only an officer could act. Have you ever heard of an officer being present when the police wanted him! The wretched constable was just there as naked as the day he was born.

That's why th
because for th
behind them.
before! Previo
fired, they use
front of the Ca
act against th
protect parlian
If the demons
protected parli
doing nothing.

You have to
put the ordina
to try and imag
all very well to
of commonsens
man? - haven't
think; he's fight
soldier or NCO
many women l
through the pl
JODL: There's no
they like. The
draw and quar
only limitation
which guerillas
the Reichsführ
must be careful
the entire male
to village and t
areas.' Apart fi
may or may no
sance and oper
HITLER: But still
thinks that to
then he's abso
circumstances.
JODL: This instr
have more exp
HITLER: I know

hurting him and at
myself? That was the
defence law and
a weapon was for
odd, wasn't it. The
at Zabern. But the
and was the order 'do
were going to break

notwithstanding all
llas is an overriding
the annihilation of
conversely anything
tion of the guerillas
y will be free to act.
o do! What are they
children in front of
e Red bastards held
at us. We could not
ng to the children!

la war. If they push
officer or NCO must
m down ruthlessly.
uld make a job of it
absolute support to
cry well to give him
pport him absolutely
ay: 'I shall be held

ie bastards go into a
d there are women
set the house alight
cent people as well.
It is no good saying:
must be an officer'.
or seven men what's
police were in, that
heard of an officer
um! The wretched
day he was born.

That's why the French police cling to our German police because for the first time in their lives they feel authority is behind them. The French police have never had such a thing before! Previously if there were riots in Paris and the police fired, they used to get it in the neck. They were hauled up in front of the Cadi. They were told to protect the parliament and act against the demonstrators. How were they supposed to protect parliament when the demonstrators were coming on? If the demonstrators had come on and the police hadn't protected parliament then they would have been punished for doing nothing. And so they shot and got punished for shooting.

You have to be frightfully careful in matters like this not to put the ordinary fellow into an impossible position. You have to try and imagine all the time what the soldier is thinking. It's all very well to sit round the table here and say that it's a matter of commonsense. 'How can you be so stupid? - can't you think man? - haven't you thought about this?' The poor devil can't think; he's fighting for his life, for his existence! So the wretched soldier or NCO cuts the cackle and shoots and kills so-and-so many women because he thinks that otherwise he'll never get through the place.

JODL: There's no question of that here. In battle they can do what they like. They can hang them, hang them upside down, draw and quarter them - there's nothing about that here. The only limitation here is after-action reprisals in those areas in which guerillas have been living and that is something which the Reichsführer himself is very cautious about. He says: 'I must be careful I don't spread guerilla activity and drive off the entire male population. The word goes round from village to village and then 2,000 men will go rushing off to the guerilla areas.' Apart from this there's not a word about what people may or may not do. This only gives certain results of reconnaissance and operations.

HITLER: But still I think we ought to write it down that if the chap thinks that to do his duty he must use the severest methods, then he's absolutely right and will be backed up under all circumstances.

JODL: This instruction is more for the commanders. The SS have more experience in anti-guerilla action.

HITLER: I know they've got more experience. But do you know

Setting Sun

what people say about the SS because they've got this experience? People are always saying they're brutal.

JODL: That's not true. They work very well. They use the stick and carrot method like everybody else!

HITLER: People will forgive them the carrot but not the stick.

KEITEL: There's not much talk about it in the guerilla area. I'm happy to say there's very good co-operation. Everybody's working well together and under one command. In those anti-guerilla actions laid on by Bach-Zelewski he was in sole command both of the police and of the troops from the divisions in the area.

HITLER: That Bach-Zelewski is a clever chap. When he was in the Party I always used him for the most difficult jobs. When we had a job breaking down Communist resistance somewhere I would bring him along and he would put it across them!

Fragment no. 8

Midday conference 12 December 1942 in Wolfschanze

Beginning 12.45

HITLER: Has there been some disaster?

ZEITZLER: No, my Führer. Manstein reached the obstacle and captured a bridge. The only attacks were on the Italian front. One regiment here was alerted during the night and reached its battle position at 10 am. That was good because the Italians had already put in all their reserves.

HITLER: I've had more sleepless nights over this business in the south than over anything else. One doesn't know what's going on.

BUHLE: They're not reliable.

ZEITZLER: We must do something like we did last night as soon as possible. If the Russians had seized their opportunity, there'd have been a disaster during the night. The Army Group only wanted to bring the regiment up early in the morning. But we actually got it into position by 10 am.

Nothing much has happened in Seventeenth Army. There are more agents' reports about a landing in the Crimea; they're waiting for really bad weather, snow showers, etc.

HITLER: That seems improbable. Can our navy lay on the weather like that!

JODL: If it's like that they can't land.

HITLER: The Russians will get through somehow. We wouldn't

be able to land that. But that
KRANCKE: That is iced up it is about freezing
HITLER: They w in fog.

I wanted to company. I am Mohammedan talion. The G The Georgian with the Turk reliable. I don happen to us I think raising risky; on the Mohammedan

ZEITZLER: I have something to go Georgians and I find the Georgi

HITLER: That's r from everybody from everybody, I can flirting with Co ment. The Tw gians are not : tribe probably trust the Arme Rosenberg or tl just as unreliab reliable are the peoples. What matter; I can't.

(The Wehrmacht re)

HITLER: Tell me posed to have g

A

Stalingrad to Tunis

be able to land in a snow shower or anything like that. I admit that. But that doesn't go for the Russians.

KRANCKE: That is if it's not too bad. If it's freezing and everything is iced up it is bad. But when it's merely snow showers and just about freezing point, then it can be done.

HITLER: They will land just the same. Just like in fog - they land in fog.

I wanted to say something about this Georgian battalion or company. I must say, I don't know - the Georgians are not Mohammedan. That means they are not a Turkoman battalion. The Georgians do not come from the Turkish race. The Georgians are a Caucasian tribe who have nothing to do with the Turkish people. I think only the Mohammedans are reliable. I don't think any of the others are reliable. That can happen to us anywhere because one has to be frightfully careful. I think raising battalions from these Caucasian peoples is very risky; on the other hand I see no danger in raising purely Mohammedan units. They're always ready to fight.

ZEITZLER: I have sent down a list of questions in order to get something to go on. Baltiz questioned a Russian general about the Georgians and he was very forthcoming. He replied that we should find the Georgians neither good nor bad; they found the same.

HITLER: That's right. All they worry about is being independent from everybody. As far as I can hear they are very unreliable from everybody's point of view. Since Stalin is a Georgian himself, I can quite well imagine that many of them are flirting with Communism. They have had a form of self-government. The Turkoman peoples are Mohammedan. The Georgians are not a Turkish race they are a Turkish-Caucasian tribe probably with some northern blood too. Then I don't trust the Armenians either in spite of what people say, either Rosenberg or the military staff. I think the Armenian units are just as unreliable and dangerous. The only people I think are reliable are the real Mohammedans, ie the real Turkoman peoples. What their fighting capacity is however is another matter; I can't judge that.

(The Wehrmacht report is produced.)

HITLER: Tell me now: where are those tanks the rats were supposed to have got at?

A

Setting Sun

ZEITZLER: They were with 22 Armoured Division. Can I now give the order for these preparations to proceed?

HITLER: The most important thing is that we should get this road.

ZEITZLER: Blocking that road doesn't make much difference because there's a side road here. If we merely block the main road the enemy can use the side road. But we shall have to extend out to Shikola if we are to be quite sure.

HITLER: We must remain in this area in order to have the road. That's unfortunate.

ZEITZLER: We can't do that. We must keep our only reserve available. I've had it looked into and the Mountain Regiment can't get here before the 20th.

HITLER: I wonder whether they'll get here even by the 20th. If they don't dig in they'll have to withdraw here.

ZEITZLER: I think that's a pretty naturally strong position however.

HITLER: When we withdraw I am always afraid of equipment being left behind. That means you've got men but no equipment. Can't start anything - quite apart from the morale aspect.

ZEITZLER: If we withdraw according to programme we shall get it back; there's a position here and very little in it. 16 Motorized Division carried out a very successful attack taking 150 prisoners and coming back with them.

HITLER: They're not fighting a war of movement down there; they left the tanks behind and did nothing about it - trench warfare.

ZEITZLER: They should have pushed their flanks much further out. Comparatively little on this front. I've cleared up the business about the order to withdraw; it will be toned down a bit. He wanted to give an order to withdraw.

Now the situation in this area: Field Marshal Manstein called me early this morning. He has captured the bridge at this place. There is a little pressure now starting against 23 Armoured Division. Those are probably the forces they brought up. Resistance here was not very great. Very heavy fighting flared up here during the course of the day. The enemy captured Ritchev. That's most unfortunate because of the bridge. That was the line of communication we wished to use to bring forces up. The attack spread as far as this point, whereas here it's more or less died away. We intercepted a

radio message taking up a enemy is doing traffic. Before that he is preparing was in this area this attack goes (Produces it.)

HITLER: He has

ZEITZLER: He has it. There's no 16 Division that shall never be he wonders what At least that proposals.

HITLER: We must got two strong tanks.

ZEITZLER: Of course divisions.

HITLER: I agree too, and some next infantry

ZEITZLER: That it here. We have That would have the two armoured will be attacked That leaves and we must difficult situation there's a risk divisions may get shall be forced shall have lost HITLER: Did he ZEITZLER: He is across here.

radio message from VIII Cavalry Corps saying that they were taking up a defensive position. It is still not clear what the enemy is doing up here. It may be merely a reaction to our radio traffic. Before we moved this was very high. It may be, however, that he is preparing something. The main attack on Sixth Army was in this area. Field Marshal Manstein called about keeping this attack going;* he put his views on paper and here it is. (Produces it.)

HITLER: He has got a front of fifty miles as the crow flies.

ZEITZLER: He has put his views on paper. You might like to read it. There's no question of moving 16 Division. If we withdraw 16 Division the whole Rumanian front will collapse, and we shall never be able to re-establish it. Seeing there's a gap here he wonders whether some armoured forces can't be pushed up. At least that's the only explanation I can make of his proposals.

HITLER: We must see what forces he's got here first. He's still got two strong divisions. One has got 95 and the other 138 tanks.

ZEITZLER: Of course there's always some risk in withdrawing two divisions.

HITLER: I agree entirely but he's got some Luftwaffe formations too, and something can be done with them. When does the next infantry division arrive?

ZEITZLER: That's a long time; it will be eight days before we get it here. We had hoped to put 11 Armoured Division in here. That would have been more or less all right. If we can't do that, the two armoured divisions will have to stay put. 23 Division will be attacked from the flank and will have to operate so. That leaves only 6 Division. So if there are counter-attacks and we must maintain this line of communication, that's a difficult situation. If we move 17 Division down from here there's a risk there too. But this attack by two armoured divisions may get stuck and then it may be that two days later we shall be forced to bring 17 Division down, and that means we shall have lost a day.

HITLER: Did he want to put 17 Division in here?

ZEITZLER: He wanted to bring it up here and bring this one across here.

* From Kotelnikovo towards Stalingrad

A

Setting Sun

HITLER: 17 Division's not worth much.

ZEITZLER: What about 11 Division then?

HITLER: That's only got 45 tanks.

ZEITZLER: It's had 49 up till now. There are some unserviceable.

It had to leave one battalion up here; as an emergency measure we could put in a regiment of 306 Division.

HITLER: When did 11 Division lose all these tanks? Up there it had 70 or 80.

ZEITZLER: As far as I know it arrived with 49 tanks.

HITLER: And now there are more unserviceable.

ZEITZLER: Of course there are always some temporarily unserviceable. The figure always goes up the day following bad weather.

HEUSINGER: At one time 11 Armoured Division had 57.

HITLER: It moved from up there with 73 or 75.

ZEITZLER: I'll look into it again. I haven't got the figures in my head. In my experience one must always reckon with ten to twenty tanks unserviceable owing to the weather.

HITLER: I'd like to hear the whole situation first and we will come back to this business at the end.

The discussion continues on these lines dealing with tactical detail on the Russian front. This part of the record will be found in Appendix A p. 521

HITLER: I've received another report that he* is withdrawing here. (Africa.)

JODL: Yes, he is. There is no doubt that the enemy has started his first major attack here and he will probably continue it on the 13th. Air reconnaissance confirms that his air force is ready and that he has moved his bases up. He has got his main fighter force with 130 single-engine and 120 twin-engine aircraft in the area north of Agedabia, and then there are 100 single-engine and 40 twin-engine aircraft in the area between Sollum and Marina. Radio interception indicates that he is poised as he was before our offensive against El Alamein and is ready to attack here. The Air Commander Africa also considers that in the immediate future we shall be faced with an English offensive aiming at Tripoli. In comparison our own forces are weak as long as the main body remains in Sicily and the majority of them are in rear of the final position.

* Field Marshal Rommel.

HITLER:

JODL: Th

HITLER:

clear as

JODL: Ro

HITLER: 1

JODL: He

drawn

In view

To c

from th

continu

put in :

the sou

situatio

operati

must re

mobile

Conside

fully m

wants t

HITLER: I

have hi

position

apparen

up inste

up front

operate

all that'

gone ba

and eve

we've lo

Which :

extraord

There

by the s

initial o

Ramcke

didn't g

had to c

Z

Stalingrad to Tunis

HITLER: Who says that is the final position?

JODL: The Duce has given that order.

HITLER: The conversation the Reichsmarschall had wasn't as clear as that.

JODL: Rommel says the same in his telegram.

HITLER: What does he say?

JODL: He says: 'Troops remaining in the area ... are being withdrawn to the final position.' There you have the word 'final'.

In view of the overall situation that's what he reckons it is.

To continue. He beat off yesterday's attacks, including those from the south but says that the attacks will undoubtedly be continued in this sector today and that he cannot afford to put in all his forces in case the enemy should also attack from the south even if only with small forces. As a result of the fuel situation he is in no position to conduct offensive or mobile operations but was just able to withdraw to this position. He must remain here until the 15th by which time he will be mobile again. Therefore he can't commit himself to anything. Considering his fuel situation that's understandable. If he were fully mobile he could go around this way, which is what he wants to do, and so slip out of any enveloping movements.

HITLER: I must say he has got an enormous army and it seems to have had enough fuel to get back here from the Alamein position. They didn't do that on water. The whole time they've apparently practically had no fuel. If they'd brought the fuel up instead of going back themselves they could have operated up front. No doubt about that. It would have been simpler to operate up front merely with a couple of divisions. After all, all that's necessary are the tanks and a little artillery. They've gone back a thousand miles taking with them household stuff and everything else they could lay their hands on. Of the men we've lost I'll bet that 50 per cent were lost during the retreat. Which means that the real losses up front were probably extraordinarily low.

There is no doubt that we were wrong to be over-influenced by the sinking of that 4000-ton steamer, and not to push our initial offensive through. That's Kesselring's impression and Ramcke's too; the latter says: 'we can't understand why we didn't go on; the English were completely routed; all we had to do was to push on and attack from some flank.' But

really I think one shouldn't leave a man too long in a position of such heavy responsibility. Gradually he loses his nerve. It's different if one's in the rear. There of course one keeps one's head. These people can't stand the strain on their nerves. It should really be a principle not to leave a man in a theatre of war too long. There's no point in it. It's better to relieve him. Then someone new comes in who wants to earn his laurels and is relatively fresher. I am therefore determined that as soon as the first rush is over we will relieve a number of generals who in themselves are perfectly all right – even field marshals; we'll simply order them to take so-and-so many months' leave so that they can return to the front completely recovered. Think what it's like. He has to go on shadow boxing out there with a few wretched units. So it's not surprising if after two years or so he gradually loses his nerve and gets into a situation where he says: 'I'll hold on ...' then things which to us in the rear don't appear so terrible, seem frightful to him. Last year we had cases of people up front simply losing their nerve as a result of the frightful weather conditions saying to themselves: 'it's easy for them in the rear to talk; they don't have to stay out in this weather'. That's right too. We must also arrange so that people are not constantly exposed to the same sort of pressure. If I put a high level staff under mortar fire for three weeks I can't be surprised if they lose their nerve. That's the reason for the Feldherrnhügel.*

Except in the last resort, where the general must be the standard-bearer because it's a matter of life and death, he must be back behind. In the long run you can't command in the midst of the roar of battle.

One thing's certain: in this small area one man can keep his eye on almost the whole battlefield. It's not a question of communications; instinct comes into it. When you do that for two years eventually your nerves go. That's Göring's impression too. He says that Rommel has completely lost his nerve.

Then there's the tragic business with the Italians. The eternal uncertainty. We get that too. I couldn't get to sleep last night – it's the feeling of uncertainty. If it was an all-German theatre, it's possible that we could do something and one would feel

* From a well-known comedy by Rhoda-Rhoda, lampooning generals who 'lead their regiments from behind,' (cf. W. S. Gilbert).

that we could have a whole announced that they hardly cap air reconnaissance the move over are moving in whether they started to run, go unless there forward with an in good order a feat of 1914 was back after making it to stand and one of the great class disciplined
JODL: We manage
HITLER: We manage
Italians; we need through anyhow continually und
JODL: We only have the front; but hi
HITLER: Perhaps straight away, as to hold on.
JODL: I don't think He's like some bread and is the He hasn't had as they're two train
His intention for the construction situation he can XXI Corps here He will wait he again. They've lery. That will t
HITLER: It's to be

A

long in a position
loses his nerve. It's
use one keeps one's
on their nerves. It
man in a theatre of
better to relieve him.
earn his laurels and
ined that as soon as
number of generals
even field marshals;
many months' leave
mpletely recovered.
ow boxing out there
prising if after two
gets into a situation
s which to us in the
il to him. Last year
ing their nerve as a
aying to themselves:
y don't have to stay
must also arrange so
to the same sort of
mortar fire for three
ir nerve. That's the

general must be the
life and death, he
I can't command in

ne man can keep his
at a question of com-
you do that for two
ing's impression too.
his nerve.

Italians. The eternal
et to sleep last night
all-German theatre,
and one would feel
oning generals who 'lead

that we could plug the holes somehow. At least you wouldn't have a whole army disintegrating in a day. The Russians have announced that they've captured 9,400 prisoners - Axis forces; they hardly captured any Germans, just Rumanians. The first air reconnaissance report says that huge grey columns were on the move over there - apparently all prisoners - and others are moving in the opposite direction so that you can't tell whether they are Russians or Rumanians. Once a unit has started to run, the ties of training and organization quickly go unless there is iron discipline. It's miles easier to go crashing forward with an army and win victories than to bring one back in good order after a setback or a defeat. Perhaps the greatest feat of 1914 was that they managed to get the German army back after making fools of themselves on the Marne and to get it to stand and reorganize on a definite line. That was perhaps one of the greatest feats. You can only do that with very high-class disciplined troops.

JODL: We managed to do that here too with the German troops.

HITLER: We managed it with the Germans but not with the Italians; we never shall with them. So if the enemy breaks through anywhere there'll be a catastrophe. If a man lives continually under this pressure, gradually he'll go to pieces.

JODL: We only had the Italian Eighth Army on a small sector of the front; but his front is primarily Italian.

HITLER: Perhaps it would have been better to have recalled him straight away, and sent down some other chap with strict orders to hold on.

JODL: I don't think you can argue much about what he's done.

He's like someone who's been living on a diet of milk and bread and is then asked to take part in the Olympic Games. He hasn't had any supplies for weeks. In the East they scream if they're two trains short.

His intention is to go back step by step in order to gain time for the construction of this position here; in view of the fuel situation he can't do anything else. There were still parts of XXI Corps here who have now been ordered to move up here. He will wait here until the English have built themselves up again. They've got to build up again and bring up their artillery. That will take a few days.

HITLER: It's to be hoped so.

A

* Gc
L

Setting Sun

JODL: Of course the English know that a considerable proportion of our forces are being moved back. That may have been the reason why they attacked somewhat earlier here.

HITLER: How much can he comb out of this enormous German supply train for the defence of this position? Is it all on the move to Tripoli?

JODL: No, on the contrary; six or seven days ago he reported that he had combed out all the rearward services as far as he could and brought the men up into the line.

HITLER: Because in a position like that 10-20,000 Germans pushed in between the Italians might hold things for a bit. It can't be done with Italians alone.

JODL: He also reports that he has laid on all sorts of mining operations, particularly on the Via Balbo and will continue with it.

HITLER: Mining is very difficult because one can only do it to the rear and if you are withdrawing you haven't got the time and so the enemy can see every mine along the roads.

JODL: No, they are doing it in front of the position too. All he wants is an improvement in the fuel situation because he's not fully mobile. If the enemy succeeds in going right round by the south he'll be in a very difficult situation but the lighter traffic from the base at Sfax is going quicker than before. They are no longer reporting single lighters.

HITLER: Up to now it hasn't worked at all.

JODL: It was used by single lighters. Anyway Kesselring felt very relieved this morning; he claimed that since yesterday a great weight had been lifted from his mind with regard to the whole supply problem.

HITLER: There you have the two opposite ends of the scale. Rommel has become the greatest pessimist and Kesselring a complete optimist. That's no end of a step forward.

Fragment no. 47

Midday Conference, 1 February 1943

The conference starts with a discussion of tactical detail on the Russian front. This part is to be found in Appendix A p. 535. It is then concerned with the Russian report that Field Marshal Paulus and a number of other generals including Generals von Seydlitz and Schmidt had been taken prisoner in the southern Stalingrad pocket.

HITLER: They have finally and formally surrendered there. Other-

wise th
using t
womar
insultir
right o
that bi
can un
arrive,
ZEITZLER
true. W
HITLER: I
put into
the nor
anythin
this to t
have th
ture. W
charact
ZEITZLER:
HITLER: I
can sho
'I have
and ther
should b
ZEITZLER:
HITLER: A
might sa
get the o
and sinc
think it
In pea
a year cl
a situati
60,000 of
end - he
that is ...
ZEITZLER:)
HITLER: Bu
I heard h
ask such a

* Geli Raubach.
What were the insulting remarks?

Stalingrad to Tunis

△

*

derable proportion
ay have been the
here.

enormous German
it all on the move

ago he reported
services as far as he

to Germans pushed
r a bit. It can't be

ts of mining opera-
continue with it.
can only do it to
ven't got the time
the roads.

osition too. All he
ation because he's
ing right round by
on but the lighter
than before. They

Kesselring felt very
yesterday a great
egard to the whole

ends of the scale.
and Kesselring a
orward.

on the Russian front.
en concerned with the
iber of other generals
taken prisoner in the

dered there. Other-

wise they'd have concentrated, formed square and shot it out using their last bullet on themselves. When you think that a woman's got sufficient pride just because someone's made a few insulting remarks to go and lock herself in and shoot herself right off, then I've no respect for a soldier who's afraid to do that but would rather be taken prisoner. All I can say is: I can understand it in a case like that of General Giraud - we arrive, he gets out of his car and is collared. But ...

ZEITZLER: I can't understand it either. I still wonder whether it's true. Whether perhaps he isn't lying there badly wounded.

HITLER: No it's true. They'll be taken straight to Moscow and put into the hands of the GPU and they'll blurt out orders for the northern pocket to surrender too. That Schmidt will sign anything. A man who hasn't got the courage at a time like this to take the road that every man has to take one day won't have the strength to stand up to that. He'll suffer mental torture. We put too much emphasis on education and too little on character training.

ZEITZLER: It's impossible to understand that type of man.

HITLER: Don't say that! I have seen a letter ... Below got it. I can show it to you. He (an officer from Stalingrad) said: 'I have come to the following conclusion about these people' and then it said: 'Paulus: ?; Seydlitz: should be shot; Schmidt: should be shot'.

ZEITZLER: I too have heard bad reports about Seydlitz.

HITLER: And among them there is 'Hube, the man!' Of course one might say it would have been better to let Hube stay there and get the others out. But since the value of men is not immaterial and since one wants men for everything in war, I definitely think it was right to get Hube out.

In peace-time in Germany about 18,000 or 20,000 people a year choose to commit suicide although none of them are in a situation like this, and here's a man who sees 45,000 to 60,000 of his soldiers die defending themselves bravely to the end - how can he give himself up to the Bolsheviks? God that is ...

ZEITZLER: It is something quite incomprehensible.

HITLER: But I had my doubts before. It was at the moment when I heard he was asking what he should do. How could he even ask such a thing? Does it mean that in future whenever a fortress

X

Setting Sun

is besieged and the commander is called upon to surrender he is going to ask: 'what shall I do now?'

He did it easily enough! (These words probably referred to Udet who committed suicide after he had broken down as Air Officer in charge of Equipment.) Or Becker: he got the equipment shop into a muddle; he ... did it and then shot himself dead. How easy it is to do that! A revolver - makes it easy. What cowardice to be afraid of that! Ha! Better be buried alive! And in a situation like this where he knows well enough that his death would set the example for behaviour in the pocket next door. If he sets an example like this, one can hardly expect people to go on fighting.

ZEITZLER: There is no excuse; when his nerves look like breaking down he must shoot himself first.

HITLER: When one's nerves break down there is nothing to do but say 'I can't go on' and shoot oneself. In fact you could say that the man ought to shoot himself. Just as in the old days commanders who saw that all was lost used to fall on their swords. That goes without saying. Even Varus told his slave: 'now kill me!'

ZEITZLER: I still think that they may have done that and that the Russians are merely claiming to have captured them all.

HITLER: No!

ENGEL: The odd thing, if I may say so, is that they have not announced whether Paulus was badly wounded when he was taken prisoner. They may well say tomorrow that he died of his wounds.

HITLER: Have we got any precise information about him being wounded?

...

The tragedy has happened. Now it may be a warning.

ENGEL: They can hardly have got the names of all the generals right.

HITLER: There will be no more field marshals in this war. We'll only promote them after the end of the war. I won't go on counting my chickens before they're hatched.

ZEITZLER: We were so completely sure how it would end that we thought we'd give him what he longed for most. ...

HITLER: ~~One had to assume that there would be a heroic ending.~~

ZEITZLER: One couldn't imagine anything else.

HITLER: He

I must sa
again mu
by it all,

ZEITZLER:

looks to l
for the or

HITLER: If;

and lets h
then I m

about tha
we can't

ligent anc
ment is s

Stalingra

As soor
whether t

on the wi
What I

soldiers is
and I'll t

arrives in
anything.

sec. They
true to sa

ENGEL: One

to the ho
be stoppe

HITLER: No

ENGEL: I m
among ot

keep it all
HITLER: On

can't get
essential w

is to bring
then we s

heavy blo
ZEITZLER: Y

given gen

Stalingrad to Tunis

surrender he is

bly referred to
en down as Air
got the equip-
en shot himself
makes it easy.
tter be buried
ws well enough
naviour in the
one can hardly

k like breaking

nothing to do
t you could say
n the old days
o fall on their
told his slave:

at and that the
them all.

they have not
d when he was
at he died of his

out him being

orning.
all the generals

this war. We'll
I won't go on

ld end that we
t...

heroic ending.

HITLER: How can you do anything else when dealing with men?

I must say that every soldier who risks his life over and over again must be a fool. If the little private soldier is overcome by it all, I can understand that.

ZEITZLER: It's much easier for a unit commander; everyone looks to him. It's easy for him to shoot himself. It's difficult for the ordinary fellow.

HITLER: If a wretched little chap is hit by all this and says ---- and lets himself get taken prisoner, I can understand that. But then I must say: how heroically they ... there's no arguing about that. Of course many fought like Germans! ... and yet we can't manage it, although our commanders are so intelligent and our soldiers so well trained and finally our equipment is so superior to that of the Russians. Yet apart from Stalingrad we were always superior.

As soon as I heard it last night I asked Puttkamer to check whether the news was out. If it hadn't already been given out on the wireless I'd have stopped it straight away.

What hurts me so much is that the heroism of so many soldiers is cancelled out by one single characterless weakling - and I'll tell you what the man will do now. Think of it! He arrives in Moscow and think of the rat trap he's in! He'll sign anything. He'll make confessions, issue proclamations. You'll see. They'll now plumb the depths of lack of character. It's true to say: one bad deed always leads to another.

ENGEL: One thing: tomorrow Major von Zitzewitz is due to speak to the home and foreign press about Stalingrad. Should that be stopped?

HITLER: No.

ENGEL: I merely ask because of course there will be questions; among other things the question.... The best would be to keep it all very general.

HITLER: One doesn't know for sure if a man knows anything: you can't get that out of him direct. But character is the first essential with soldiers and if we can't teach that, if all we can do is to bring up intellectual and mental acrobats and athletes, then we shall never get a race capable of standing up to the heavy blows of fortune. That's decisive.

ZEITZLER: Yes, in the general staff too. For the first time I have given general staff insignia to a liaison officer who had not

A

Setting Sun

had general staff training because he had done wonderful staff work in arranging the withdrawal of his division. It doesn't matter whether or not he'd done the eight-weeks training course. I took immediate action. I just sent down an order: 'You are a general staff officer as of today.'

HITLER: Yes, one must select brave, daring people, who are willing to sacrifice their lives, like every soldier. What is 'life'? ... the nation; the individual must die any way. It is the nation which lives on after the individual.

But how can anyone be afraid of this moment which sets him free from this vale of misery, unless the call of duty keeps him in this vale of tears! Well now ...! They announce they've captured Paulus. I want a distinction made between prisoners and missing. When the enemy breaks through and gets there without fighting, one knows they have been taken prisoner. The others must be posted as missing.

I don't know how we should proceed in the case of Paulus. We must let the commander in the northern pocket have something that he is to hold the pocket under all circumstances. The pocket must be held to the last man. ...

ZEITZLER: So you agree that I should send a message in this sense?

HITLER: Yes! I keep on thinking of this: the Rumanian General Lascar was killed with his men. I am glad I gave him the Oak Leaves Cross. Queer how these things happen! When I heard it about 10.30 last night - I'd gone to bed early - I got hold of Puttkamer straight away to see whether the radio message had already gone out. Then the Russians announced: Marshal Paulus captured with his entire staff. The entire staff surrendered. Now the Russians will ...

ZEITZLER: Just what I feared! I thought: they'll play some disgusting game with Paulus' body, and now it's even worse.

HITLER: Any minute he'll be speaking on the radio - you'll see. Seydlitz and Schmidt will speak on the radio. They'll shut them in that rat trap and two days later they'll have got them so conditioned that they'll speak straight away. And there's this beautiful woman, a really very beautiful woman, who is insulted by some words. Straightaway she says - it was only a triviality - : 'so I can go; I'm not wanted'. Her husband answers: 'get out then!' So the woman goes off, writes a letter of farewell and shoots herself. ...

Anna Kerwin³⁰⁴ ?

Geli Raubel ?
A. G. hiding the
details

Did the report left or after?

ZEITZLER: I will c about it, if it wa

HITLER: We must the staffs fought prisoner when th superior forces.

ZEITZLER: That is

HITLER: We must were overwhelm

ZEITZLER: We car another picture first.

HITLER: Say tha and that the them.

ZEITZLER: I think As regards the whether there a instance a gene prove that every list they have ca

HITLER: They say and Seydlitz.

JODL: I don't kno he was not in Who are the ge

HITLER: He was I can't understa The heroism of generals is canc character when woman can do.

JODL: But I'm no HITLER: There w man died a pa she asked me to go on living, i That's what a

A

Stalingrad to Tunis

one wonderful
division. It
the eight-weeks
just sent down
today.

people, who are
What is 'life'?
It is the nation

ent which sets
e call of duty
They announce
made between
s through and
ave been taken

case of Paulus.
ket have some-
umstances. The

ge in this sense?
anian General
re him the Oak

When I heard
- I got hold of
io message had
nced: Marshal
re staff surren-

play some dis-
ven worse.

lio - you'll see.

y. They'll shut
have got them
y. And there's
voman, who is
- it was only a
Her husband
writes a letter

Did the report that they were wounded come before Jänecke left or after?

ZEITZLER: I will check. I will call Jänecke. He must have known about it, if it was before he left.

HITLER: We must get that clear. Then we must make out that the staffs fought to the last man and that they were only taken prisoner when they were wounded, overwhelmed and faced by superior forces.

ZEITZLER: That is undoubtedly what most of the staffs did.

HITLER: We must say that this was no surrender but that they were overwhelmed.

ZEITZLER: We can put that in the report. The Russians will give another picture of it. Let us get our story into the world press first.

HITLER: Say that they've been without rations for months and that the Russians were able to overwhelm many of them.

ZEITZLER: I think this is the better line to take. . . .

As regards the Russian communiqué we must check to see whether there are any errors in it. For a single mistake - for instance a general who couldn't have been there - would prove that everything they have published was taken from some list they have captured somewhere.

HITLER: They say they have captured Paulus as well as Schmidt and Seydlitz.

JODL: I don't know about Seydlitz. It's not quite clear whether he was not in the northern pocket. We'll find out by radio.

Who are the generals in the northern pocket anyway?

HITLER: He was definitely with Paulus. I'll tell you one thing: I can't understand how a man like Paulus wouldn't rather die. The heroism of so many tens of thousands of men, officers and generals is cancelled out by a man like this who hasn't got the character when the moment comes, to do what a weakling of a woman can do.

JODL: But I'm not yet certain that that is correct.

HITLER: There were a man and wife living together. Later the man died a painful death. Then I got a letter from the wife; she asked me to look after the children. She said she couldn't go on living, in spite of her children. Then she shot herself. That's what a woman can do; she's got the strength and

li. Raul?
H. hiding the
details

A

Setting Sun

soldiers haven't! You'll see; within a week Seydlitz and Schmidt and Paulus too will all be speaking on the radio.

JODL: I am sure of it.

HITLER: They'll be taken to the Ljubljanka, and there the rats will get at them. How can they be such cowards? I don't understand it.

JODL: I am still not sure.

HITLER: Unfortunately I am. You know, I don't believe this story of Paulus being wounded any more. It doesn't seem to fit. They must think that they.... What are we to do?

What hurts me the most personally is that I went on and promoted him field marshal. I wanted to give him his heart's desire. That's the last field marshal I promote in this war. One must not count one's chickens before they are hatched.

I just don't understand it. When a man sees so many men die - I must really say: how easy it is for our ... he can't have thought of that. It's ridiculous, a thing like this. So many men have to die and then a man like this comes along and at the last moment besmirches the heroism of so many others. He could have got out of this vale of tears and into eternity and been immortalized by the nation and he'd rather go to Moscow. How can he even think of that as an alternative. It's crazy.

JODL: That's why I am still not sure.

HITLER: It's just as if I were to say today that I would hand over a fortress to General Förster; then I'd know straightaway that he'd be the first to haul down his flag. There are others who wouldn't do it. It's tragic that in a moment like this so much bravery should be besmirched.

JESCHONNEK: I think it's possible that the Russians have reported this on purpose. They are such clever devils.

HITLER: In a week they'll be on the radio.

JESCHONNEK: The Russians might even arrange for someone else to do the talking.

HITLER: No, they'll talk on the radio themselves. You'll hear it soon enough. They'll all speak personally on the radio! First they'll call upon the people in the pocket to give themselves up and then they'll say the meanest things about the German Army. You have to realize that they'll be taken to Moscow, put into the Ljubljanka and there 'worked over'. When someone's not got the courage at a time like this....

I've already
that they

KEITEL: He
in the Rus

JODL: Yes ar
it quite cl

moment. I
northern p

and then I
tioned son

definitely t

KEITEL: He

JODL: Yes.

HITLER: If H

... I am co

selves brave

The discussions
not bring out th
idea of the comp
was in fact an i
mentioned at th
Hitler's instructi
were put to Con
This document
'depending on y
very far-reaching
was taken in No

Any question
long run after th
rejected by those
On 29 November
from the desert c
mand, while the
totally to evacua
welcome he was
cut the ground fr
that it was only
across the Medi
could meet all re

X

I've already told Zeitzler he must send a message to Heitz that they must hold on in the northern pocket.

KEITEL: Heitz was in the southern pocket and he's not mentioned in the Russian report.

JODL: Yes and that's why we must now put the question and get it quite clear who actually is in the northern pocket at the moment. If the report includes names of people who are in the northern pocket, it is a list which they have found somewhere and then published. One thing is clear – they have not mentioned somebody who was in the southern pocket and has definitely been killed – Hartmann.

KEITEL: He was killed four days ago.

JODL: Yes.

HITLER: If Heitz was in the southern pocket and is not mentioned ... I am convinced that the staff as a whole acquitted themselves bravely and honourably.

The discussions about North Africa recorded in these fragments do not bring out the fact that Hitler was at the time toying with the idea of the complete evacuation of the whole of North Africa. There was in fact an indication of this in Jodl's instructions to his staff mentioned at the beginning of this chapter; shortly afterwards on Hitler's instructions a series of questions on the sea transport situation were put to Commander-in-Chief South, Field Marshal Kesselring. This document included the following pretty clear indication: 'depending on your answer, the Supreme Command may well take very far-reaching decisions'.¹¹ Nevertheless no precautionary action was taken in North Africa to avert the impending disaster.

Any questioning of the possibility of holding North Africa in the long run after the events of early November was initially totally rejected by those on high; it can in fact be traced back to Rommel. On 29 November he unexpectedly appeared in Wolfschanze direct from the desert of Syrtes. His object was to bring the High Command, while there was still time, face to face with the decision totally to evacuate North Africa. Contrary to his previous friendly welcome he was most coldly received by Hitler who forthwith cut the ground from under his feet by quoting a remark of Göring's that it was only 'a short hop' to Tunis and stating that supply across the Mediterranean was now assured for the future and could meet all requirements.¹² (The real truth and the insincerity

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

ever and for as long as necessary. There still being no superior co-ordinating staff, he himself gave verbal orders to OKH at the beginning of May to be prepared at any time for the rapid movement of six armoured divisions from the East to the South; these were to include three named SS Panzer Grenadier Divisions, whose appearance he considered would have a considerable effect upon the Fascist elements in the Italian armed forces and population. For similar reasons he instructed Field Marshal Rommel, who had now recovered, to make all preparations in collaboration with OKW to take over as Commander-in-Chief in Italy in place of Kesselring the moment an Italian collapse, in whatever form, took place. He himself briefed Rommel personally, as he did the Commander-in-Chief in the Balkans, Colonel-General Löhr. On the other hand, anxious to keep matters secret from our allies, he forbade any written instruction, merely taking from the OKW draft the code names 'Alarich' for German protective measures in Italy and 'Konstantin' for the Balkans.⁴

A more detailed account of these events and at the same time a striking picture of the atmosphere in German Supreme Headquarters at the time is provided by the following extracts from the shorthand record of certain briefing conferences.

Fragment no. 5

Discussion with Sonderführer von Neurath concerning Italy on 20 May 1943*

Present: The Führer	Ambassador Hewel
Field Marshal Keitel	Major General Schmundt
Field Marshal Rommel	Colonel Scherff
Colonel-General Löhr	Lt-Col. Langemann
Lt-General Breuer	Sonderführer von Neurath
Lt-General Warlimont	Hauptsturmführer Günsche

Conference opened 13.19 hours.

HITLER: You've been in Sicily?

VON NEURATH: Yes, my Führer. I've been down there and I spoke to Roatta whom I have known since the days when he was head of the Attaché Section in Rome. Among other things he told me that he hadn't much confidence in the possibility of defending Sicily. He claimed that he was too weak and that his troops were

* Sonderführer was a title used for certain civilian experts who were given temporary military status. There is no English equivalent.

not properly equipped. Most important, he has only one motorized division; the rest are static troops. Every day the English are busy shooting up the engines on the railways so that movement and supply of locomotive spare parts is almost if not quite impossible. Crossing from Giovanni to Messina my impression was that traffic on this short crossing is almost at a standstill. I think there are six ferries in all but only one appeared to be there. This one was, as they put it, 'wrapped in cotton wool'; they are apparently being saved for more important purposes.

HITLER: What are these 'more important purposes'?

VON NEURATH: Well my Führer at one moment the Italians say 'when the war is over' – that's a very frequent expression; at another moment they say: 'you never know what's going to happen'. In any case this single ferry is not working. It may be there's just something wrong with it. But the German people I spoke to down there didn't think so. The German troops in Sicily have undoubtedly become pretty unpopular. It's easy to see why; the Sicilians consider that we have brought the war to their country and that we've snapped up more or less everything they have. We're now going to be the reason for the arrival of the English which however – and I must emphasize this – the Sicilian peasant would be quite pleased about; he thinks that would mean the end of his tribulations. This is quite understandable for the simple peasant; he can't look beyond the end of his nose and his object is always what will make life most comfortable quickest; once the English arrive, that's the end of the war. That's the general opinion in Southern Italy – that once the English come the thing will be over quicker than if the Germans are still there making life unpleasant.

HITLER: What are Italian official circles doing about this?

VON NEURATH: My Führer, as far as I know the Prefect and other officials who are still around are not doing much about it; they see it and they hear it but they always say the same thing. I've pointed it out to them on many different occasions, and have said: 'when a German soldier is openly cursed in the street as an enemy or something like that, which one hears of pretty often particularly in Sicily, what do you do about it? You can't let that sort of thing go on permanently.' Then they

always say:

the way th

popular. Y

chickens the

there's a wa

an excuse; t

German sol

more severe

authorities;

of the more

HITLER: They

VON NEURATH

But the Sicil

Looked at o

let things ge

The air t

serious. The

to you. Pale

the town ir

primarily th

told me is ne

English won

quite differ

Cagliari in

warehouses ;

out but the

or less intact

HITLER: That'

WARLIMONT: J

VON NEURATH

is down the

I'm not quit

troops in Sai

only in Sout

It's signific

and that Ger

General Ro

Italian staff

Some of the

nctions of se

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

always say: 'what are we to do? That's public opinion! That's the way the people feel and you haven't made yourselves popular. You've requisitioned here and eaten up all their chickens there.' I reply: 'we're not here for fun but because there's a war on!' But they always seem to make some sort of an excuse; they merely say: 'We can't do anything about it; German soldiers curse Italian soldiers too'. In my view some more severe action ought to be taken, particularly by the authorities; they ought somehow to make more of an example of the more flagrant cases than they have done up to now.

HITLER: They won't do anything.

VON NEURATH: It's very difficult. In the north they do take action. But the Sicilian is quite different from, say, the northern Italian. Looked at overall it's most unpleasant that they should have let things get into this state.

The air threat or air superiority over Sicily is extremely serious. There's no doubt about it. I don't suppose that's news to you. Palermo has been pretty well flattened – large areas of the town including many beautiful old buildings, but it's primarily the harbour. It looks as if what many people have told me is now true, that the harbour's in such a state that the English won't be able to use it themselves. Apparently it's quite different with the results of the English attacks on Cagliari in Sardinia; it's striking that there the town and the warehouses adjoining the town have been practically rubbed out but the harbour installations and the moles are still more or less intact.

HITLER: That's the report...

WARLIMONT: That's what Admiral Ruge reported.

VON NEURATH: And then, my Führer, the Italian Crown Prince is down there as Commander-in-Chief of the Italian troops. I'm not quite clear if he is Commander-in-Chief of the Italian troops in Sardinia or Sicily or in Sicily and Southern Italy or only in Southern Italy.

It's significant that he holds a lot of inspections down there and that General Roatta is very busy with him; what's more on General Roatta's staff there are a large number of officers – Italian staff officers – who are known to be pretty pro-English. Some of them have English wives, others have English connections of some sort.



HITLER: What have I been saying all along!

VON NEURATH: Personally in so far as I know him (Roatta) I wouldn't trust him further than I could kick him.

HITLER: No!

VON NEURATH: I've always thought him very foxy.

HITLER: Foxy? He is the Fouché of the Fascist revolution, a completely spineless spy. He is actually a spy.

VON NEURATH: He is a born secret service man, a typical example of one. In any case I am convinced personally that he is up to some game. The Germans down there confirmed that it was noticeable that he was increasingly trying to build up some sort of a position for himself so that he would be all right if the English attacked Sicily. I don't know how far he'll be able to do this; I am not well up on that; I don't know. But I think that I can warn you now that he's definitely up to some dangerous game.

HITLER: My view exactly!

VON NEURATH: He is the absolute ruler of Sicily; there's no doubt about that; that he has achieved. His headquarters is in Enna. Everybody dances to his tune; that's confirmed on all hands and everybody says: 'without General Roatta's approval and authority nothing happens'.

HITLER: Have you talked to Kesselring about this?

VON NEURATH: I told General von Rintelen about it, my Führer.

HITLER: We must be very careful. Kesselring is no end of an optimist and we must be careful that in his optimism he doesn't fail to see the moment when optimism must be a thing of the past and severity must take its place.

VON NEURATH: The Luftwaffe in Sicily is for the moment having a very hard time. The attacks are so heavy that I assume our losses on the ground must be correspondingly high. In some cases they can hardly get off the ground.

WARLIMONT: It was somewhat different yesterday. 27 aircraft attacked, 7 were shot down and we lost none.

HITLER: There aren't enough airfields anyway.

KEITEL: They are too concentrated.

VON NEURATH: They are concentrated.

Morale in Rome goes up and down, my Führer. It is very unpleasant. We know about the plutocratic crowd; they of course think along English lines. The Duce is pushing new

Ea
measur
they wi
of the
market
taken r
to stop
making
HITLER:
leaders
whole
been ir
VON NEU
HITLER:
VON NEU
HITLER:
to Ger.
VON NEU
peared
headqu
which
being
WARLIM
VON NEU
the Va
HITLER:
VON NEU
People
and fe
happe
are a
give o
in the
HITLER:
force;
ROMMEL
'spoilt
VON NEU
have t
HITLER:
anywa



gl
know him (Roatta) I
kick him.

very foxy.
Fascist revolution, a
spy.

man, a typical example
onally that he is up to
confirmed that it was
ing to build up some
ould be all right if the
ow far he'll be able to
n't know. But I think
utely up to some dan-

icily; there's no doubt
adquarters is in Enna.
nfirmed on all hands
Roatta's approval and

out this?
about it, my Führer.
ring is no end of an
is optimism he doesn't
ust be a thing of the

or the moment having
vy that I assume our
dingly high. In some

yesterday. 27 aircraft
ione.
way.

ny Führer. It is very
ratic crowd; they of
Duce is pushing new

measures through with great energy and the people think that they will result in a more equitable distribution of the burden of the war. But I think this has all come a bit late. Black marketing and racketeering have become habits which have taken root and spread and it's going to be frightfully difficult to stop that in one fell swoop. What he is doing is certainly not making him popular just now.

HITLER: How can you get rid of this in a country where the leaders of the armed forces and of the State, etc. - where the whole country is nothing but a mass of corruption? Have you been in Northern Italy too?

VON NEURATH: No, my Führer, I only passed through.

HITLER: How long were you in Rome?

VON NEURATH: I was there seven days this time.

HITLER: Seven days. What is the attitude of the people in Rome to Germans?

VON NEURATH: It's such that the German soldiers have disappeared from the streets. Germans are only in uniform in the headquarters and at the railway station. All these agreements which I don't know in detail have resulted in the headquarters being moved out of the town so that the military impression ...

WARLIMONT: That comes from the time ...

VON NEURATH: No, that's nothing new. I believe it was urged by the Vatican. For the rest Rome looks just as before.

HITLER: Like in peace-time?

VON NEURATH: Yes, like in peace-time. No doubt about it. People were always astounded when they came from Africa and found the streets presenting a picture as if nothing had happened in the last two years. But you're always told: 'we are a poor people; we've not got the uniforms or the boots to give our soldiers, so it's much better that we just let them stroll in the streets'.

HITLER: They could at least have let us have them as a labour force; then they could have worked.

ROMMEL: That wouldn't suit the plutocrats. They'd have been 'spoilt' by us.

VON NEURATH: Naturally, in the Italian view people would have been completely 'spoilt' by our advanced social system.

HITLER: How many workers have we in Germany at the moment anyway? Do you know that, Hewel?

HEWEL: We had 230,000; they were to be gradually released from June onwards.

HITLER: From June?

HEWEL: I'm not completely in the picture, I can find out.

HITLER: You can do that afterwards.

KEITEL: Call Sauckel; he'll know exactly.

HITLER: And what about Roatta himself? I am quite clear in my mind: a certain section in that country has consistently sabotaged this war from the beginning. From the beginning! It was sabotaged first in 1939. By their sabotage these people succeeded at that time in stopping Italy's entry into the war. Or rather she didn't actually have to enter the war; if Italy had only declared at the time that she stood with Germany as she was obligated to do by the treaties, then the war wouldn't have broken out; the English wouldn't have started nor would the French. It was this way with the English: two hours after the decision had been taken that Italy would not enter the war – it was immediately transmitted to London – England hurriedly signed her Treaty of Assistance with the Poles. It hadn't been signed up till then. Two hours after the end of the meeting the treaty was signed. We've seen the same thing happen later. Every memorandum I sent to the Duce was immediately transmitted to England. So I only put in things which I wished definitely should get to England. That was the best way to get something through to England quickly.

VON NEURATH: This sort of trafficking with England is still going on. The night before last on the train the submarine commanders from Spezia told me that they had absolute proof that the battleship *Ventroy* (?) is in communication with Malta every morning from eight to ten. When a German security officer arrived to look into it and found out the truth, he was immediately arrested by the Italian Authorities on suspicion of espionage because they realized that he had found out the truth. That's a dead sure story.

HITLER: Is there anyone here from the Navy? It doesn't matter. We must watch out now that the submarines in the Aegean ...

KEITEL: I've already made a note of it. We'll include all that.

There are new thoughts and ideas coming in all the time. [For the order dealing with the defection of Italy.]

HITLER: The ships and everything but especially the submarines.

KEITE
WARL
HITLE
but
the
by
VON N
wor
gent
HITLE
Göri
KEITE
ROMM
Mar
acro
migl
troop
KEITE
shou
to S
avall
ferry
VON NI
Mars
HITLER
VON NI
HITLER
tion's
VON NI
HITLER
when
Italia
Italia
them.
been
away
tank
in wo
SCHMUN
Munic

X

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

KEITEL: All the Fleet auxiliaries are included in our notes.

WARLIMONT: On the French coast...

HITLER: If they're on the south coast of France they can stay there but not in Italian harbours - Spezia, etc. Günsche, measure on the map how far it is from England to Munich and the distance by air from Corsica to Munich. This Roatta is a spy though!

VON NEURATH: It's the same thing with the Göring Division. The worry is that we shan't be able to get it out of Sicily if the gentlemen there won't co-operate.

HITLER: As I've said, we must think whether we want to bring the Göring Division out. In my view perhaps we shouldn't.

KEITEL: I've always felt we should hold it in Southern Italy.

ROMMEL: It won't be able to get back. I don't believe what Field Marshal Kesselring has said - that it would be able to get back across the Straits under enemy pressure. A few individuals might get back but none of the equipment nor the bulk of the troops. It will all go down the drain.

KEITEL: Yes, it'll go down the drain. My suggestion was that we should quietly pull back parts of the Hermann Göring Division to Southern Italy so that we should still have the division available as such, but not do more than that. Can we get this ferry going again?

VON NEURATH: That ought to be possible straight away, Field Marshal.

HITLER: Well then!

VON NEURATH: We can get along even without this ferry.

HITLER: That's so. The ferry is not the decisive factor, determination's the decisive factor!

VON NEURATH: It's certainly the most important!

HITLER: If you're determined you'll find a ferry. After all, when there were twenty or thirty lighters which we or the Italians had, ours were always 60 per cent serviceable and the Italians 10 per cent. There was always something wrong with them. And it was probably the same with the tanks. I've always been struck with the speed with which the Italian tanks melted away each time they were used; there was hardly an Italian tank available for two or three days afterwards; they were all in workshops. It's just a question of determination.

SCHMUNDT: England to Munich is 675 miles. And Corsica to Munich 470 miles.

A

Setting Sun

HITLER: Another point – write this down: the ammunition supply for the anti-aircraft we have down there must be so worked that it can be stopped at any time and that they haven't got too big stocks. Keep them short!

WARLIMONT: Yes, the anti-aircraft we've transferred to the Italians.

HITLER: All the anti-aircraft.

ROMMEL: Would it be possible, my Führer, for the Italians to send more troops to Sicily and hold it instead of us?

HITLER: Anything's possible of course, the question is whether they *want* to defend it. If they really want to defend it then anything could be done. What worries me is not that it *can't* be defended – for with real determination it can be defended, there's no doubt about that; we could send over troops straight away – but what worries me is that these people have no will to defend it; you can see they've no will. The Duce may have the best intentions, but he will be sabotaged. I've read Bastianini's speech. It's a stinking speech of course; no doubt about that. This speech is – I don't know if you've read it....

KEITEL: No, I've not read it; I simply saw a short note this morning that he'd spoken.

HITLER: There was a telegram. I've got it over there. The general lines of the speech were: Italy and Germany are fighting for the right, etc. and the others for the wrong and unconditional surrender would be intolerable for the Italians – that sort of thing – and Italy will rally round her King and defend her army and her King. At the word 'King' there was ostentatious applause in the Senate from certain people. There now!

All in all a rotten speech, a very rotten speech and it merely reinforces my feeling that at any moment there may be a crisis there on the lines that we've been discussing. Lohr, you will have to think about your objectives and your problems from this point of view, and ...

KEITEL: My Führer, we have discussed with him thoroughly the points you made to him yesterday and also the written instructions you gave him yesterday; he knows the ideas.

LÖHR: Yes.

HITLER: And you?

BREUER: Yes.

HITLER: One has to be on the watch like a spider in its web.

East-So.

Thank God so that I can
So far when
turned out for

KEITEL: I'm not
Crete, Rhodes

HITLER: It is
Balkans: copy

ensure that it
would call a

LÖHR: The situation
It's arrived here

HITLER: Meaning

LÖHR: If only you

HITLER: I Divi

KEITEL: The first
did on the 1

should also be
which don't get

should be let
HITLER: No one

you can give
more that is

wants to know
that is nothing

ined from this
we must be careful

we must always
That's the matter

LÖHR: Yes.

HITLER: It may
got anything to

KEITEL: The Duke
has summoned

HITLER: What time

WARLIMONT: He
he had an appointment

HITLER: How late
WARLIMONT: Twelve

HITLER: When's

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

ammunition supply
must be so worked
at they haven't got

transferred to the

the Italians to send
us?

question is whether
it to defend it then
is not that it *can't* be
it can be defended,
over troops straight
people have no will to
Duce may have the
we've read Bastianini's
to doubt about that.
did it....

by a short note this

er there. The general
any are fighting for
g and unconditional
Italians - that sort of
ing and defend her
ere was ostentatious
There now!

speech and it merely
here may be a crisis
ing. Lohr, you will
your problems from

th him thoroughly
and also the written
ows the ideas.

a spider in its web.

Thank God I've always had a pretty good nose for everything
so that I can generally smell things out before they happen.
So far whenever the situation looks difficult it has always
turned out for the best.

KEITEL: I'm not worried, but we must help him, particularly over
Crete, Rhodes and the supply to the South.

HITLER: It is really of decisive importance that we hold the
Balkans: copper, bauxite, chrome and most important of all to
ensure that if the Italian affair happens, we don't have what I
would call a complete crash there.

LÖHR: The situation is difficult until 117 Division is operational.
It's arrived but is not yet ready.

HITLER: Meanwhile we may be able to get 1 Division down there.

LÖHR: If only we had a little armour.

HITLER: 1 Division will move so that ...

KEITEL: The fighting troops! We've laid this on exactly as we
did on the Eastern Front. And then Colonel-General Lohr
should also be warned that apart from detailed instructions
which don't give anything away, only those who have to know
should be let into the secret. No one else needs to know.

HITLER: No one needs to know why and all instructions you give
you can give out of your own knowledge. No one needs to know
more than is necessary for his job. For instance, if someone
wants to know because of something to do with appointments,
that is nothing to do with him. Every measure must be exam-
ined from this point of view: the principle must always be that
we must be careful and in case there is a collapse, with which
we must always reckon, we can intervene in order to help.
That's the main theme isn't it?

LÖHR: Yes.

HITLER: It may of course happen quite differently - have you
got anything else?

KEITEL: The Duce had an audience of the King this morning and
has summoned Rintelen for later.

HITLER: What time was Rintelen's appointment?

WARLIMONT: He was to report straight away, my Führer, when
he had an appointment. The last time I spoke to him was 11.15.

HITLER: How late is it now?

WARLIMONT: Two o'clock.

HITLER: When's Zeitler coming?

A

Setting Sun

WARLIMONT: He's coming at 3.30.

HEWEL: (*Producing a paper.*) These are just a few thoughts of mine.

HITLER: There's nothing new about these two worlds. They were always there. Even at the time of his Abyssinian war. If I'd stood out against Italy then, it would have collapsed straight away. I told him then that he should not have.... I told him at the time: 'I'll chalk that up against you'; we'll chalk this up against him too. I felt that quite clearly at the reception in Rome - I remember it quite well; these two worlds stood out quite clearly; on the one side was the obvious warmth of the Fascist reception, and so on, and on the other side the absolutely glacial atmosphere of the military and the Court. People who were more or less nobodies or otherwise cowards. In my view everybody who has more than £10,000 a year is in general a coward, because they want to go on living so that they can sit upon their £10,000. They lose all courage. If a man has £50,000 or £100,000 he is quite happy. Those people don't make a revolution or anything else. So they're against any war; so they don't mind if they see their people starving. They've got a hide like a rhinoceros. If there was just distribution in a land like that, if everybody got at least what he was entitled to, even the people in England would begin to wonder about the possibility of extending the Empire. But that's not the way it is. Those people have a damned good time; they deny themselves nothing, they've got everything and the poor devils down under are the only people who have a bad time. I saw in Rome how Fascism was placed all right. It couldn't do anything against the Court circles. A reception at court is something revolting to our ideas - I wouldn't even speak of it otherwise. But it was the same even at one given by the Duce, and why? Because the whole court circle pushed its way in. It's the same with Ciano. I was supposed to take Countess Edda Ciano in to dinner. Suddenly Philip turns up with his Mafalda and the whole programme has suddenly to be turned upside down. Great excitement. Then I had to take this Mafalda in to dinner. What does she mean to me? As far as I am concerned she's nothing but the wife of a German company director. Period! Nothing more! Then her mental equipment was not so great that I would say she would cast a spell over anybody. I'm not talking about whether she was good looking or not,



but just about what she had up top. But that showed what it was like: completely penetrated and undermined by this gang in the Quirinal although all the Fascists and the Life Guards were there too; the split showed up quite clearly. The court officials said they were ...

The great question for me is what's the Duce's state of health? That's the decisive factor with a man who has to take such important decisions. What does he reckon the odds are, if for instance, the Fascist revolution goes under? There are the two problems. For either the nation is Fascist and sends the monarchy packing – what chance does he think the people have got – or what does he think will happen if the King takes over power. Difficult to say. He said something when we were dining together at Klessheim; he suddenly said: 'Führer, I don't know, I have no successor in the Fascist revolution; one can always find a successor as Head of State, but there's no successor in the revolution.' That's of course very tragic. His troubles began in 1941 while we were in the second headquarters down there on the railway – the Russian campaign had started.

KEITEL: Yes, down there in Galicia where the big tunnel was.

HITLER: In the evening we talked about the Russian commissars; that there couldn't be two authorities, etc. He was thinking hard and I was sitting there with him in the train. Then suddenly he said to me: 'You are right, Führer; there can't be two authorities in an army; but what do you think, Führer; what is one to do when one has officers who are against the government, who have second thoughts about the constitution? They say that because they are officers they can have mental reservations; when someone comes along with a constitution or a government they say: 'we are monarchists, we are servants of the King'. That's the difference; that was already the problem in 1941.

It was even worse in 1940. On 28 October when I came back – that was 1940 – he suddenly said: 'you see, I have no confidence in my soldiers; I've no confidence in my generals; I can't trust any of them.' That's what the man said to me on the very day that the offensive against Greece – or was it Albania – started.

Of course the question is – if the Duce was fifteen years younger today, there would probably be no problem; but he's

A

Setting Sun

sixty and that makes it more difficult – the question is how fit does he feel. But in my view these two worlds have always existed. They've never got rid of one of the two worlds and it sits there weaving its web – that shows up with everybody who comes from down there. This evening probably – what's his name?

KEITEL: Djurisc.

HITLER: He'll probably be with the King. You'll probably find this robber baron is related to the royal family. Oh yes, in ordinary life it's of course very difficult to marry off a daughter if her father's a sheep stealer and has been locked up umpteen times; but in Court circles there's no shame about that, it's rather an honour; all the titled gentry compete for the princesses, although the good Nikita is really nothing but a tramp who came from Austria, carried out one extortion after another and played the two off against each other – Italy and Austria. He's the chap who used the World Postal Union as part of the fraud and who swindled the Austrian State out of one-and-three-quarter million kroner. The Emperor had to pay for that out of his private purse. No end of a scandal! But that doesn't matter with 'well-bred people'.

KEITEL: My Führer, we've now got the general lines – nothing firm yet – for the instruction dealing with the possible employment of Rommel's army, also that for Löhrr which I showed you yesterday. Löhrr has been briefed on the general lines and he knows it all but he can't take any paper with him.

HITLER: We must be frightfully careful about papers just now.

KEITEL: I know that's what you want. New points arise every day, for instance this submarine question (*produces a paper*). There's a general introduction which says nothing and gives away as little as possible. But the main point is what comes later – command organization, forces, supply, all of these must be thought of and something new appears every day. Today for instance the U-boat question and the AA artillery question, etc. We would like to fill this out now. Rommel's already read it. He knows the general lines.

ROMMEL: Yes, I've been shown it.

KEITEL: He would like to add certain things. So far it's all theory. Then there are the orders which set things in motion – transport of forces and the like. But we must get the details clear.

Et

Someo
him ho
part o
These
one wh
paper.

HITLER:

two pa

ROMMEL:

HITLER:

operati

KEITEL: \

ROMMEL:

sudden

Brenne

and als

that th

these g

possibly

frontier

best if i

HITLER:]

KEITEL: \

good lc

lines cl

forgotte

but the

HITLER:]

WARLIMO

KEITEL:]

WARLIMO

HITLER:]

WARLIMO:

them ac

HITLER: W

For all those
of the Medit
collapsed in

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

Someone must go over to C.-in-C. West and discuss with him how he can, if necessary, get forces across to take over that part of the Mediterranean coast occupied by the Italians. These details only occur to one gradually; they only occur to one when you're writing it all down. That's why we've put it on paper.

HITLER: So you think, Rommel, it's better we should keep the two parachute divisions back?

ROMMEL: Yes, definitely.

HITLER: Both divisions will be available to you for your own operations.

KEITEL: We could move them into northern Italy.

ROMMEL: I am very worried, my Führer, that the Italians may suddenly collapse and close the frontier, particularly the Brenner. Those chaps have worked at it for five years. Gambara and also Navarini have let fall chance remarks to the effect that they might possibly turn and act against us. I don't trust these guys; it seems to me that if they change sides they might possibly make the English a present and say: 'we'll close the frontier and let no Germans either in or out'. So I think it's best if these divisions are initially outside. . . .

HITLER: I'd like to think that over quietly.

KEITEL: Yes, it's not so firm yet that we ought not to have another good look at it. But fairly soon we'd like to get the general lines clear. It must be put on paper or something will get forgotten. We can always change the introduction if you like, but the main lines. . . .

HITLER: I'll read that through quietly.

WARLIMONT: The section on the South-east is attached.

KEITEL: That would be the basis for Rommel's job.

WARLIMONT: Do you want the maps as well?

HITLER: No, I don't need those.

WARLIMONT: They are very good maps; perhaps I could send them across to you, my Führer.

HITLER: Well, if you like.

(Conference ended 1530 hours)

(May 1943)

For all those involved this was the start of planning for the defence of the Mediterranean without Italy. Until our Axis partner finally collapsed in September 1943 the principle was that nothing must

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

Germany and talks to me that's good. If he doesn't come or if he can't or if he resigns because he doesn't feel fit - which wouldn't surprise me with such a pack of traitors - then one doesn't know. Anyway what's-his-name said straightaway that the war would be continued but that doesn't mean a thing. They have to do that because that's treachery. But we can play the same game; we'll get everything ready to lay hands on the whole boiling, the whole crew. I'll send a man down tomorrow to the Commander of 3 Panzer Grenadier Division with an order to drive into Rome with a special detachment and arrest the whole government, the King - all that scum but primarily the Crown Prince - to get hold of this rabble, principally Badoglio and the whole gang. And then you watch them creep and crawl and in two or three days there'll be another coup.

KEITEL: The only unit from plan Alarich still on the move is 715 Division.

HITLER: Has it anyway got the assault guns, all 42 of them?

BUHLE: It must have the 42 assault guns. They all arrived.

JODL: Here is the layout (*produces a paper*).

HITLER: How far are they from Rome?

JODL: About sixty miles.

HITLER: Sixty? Forty miles! It can't be more than that. If he gets going with motorized troops he can get in and arrest all that scum.

KEITEL: Two hours.

JODL: Thirty-five to forty miles.

HITLER: That's no distance.

WAIZENEGGER: Forty-two assault guns in the division.

HITLER: Are they there with the division?

WAIZENEGGER: Yes.

HITLER: Jodl, work that out straight away.

JODL: Six battalions.

KEITEL: Ready for action, five only partially ready.

HITLER: Jodl work out straight away an order we can send to 3 Panzer Grenadier Division, an order telling them to tell no one but to drive into Rome with their assault guns and arrest the Government, the King and the whole crew. Most important of all I want the Crown Prince.

KEITEL: He's more important than the old man.

A

Setting Sun

BODENSCHATZ: We must arrange to pack them into an aircraft and fly them off straight away.

HITLER: Into the aircraft and straight off, straight off!

BODENSCHATZ: Provided we don't lose the baby on the airfield!

HITLER: There'll be another crew in a week you see.... Then I'd like to speak to Göring.

BODENSCHATZ: I'll tell him straight away.

* HITLER: Of course the decisive moment will come when we've got enough strength to move in there and disarm the whole gang. The story must be that a *coup* against Fascism was carried out led by treacherous generals and Ciano – who isn't popular anyway.

(Telephone conversation between Hitler and Göring – the stenographer could not hear Göring's questions or answers.)

Hello Göring. I don't know. Have you had any news – well there's no direct confirmation yet but there's hardly any doubt that the Duce has resigned and that Badoglio has taken his place. It's not a question of possibilities in Rome, it's a question of fact. – That's the truth, Göring, no doubt about it – what? – I don't know; we're trying to find out – of course that's nonsense; he'll keep going but don't ask me how. Now they will see how we keep going. That's all I wanted to say to you. Under these circumstances I think it would be a good idea for you to come here straight away. What? – I don't know. I'll tell you about that then. But you'd better assume that it's true.

(End of telephone conversation)

We've had a mess like this once before: that was when the government fell here.*

(KEITEL: 10.0 am in the main conference room.)

HITLER: That was a bit different. I trust they haven't arrested the Duce. But if they have it's even more important that we go in there.

JODL: That would of course be different. Then we should have to go in. The most important thing is to get the trains across which are now stuck here. The order was given yesterday that everything should if possible move into northern Italy even if they can't get further forward than this, so that at least

* Belgrade, at the end of March 1941.

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

we can get some forces across into northern Italy here. Then in that case....

BUHLE: These people here are also available.

HITLER: Use them straight away! Straight away – if necessary of course.

KEITEL: That's why we withdrew them as far as this.

HITLER: We can do that straight away, that's clear.

KEITEL: The next infantry division.

HITLER: Splendid! Wave them on. If they're not used here they will probably ... of course treachery alters everything.... We must be clear this bastard Badoglio has been working against us all the time, here, in North Africa and here, everywhere. Has Rommel gone?

DARGES: We'll check at once, my Führer.

HITLER: If he's gone we must of course get him back straight away.

KEITEL: It's possible that he'll still be in Wiener Neustadt. He went to get his baggage.

HITLER: Then get him to come up here first thing tomorrow morning in a Condor and I'll give him his orders. If the thing has developed, then of course everything will be under the command of Field Marshal Rommel and everybody will take orders from him only. Is Himmler here?

DARGES: No he's on the road; he's due back tomorrow.

HITLER: Check that. (Darges: Yes.) We must draw up a list straight away. It must obviously include Ciano and then Badoglio and many others, primarily of course the whole gang but obviously Badoglio dead or alive. (Hewel: Yes.) The first measures to be taken are: 1, to get the formations straight away on the move towards the frontier so that we can get across whatever we can, so that these formations can ...

JODL: These formations down here must be told straight away what their job is, but under all circumstances they must lay hands on all the passes.

KEITEL: That was in the secret instructions to the battalion in Innsbruck.

HITLER: Is it still there?

KEITEL: It's still there but the Mountain Warfare School has been disbanded. 715 has instructions and also 3 Panzer Grenadier Division and either the HQ or one regiment of Feldherrnhalle.



Setting Sun

3 Panzer Grenadier have their instructions. They had a secret instruction from C.-in-C. West for Plan Alarich. They were forbidden to give any information or make any extracts so as not to attract attention to these things. 3 Panzer Grenadier can do it. We hope they can collaborate with ...

HITLER: Aren't they there?

KEITEL: No, they're not there.

VON PUTTKAMER: We must warn the Navy about what's happened. They're scattered about everywhere all among the Italians in the harbours.

HITLER: Of course, but as far as possible we must get people across here.

GÜNSCHE: Field Marshal Rommel left this morning for Salonika and has now arrived there.

HITLER: Then he can fly back again tomorrow morning. He's presumably still got his aircraft.

CHRISTIAN: It's his old crate of a Heinkel III.

HITLER: How long will it take him from Salonika?

CHRISTIAN: He might get here by 3.0 or 4.0 pm. He'll have to land once to refuel.

HITLER: In six to seven hours time then.

BUHLE: Six hours.

JODL: We once got here in two and a half hours from Salonika in a Heinkel.

SPEER: At least he hasn't got my 'lame duck'. That's something different.

HITLER: You and your 'lame duck'! If the good Mackensen hadn't had it recently he wouldn't have been able to land. I heard that our good Hewel called Frau von Mackensen and said Mackensen's aircraft was overdue. That's very 'diplomatic'; that's why you get made an ambassador.

Everything else will be all right - well now, Jodl, I'll repeat: First, an order to 3 Panzer Grenadier Division and if necessary to the formations here to support the action in Rome; similar orders to the Luftwaffe round Rome and if it's still there to the anti-aircraft etc., so that they know what's happening. That's one set of things. Then get along the other formations straight away. The two things must of course go together. Third is to prepare to evacuate all German forces from this entire area. These here must be got back, naturally keeping a

East-South

screen in front back at once, small arms and else go. That's the best possible last of them are got enough German there.

JODL: It's almost
HITLER: The ant all the time. ? withdrawn. Th last.

CHRISTIAN: Are r
HITLER: We mus in a night. If w ment - nothing day.

BUHLE: Today or to the General area must have line or on the w never get there.

HITLER: We can thinking about business with H

JODL: Then C.-in-
HITLER: Yes.

JODL: 3 Panzer round the whol
HITLER: Yes.

JODL: Otherwise
HITLER: Yes, but quarters, they v

JODL: We must h
BODENSCHATZ: W

HITLER: They're
SPEER: We want

JODL: Don't let a those already tl

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

They had a secret
arch. They were
any extracts so as
Panzer Grenadier
b ...

about what's hap-
e all among the

must get people

ning for Salonika

ow morning. He's

ika?
pm. He'll have to

from Salonika in a

That's something

good Mackensen
n able to land. I
1 Mackensen and
nat's very 'diplo-
dor.

; Jodl, I'll repeat:
n and if necessary
in Rome; similar
's still there to the
happening. That's
ormations straight
' together. Third
forces from this
aturally keeping a

screen in front of them. All rearward services must be moved back at once, crossing here. Doesn't matter. Take with them small arms and machine guns but nothing else; let everything else go. That's 70,000 men we've got down there and some of the best possible men among them. We must arrange that the last of them are motorized and get straight on board. We've got enough German ships here; there's a lot of German shipping there.

JODL: It's almost entirely German.

HITLER: The anti-aircraft must remain here and keep in action all the time. The anti-aircraft over there is the last to be withdrawn. They should blow up everything and get across last.

CHRISTIAN: Are no Italians to cross with the German troops?

HITLER: We must do it so quickly that if possible it's all over in a night. If we're only getting across the men with no equipment - nothing - it should be completed in two days, one day.

BUHLE: Today or tomorrow, my Führer, we must give an order to the General Staff that as far as vehicles are concerned this area must have priority, ie everything which is on the assembly line or on the way to the East. Otherwise these formations will never get there.

HITLER: We can leave that till tomorrow. I must do a bit of thinking about something else; we must be careful about the business with Hungary.

JODL: Then C.-in-C. South must have a guard.

HITLER: Yes.

JODL: 3 Panzer Grenadier Division must put a strong guard round the whole headquarters.

HITLER: Yes.

JODL: Otherwise they'll get the headquarters.

HITLER: Yes, but we can play that game too, I'll get their headquarters, they won't know what's hit them.

JODL: We must have half an hour to think all this over quietly.

BODENSCHATZ: What about the Italian workers?

HITLER: They're not there any more.

SPEER: We want the labour.

JODL: Don't let any more Italians across the frontier apart from those already there - those in Germany.

SPEER: They work very well; we can make good use of them in the Todt organization.

HITLER: The moment this thing breaks I needn't worry any more about the King of the Belgians. I can cart the King off straight away and lock up his whole family.'

JODL: Agents have reported a secret meeting in the headquarters in Cairo on 20 June between the King of England and General Wilson, Commander-in-Chief of Twelfth Army which has been detailed for Greece.

HITLER: They're in touch with these people here, with the traitors.

JODL: Then there's this message which may be connected with it. It comes from a somewhat controversial personality in Switzerland who has often provided extremely good information: 'once the Allies have stabilized the situation in Sicily an attack on the mainland is planned towards Rome using fresh troops from North Africa. Occupation of Rome is looked upon as psychologically most important. A provisional national government will be installed in Rome at once. The Fascist Party will be dissolved and Italy and Albania will be freed from Fascist dictatorship. Considerable numbers of troops and quantities of equipment have arrived in Africa from America and Canada.'

HITLER: That certainly all adds up. Ought we not to get 2 Parachute Division ready and alerted at once?

JODL: That might possibly be necessary to reinforce Rome.

HITLER: Yes, so that we could rush it into Rome straight away.

JODL: That's all we can tell him (*Kesselring*) for the moment.

HITLER: No there's nothing more. He should have a strong guard ready. He mustn't go anywhere himself, not to any meeting and he must receive people only in his headquarters. The best would be to say that he's sick, or we could say that we've called him back here to report.

JODL: He must stay down there.

KEITEL: I'd let him stay down there. He can command and we can give him orders. He's got the machinery available. He mustn't leave his headquarters - absolutely not, and anyone who comes to see him should have a military escort; he shouldn't receive anyone and of course he should not leave his headquarters or go to any meeting. We'll lay that down precisely.

HITLER: Well then, Jodl, you'll get it all ready.

JODL: These or
HITLER: We m
thought that
JODL: Yes we i

Fragment no. 15
Brief

JODL: Then th
C.-in-C. So
whether he
has at the m
plan Alarich
now themse
their job in
number of d
teleprinter.
How do mat
let them go.

HITLER: We m
JODL: Then th
communicati

HITLER: I wou
KEITEL: No, no

HITLER: All pe
and no furth

JODL: I have sp
but we've no
Commander-
ring now war
which in fact

HITLER: Must
JODL: He'll do
tion.

HITLER: And ti
KEITEL: Hube

HITLER: You
generals' in s

JODL: We've is
once and hol

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

JODL: These orders, yes.

HITLER: We must of course play the game from now on as if we thought that it was going to succeed.

JODL: Yes we must do that.

(Meeting ended 22.13 hours)

Fragment no. 15

Briefing Conference, midnight, 25-26 July 1943

JODL: Then there are a number of other questions, my Führer. C.-in-C. South-east has been instructed to report at once whether he can carry out plan Konstantin with the forces he has at the moment; the same for C.-in-C. West in the case of plan Alarich. Now it's all changed. But all the same they must now themselves make proposals as to how they will carry out their job in the changed circumstances - they've each lost a number of divisions. Their report should come in tonight by teleprinter. They had had the news. We said nothing else. How do matters stand with coal trains for Italy? So far we've let them go.

HITLER: We must do everything which makes it look as if ...

JODL: Then there is the question: should all travel and private communications to Italy be stopped?

HITLER: I wouldn't do that yet.

KEITEL: No, not yet.

HITLER: All persons of any importance must call off their visits and no further authorizations will be given.

JODL: I have spoken to Kesselring. He has heard the proclamation but we've now no touch with him. In fact there's now a new Commander-in-Chief and a new Head of Government. Kesselring now wants to get in touch with the King and with Badoglio, which in fact he must do.

HITLER: Must he? Yes, I suppose he must.

JODL: He'll do that first thing tomorrow, to sound out the situation.

HITLER: And the good Hube says: 'everything's all right here!'

KEITEL: Hube knows nothing, he's merely repeated what the ...

HITLER: You see how dangerous it is having 'non-political generals' in such a political atmosphere.

JODL: We've issued the order to alert 2 Parachute Division at once and hold all available transport aircraft ready.

CHRISTIAN: I shall have the report of what is available shortly.

But there's now another question, my Führer: Field Marshal von Richthofen in 2 Air Fleet has up to now been using 100 JU 52 transport aircraft for the supply of 1 Parachute Division in Sicily; ten were shot down today. He wanted to withdraw them. C.-in-C. South wanted to take over these aircraft and in view of the latest developments use them to bring troops from northern to central Italy. 2 Air Fleet asked for instructions from C.-in-C. Air. I have told C.-in-C. Air that there must be no more telephone conversations on the subject and everything must now go via C.-in-C. South.

HITLER: C.-in-C. South must run all this and concentrate everything under his own hand. I have already told Göring that there must be no more telephoning.

CHRISTIAN: That came up from below, my Führer; C.-in-C. Air did not start it; it came from 2 Air Fleet. The question now is: should 2 Parachute Division have these aircraft?

HITLER: 2 Parachute Division takes priority; that is the most important; that's quite clear.

KEITEL: The order reads: 'if necessary abandoning heavy equipment, which must be destroyed if unavoidable; no further issue of orders by telephone, even in camouflaged form'.

HITLER: No, I would put: 'all heavy equipment'.

KEITEL: Then it reads: 'if necessary abandoning all heavy equipment, which must be destroyed if unavoidable'. Then 'no further issue of orders even in camouflaged form; instructions only via liaison officer'.

HITLER: By liaison officer whose instructions must also be in cipher.

HEWEL: My Führer, the question arises whether we should cut telephone communications through the postal authorities. The Post Office has put the question. Journalists' reports are still going. That's probably what they're getting at; whether we shouldn't cut everything except the military lines.

HITLER: We could say that all lines were required for military purposes and official communications.

HEWEL: It's primarily the journalists who of course are now very—

HITLER: Only for official communications.

HEWEL: Only for ministries?

HITLER: Only for ministerial and military communications.

TO KEITEL: 'there's r

CHRISTIAN

HITLER: T

both things b

KEITEL: N

HITLER: T

KEITEL: '.

HITLER: A

JODL: Ther

ment wa

form from Pal

eight larg

direction

as if there

right flan

HITLER: Is

JODL: The l

CHRISTIAN:

HITLER: All

there strai

JODL: The a

HITLER: We

get the re

holds and

away in a

shooting a

JODL: Anoth

plan for R

HITLER: Tha

clear. We

must make

Division m

be occupie

Grenadier

JODL: What a

HITLER: Tha

unloaded',

KEITEL: It m

those whic

★

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

KEITEL: '... whose written instructions must be encoded.' So that there's nothing in what they've got on them.

CHRISTIAN: What about teleprinter and radio?

HITLER: Teleprinter scrambled and radio enciphered. But can't things be deciphered?

KEITEL: No, that's the procedure the Navy use.

HITLER: Teleprinter scrambled and radio enciphered.

KEITEL: '... or encoded radio messages.'

HITLER: All right.

JODL: Then reconnaissance this afternoon established that movement was taking place along the north coast of Sicily eastwards from Palermo. There were approximately fifty vessels including eight large ones; the rest were small, probably landing craft; direction not quite clear but probably east. It looks therefore as if there's going to be an attempt at a landing in rear of our right flank.

HITLER: Is the Luftwaffe all ready for it?

JODL: The Luftwaffe has been warned.

CHRISTIAN: Yes, we have that from C-in-C. South.

HITLER: All the same I think we ought to send an officer down there straight away.

JODL: The aircraft is ready, it will only have to wait for first light.

HITLER: We must send an officer to tell Hube how to act. First get the rearward services back and across, while the front line holds and then gets back itself in a single night. They must get away in a single night - men only. The rearguard must go on shooting and put up a show.

JODL: Another thing which must be transmitted verbally is the plan for Rome.

HITLER: That must happen under all circumstances; that's quite clear. We can't deal with it here; we must strike back and we must make sure we get the whole Government. The Parachute Division must have plans to jump in the Rome area. Rome must be occupied. Nobody is to leave Rome and then 3 Panzer Grenadier Division moves in.

JODL: What about the units on the move - those from 26 Division.

HITLER: That's not quite clear in the order as written; 'which are unloaded', it should say that they are to be unloaded there.

KEITEL: It means 'the units to be unloaded', ie in addition to those which have been unloaded. I read it through twice. I

also thought it would perhaps be better to put 'the elements of 26 Armoured Division to be unloaded.'

JODL: They were partially unloaded because they couldn't get further forward and had to go on by road.

HITLER: Then you must add 'units which have been unloaded and are still to be unloaded'. Here: 'in addition to the units already unloaded, the remainder of 26 Armoured Division is to be unloaded and placed under command of 3 Panzer Grenadier Division'.

HEWEL: Ought we not to tell them to occupy the exits to the Vatican?

HITLER: That doesn't matter; I'll get into the Vatican any time!

Do you think I worry about the Vatican? We can seize that straight away. The whole diplomatic corps will be in there. I don't care a damn but if the whole crew's there, we'll get the whole lot of swine out. That is ... then we'll say we're sorry afterwards; we can easily do that. We've got a war on.

BODENSCHATZ: There'll be most of the ... do you think that's safe.

HEWEL: We'll lay hands on a lot of documents there.

HITLER: There? Yes, we'll get some documents there. We'll get some evidence of treachery! How long will the Foreign Minister take to get the instruction out to Mackensen - pity he isn't here.

HEWEL: It's probably gone out already.

HITLER: All right then.

HEWEL: I'll check at once.

HITLER: Is this some journalistic effort covering twelve pages? I'm always afraid of you chaps; two or three lines is all that's wanted.

I've thought of something else, Jodl - if they attack tomorrow or the day after I don't know whether the formations are concentrated yet - I would get them to attack once more in the East. Then the Leibstandarte could take part once more; because until the equipment arrives ...

KEITEL: The rolling-stock.

JODL: It can of course do that; it would of course be better if we could firm up the position there before it leaves.

HITLER: That would of course be a good thing. Then we can just move the one division, the Leibstandarte. It must be the first



to get on the move and can leave its equipment there. It can leave a lot of equipment there; no need to take its tanks with it. It can leave them there and be supplied from here. It can get them here. Well then the tanks stay there. And the division gets tanks here; there are plenty of stocks. That's simple. As soon as the division arrives, tanks will be available for it.

HEWEL: I wanted to ask about the Prince of Hesse; he is standing around here all the time. Shall I tell him we don't want him?

HITLER: I'll see him and have a word with him.

HEWEL: Naturally he's asking questions of everybody; he wants to know everything.

HITLER: On the contrary that's a good piece of camouflage; it's like a prison wall. That's definitely a good thing. When we've been planning something we've often had people around who knew nothing and then everybody else thought: 'if they are there, everything's all right'. I am a bit worried that Göring isn't keeping to his job.

BODENSCHATZ: I've already told him that quite clearly.

HITLER: You must be fearfully polite. I'll give him all the proclamations we've got here – they're more or less public. Philip can read those through at his leisure; there's no danger in that. But take care you don't give him the wrong things. I don't know where they are. Look and see you don't give him the wrong ones! Now the movements. When can the first begin? Best it should be concentrated!

JODL: We'll know that soon. This is 305 Division which is ready.

HITLER: And what about 44?

JODL: That's ready; it depends on the rolling-stock. 44 Division will not be released until tomorrow. But I think it can start to move during the course of tomorrow.

HITLER: Is 44 Division motorized? (JODL: No.) Is it a three-regiment division?

KEITEL: It's a fully battle-worthy three-regiment division. We wanted to get it down here a month ago; Rommel was very keen to have it because it was ready. But at that time you refused. So we brought down the Brandenburg division as being less noticeable.

HITLER: The Brandenburg isn't there either.

KEITEL: It's gone too. It was in Innsbruck but things have altered a bit.

△

Setting Sun

HITLER: These two formations may have to deal with a pillbox or two; oughtn't we to give them something, either a Tiger or something like that, in case they run into difficulties; a Tiger would knock down a couple of pillboxes straight away if it hit the slits. (KEITEL: Of course.) Perhaps you could check straight away with Buhle what Tigers there are in the training schools etc.

JODL: Anything we lay hands on we must get to Innsbruck.

HITLER: We only need one or two, just to shoot up a couple of pillboxes and then move on to Krain. They'll soon deal with one or two pillboxes. If a couple of Tigers come along and shoot them up, that'll soon be the end of them. They'll go straight through the concrete they've got. If necessary we could use Panthers. Perhaps we could see whether we couldn't get one or two out of the schools - assault tanks too.

KEITEL: I'll talk to Buhle.

HITLER: I want to see Guderian too.

(Meeting closed 00.45 hours)

Fragment no. 16

Midday Conference, 26 July 1943

HITLER: Any fresh news, Jodl?

JODL: No. A meeting has been arranged with Badoglio for 6 pm; up to now he's been too busy to have time... Some are yelling: 'peace, peace!'; others are hunting down Fascists.

HITLER: That's good.

JODL: So far it's nothing but baby games like on Ash Wednesday.

HITLER: That might however be like the Ash Wednesday we once had.

JODL: We've spoken to the headquarters and they have assured us that, should there be any danger, they have one airfield completely in German hands.

HITLER: Another question: have you any information when this parachute division will be ready to jump?

JODL: It's been alerted but there's no news yet when it will get the additional troops.

HITLER: Jeschonnek ought to know that.

JODL: They ought to be arriving about now.

HITLER: Has movement started here [*Sicily*] - would it be possible at least to get the tanks across?

East-Son

JODL: Of course try and get it

HITLER: With report there to go. And what away from the

JODL: I should that's possible

GÖRING: That's

HITLER: They're

Corsica. We

Corsica.

Where is it

HITLER: It's

JODL: It's not

HITLER: I've heard

just what you

men.

JODL: I read it

HITLER: These

come from the

mostly sixteen

fight more for

divisions fight

HITLER: They

HITLER: ... if it

like all our young

lines. The other

but they've not

HITLER: Both

They're now

Blaskowitz, R

completely so

HITLER: What's

the average a

HITLER: On

3-4,000 senior

The average

reckoning from

soldier.

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

JODL: Of course while we still can't get any men across we must try and get across the most valuable equipment.

HITLER: With priority to the tanks! According to yesterday's report there are 160 tanks there.

And what can we do here [Sardinia]? How can we get them away from there, primarily the men?

JODL: I should like to propose that we take them to Corsica if that's possible and concentrate them there.

GÖRING: That's my view too – make Corsica as strong as possible.

HITLER: They'd have to leave all their equipment if they went to Corsica. We must discuss today how we can get them over to Corsica.

Where is 10 SS Division? Is it here?

HIMMLER: It's here; it arrived recently.

JODL: It's not quite ready but nearly.

HITLER: I've had a very good report about the Göring Division – just what you'd expect; it's an average picture of our young men.

JODL: I read it.

HITLER: These young men are fighting like fanatics because they come from the Hitler Youth. They're young German kids, mostly sixteen-year-olds. These Hitler Youth chaps generally fight more fanatically than the older people. So if these two divisions fight as well as the SS divisions ...

HIMMLER: They're now good divisions, my Führer.

HITLER: ... if they fight like the Hitlerjugend Division, in fact like all our young people. They've been brought up on the right lines. The others will be amazed. They're only young chaps but they've now been training for a long time.

HIMMLER: Both divisions trained from 15 February to 15 August. They're now in good shape. They were inspected by Dollman, Blaskowitz, Rundstedt and the rest and they all said they were completely satisfied.

HITLER: What's the average strength of each division and what's the average age?

HIMMLER: On an average they have 400 officers and about 3-4,000 senior NCOs. They're older – about twenty to thirty. The average age in the two divisions is eighteen-and-a-half, reckoning from the Divisional Commander down to the private soldier.

A

Setting Sun

HITLER: So you could more or less say eighteen?

HIMMLER: Yes, eighteen.

GÖRING: Not long ago it was being said that it was the people between twenty-six and thirty who fought best.

HIMMLER: On an average, yes, but only from the point of view of physical strength.

HITLER: If they'd been trained as long as that. ... Before that they taught young people God knows what. ... They're all youngsters who joined up at seventeen, some of them even earlier in order to get in ... they've fought marvellously – unparalleled bravery ... the others were wretchedly trained – two months training ... some before April, some after April, some during April and during the other months we had about fourteen days ... those were some exercises, exercises in the Oberwiesensfeld training area ... these are definitely better.

HIMMLER: Actually they are well trained.

HITLER: So these first five divisions are there; has 24 Armoured Division got there yet?

JODL: 24 Armoured Division's got there.

HITLER: It must be put in here, that's obvious. We must ensure that we can get a division from the East down here quickly in support.

JODL: Then, my Führer, Field Marshal von Rundstedt is arriving at Italian Fourth Army today [*on the eastern sector of the French Mediterranean coast*].

GÖRING: On a visit.

JODL: One of a current series of visits. Up to now relations have been good. I think this is very good. ...

GÖRING: Excellent!

HITLER: But he mustn't stay there long; he must move off as quickly as possible. He must get through with it quickly. We must ensure that as quickly as possible ... he must get a detailed picture of the situation today ... Göring. ...

GÖRING: What Italian forces are there in Rome?

HIMMLER: My Führer, we could try to get this division out of the Duce. We gave it twelve assault guns, twelve Mark IV tanks, twelve Mark III tanks; that makes 36.

HITLER: He must ensure that we get the whole division – that it comes over to us.

GÖRING: The guns at any rate.

HIMMLER:
JODL: Wh
GÖRING: A
HITLER: I
JODL: Tha
HITLER: S
wise we
know w
GÖRING: I
liaison o
HITLER: L
papers.
GÖRING: W
HITLER: B
HIMMLER:
HITLER: If
HIMMLER:
HITLER: A
HIMMLER: C
making i
GÖRING: T
JODL: The
what fut
again qui
HITLER: So
here or a
JODL: Ther
are runni
HITLER: Ye
JODL: Then
HIMMLER: A
HITLER: T
withdraw
HIMMLER: I
you seize
vinced of
HITLER: ...)
... have yc
About this
SCHERFF: T

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

HIMMLER: Then the training teams are there too.

JODL: When can I give this order?

GÖRING: Are we actually issuing an order?

HITLER: They're transmitted on scrambled teleprinter.

JODL: That's quite safe.

HITLER: Scrambled teleprinter, what more do you want? Otherwise we can't give him any orders at all. Otherwise he won't know what we want.

GÖRING: I thought perhaps in this case it ought to go by special liaison officer.

HITLER: Liaison officers are more dangerous still, if they've got papers. They have to be in cipher.

GÖRING: Why not keep it in his head?

HITLER: But you can't keep too many things in your head.

HIMMLER: I can still use radio to my division in Rome.

HITLER: In cipher?

HIMMLER: Yes, in cipher.

HITLER: And that's quite safe?

HIMMLER: Quite safe. We've just made up a new code. Finished making it yesterday. I can give them the order to ...

GÖRING: That must be safe.

JODL: The order must go to Kesselring, otherwise he won't know what future intentions are. The information he then gets ... again quite a different situation....

HITLER: So move them down here, Jodl, so that they can get in here or alternatively get across the Brenner.

JODL: There's no difficulty in getting across the Brenner; trains are running.

HITLER: Yes, but if they suddenly occupy it?

JODL: Then there's the other point....

HIMMLER: And South Tyrol rises!

HITLER: There are no south Tyrolese there; they've all been withdrawn.

HIMMLER: There are one or two still there. The Italians are ... if you seize it ... they would go into their pill boxes, I am convinced of that.

HITLER: ... Innsbruck Garrison ... and makes his Tigers available ... have you talked to Thomale about this business? (JODL: Yes.) About this?

SCHERFF: Thomale was here just now.

JODL: I've spoken to him already. At least we've got something over there in the east, near Tarvisio, that's the next regiment.

HIMMLER: I was just about to say what about this regiment.... I can anyway get that here ... this Mountain Regiment. Can we get it up straight away?

HITLER: What's this police regiment here?

HIMMLER: That's the police regiment in Marseille. My Führer, we could, with the one in Laibach and Trieste.... I very much want to keep the one in Laibach.

HITLER: But we could get that one along.

HIMMLER: I can do that straight away.

HITLER: Should we do that straight away?

JODL: I assume they are acting this way because they've been ordered to take increased precautions - we shall hear about that today.

HITLER: Anyway when the tanks arrive the whole rabble will run like nothing on earth.

HIMMLER: Will our tank detachments get as far as this?

HITLER: Down to here, but we must see. The Leibstandarte is leaving its tanks behind and drawing up others here.

GÖRING: I'm not worried. There's no question of these good-for-nothings stopping us on the Brenner.

HITLER: If our tanks arrive....

GÖRING: I think it's a very good idea to let the paratroopers jump. Himmler's people can do that better than mine. Do it at once! ...

GÖRING: Can I ask again about the parachute division, my Führer. Where do you mean it to land?

JODL: The object of the parachute division is to prevent anybody getting out of Rome.

HITLER: Everything must be occupied - all the exit roads. You only want quite small detachments; they can dig themselves in and then nothing can get by.

GÖRING: Not all at the same time then ... what is being concentrated at the airfields....

HITLER: Everything else we shall need in the city can be landed at an airfield. I don't know which for the moment. But we must be sure to get away from the airfield quickly, because we must reckon on the Allies attacking straight away. We must get away from the airfield in a flash.

GÖRING: And blow up whatever we can.

JESCHONNEK: Southern F
lane or to 2 Para
GÖRING: The
JESCHONNEK: this afterno
HITLER: The
Rome. The
anyway.
GÖRING: Who
tal?
HITLER: That
Panzer Gren
Now here a
think they'll
against them
JODL: 12 Divisi
KEITEL: I don't
and they wa
HEWEL: They'
newspapers
of Stefani ha
HITLER: Who?
HEWEL: The C
At least that
HIMMLER: My
who didn't b
picion that
women too.
HITLER: The F
sador at once
shall take th
act quickly -
is the most in
Now Romr
because we c
tion; it's que
but that does
concentrated
JODL: May I re

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

JESCHONNEK: Could we not send a liaison officer down to Southern France today or early tomorrow to General Student or to 2 Parachute Division and tell them where to go.

GÖRING: The detail of where they've got to jump.

JESCHONNEK: We can't say exactly what the situation will be this afternoon or early tomorrow.

HITLER: The situation will be just the same. Rome will still be Rome. The exit roads must be occupied. That can be done anyway.

GÖRING: Who had best cordon off the Vatican City from the capital?

HITLER: That's the job of the formations which go in, primarily 3 Panzer Grenadier Division. The units which land come after. Now here are three so-called active Italian divisions. I don't think they'll do much, though, if we make a show of force against them.

JODL: 12 Division is in Rome; the others are further away....

KEITEL: I don't believe they had any military units down there and they wanted to get hold of some quickly.

HEWEL: They'd apparently prepared everything very well; the newspapers ... notices had all been prepared that the Chairman of Stefani had shot himself etc.

HITLER: Who?

HEWEL: The Chairman of the Stefani News Agency shot himself. At least that's the story.

HIMMLER: My Führer, people have been arrested too – Germans who didn't belong to the Embassy and were under some suspicion that they'd been giving information or something – women too.

HITLER: The Foreign Ministry must get that – tell our Ambassador at once: all Germans must be released forthwith or we shall take the most energetic measures. Of course we must act quickly – that's the most important thing. In this case speed is the most important thing.

Now Rommel, here's the problem: first to get our forces back because we can't hold Sicily any longer, that's out of the question; it's questionable whether you can hold the toe of Italy but that doesn't matter. The most important thing is to remain concentrated so that at least you can fight.

JODL: May I refer to the command organization; Field Marshal

A

Rommel will command down there ... alternatively we must have a division of responsibility - that Field Marshal Rommel acts here ... and that Field Marshal Kesselring gets additional forces from the south up here. As soon as they arrive they come under command of Field Marshal Rommel; otherwise it won't work; from Munich it is...

HITLER: I agree to all that, but I still think overall command should go to Rommel. Field Marshal Kesselring hasn't got the reputation. We'll publish that the moment we move in - Field Marshal Rommel! Secondly all Fascist divisions will come over to us ... we must get the Fascists back straight away, that must be our object ... battered formations and regular divisions ... and volunteers... Himmler's had a very good idea: any man who wants to can go home; we'll get Farinacci to announce that - we'll get him into this today - any Italian soldier can go home ... we shan't get those who go home; they're no use anyway.

HIMMLER: We could perhaps take them to Germany later as a labour force.

HITLER: Of course, but they're not much use - the next thing is to try and get the men away from here. That's the main job here, apart from the precautionary measures here. The third thing is the occupation of Rome for which the paratroopers jump and 3 Panzer Grenadier Division moves in.

GÖRING: But the orders must be given on the spot. You can't command that from Munich.

HITLER: The orders will be given and the commanders will be responsible for carrying them out and then at the same time German divisions will move in ... if any unit looks as if it's going to offer resistance, fire must be opened on it ruthlessly; that's the only way. This thing's got to succeed ... that means that with the Hermann Göring Division we've got six - and two good ones among them.

GÖRING: The Opposition will of course call on the Allies for help and beg to be protected. So where will the enemy land?

HITLER: But it will be some time before he is in a position to land.

GÖRING: Of course he can always put down parachute troops the same as we can.

HITLER: Of course he can, but ...

GÖRING: I only thought I'd raise the point.

HITLER: To be caught
GÖRING: If the Allies.

HITLER: The heels beca
down Fas
HEWEL: Yes

HITLER: We wait for a instance 'I
visional Fi
itself there
must have
National-S
and officer

of seventy-
HIMMLER: C
straight aw

HITLER: He
HIMMLER: Th

HITLER: But
GÖRING: At le

manned.

HITLER: Our
There's tim

they'll give
hopes they
more ... it
viously ...

GÖRING: Whe
JODL: We cou

headquarter

HITLER: Who
JODL: Student.

HITLER: Splen
... (Hewel pr

Badoglio.) W
mental co-or

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

HITLER: To begin with, as always happens in such cases, they'll be caught on the wrong foot.

GÖRING: If Rome surrenders there'll be no call for assistance to the Allies.

HITLER: They've done that already. Some have taken to their heels because the Italians are ... Italy's divided, they're hunting down Fascists – who shot himself, the Chairman of Stefani?

HEWEL: Yes, the Chairman of Stefani shot himself.

HITLER: We must ensure that all this is co-ordinated, that people wait for a signal and that then it all starts. We must ... for instance 'Fascist Freedom Army' ... we must set up a provisional Fascist Government straight away which can install itself there and give orders ... all Fascist soldiers and officers must have a National-Socialist ... we must be sure that the National-Socialist ... we must ensure that these Fascist soldiers and officers join National-Socialist formations. This old man of seventy-three ...

HIMMLER: Can I give the order to my commander down there straight away? ... Urgent that those who are trained arrive.

HITLER: He won't be able to do it.

HIMMLER: That's another division. These are really only militia.

HITLER: But there are so many others in between!

GÖRING: At least use the tanks and assault guns; they are German manned.

HITLER: Our people are the only ones who will do anything. There's time. They'll give the order. If this has got to happen, they'll give the order. They'll hear the proclamations and one hopes they won't stop up their ears. No need for secrecy any more ... it will be out on the radio. If the Stefani radio obviously ...

GÖRING: Where is parachute division headquarters?

JODL: We could use it for this business; it's the only available headquarters.

HITLER: Who is it.

JODL: Student.

HITLER: Splendid! He is the man for this sort of thing. Just right.

... (*Hewel produces record of a conversation between Mackensen and Badoglio.*) What a pack of lies! Listen to this! (*Reads*), 'fundamental co-operation'! What impertinence!

Setting Sun



East-5

HEWEL: He is trying hard.

HITLER: If only I could lay hands on the bastard!

GÖRING: What a nerve with this letter!

HITLER: He's an old hard-boiled enemy of ours. It was he who was primarily responsible for stopping Italy coming into the war on 25 August 1939, and it was primarily that which led to England and France coming into the war and signing the Polish Treaty.

GÖRING: But to write a letter like this! It's a piece of play acting! A Punch and Judy show! ...

DÖNITZ: That's too much. I can't do anything to stop ... that there should be U-boats in Spezia and Toulon and that five or six should lie off Spezia. If we can't work it by propaganda, the best would be to seize the ships as soon as possible.

HITLER: They will be in Toulon...

DÖNITZ: Yes, perhaps we could seize them beforehand. I have only got U-boat crews in Spezia and they've got nothing but rifles and revolvers. They're not equipped for anything else. So if we want to seize the ships we must have adequately equipped troops. But anyway I think the Italians will give themselves up.

HITLER: Have you any idea ...

GÖRING: We've got people there.

DÖNITZ: But they're not mobile and they are only 300 men. We've got two U-boats there. You can't do much propaganda with 300 men. And of course they're not trained, they're just sailors. I think, my Führer, that we must try and stop the people getting away.

HITLER: I've already said that a special army formation should be got ready for this purpose.

DÖNITZ: Better wait a bit; we don't know.

GÖRING: But haven't you got U-boats lying off?

DÖNITZ: I've got U-boats lying off in case they run for it. One must wait to see how things develop. It's also possible that there may be a split in the fleet and that the younger officers will arrest the older.

JODL: In my view the most urgent thing is to transfer Student's staff to Kesselring. Then to send a liaison officer to Kesselring who can discuss the Rome operation verbally with Kesselring

and Student

forthwith

wants so d

HITLER: The

never get

that's no

Serbian o

You can't

JODL: But fo

which cau

Grenadier

HITLER: Th

troopers...

GÖRING: Th

JESCHONNE

They'll h

that as f

wave with

it's to lar

brought u

HITLER: Yo

first thing

detachme

JESCHONNE

soon as it

JODL: We n

the blue

and let it

HITLER: Bu

away? Ea

lot of par

JODL: I thi

on the w

troops w

HITLER: Th

JODL: I do

thing diff

HITLER: Th

We must

GÖRING: T



and Student. He knows nothing about it and then he can tell us forthwith what forces he can concentrate and how long he wants so that we can more or less set a date.

HITLER: The date must be laid down by us, otherwise we shall never get to the end of it and there'll be endless delays and that's no good. We've always laid down the date. Even in the Serbian operation we decided on the date and laid it down. You can't leave that to subordinate headquarters.

JODL: But for the moment it's only the subordinate headquarters which can tell me what's available apart from 3 Panzer Grenadier Division.

HITLER: The other thing's our affair. We can tell the paratroopers....

GÖRING: There are nine battalions.

JESCHONNEK: We must get nine infantry battalions going quickly. They'll have to be flown in three waves. I'd like to propose that as far as possible we agree details about the second wave with Field Marshal Kesselring – he must decide where it's to land.... In addition, 1 Parachute Regiment can be brought up ... Naples.

HITLER: You can't land the first wave without ... no good. The first thing to do is to block the exit roads in a flash. Special detachments must be detailed.

JESCHONNEK: ... the first wave without the Italians noticing ... as soon as it's clear we mean to cut off Rome.

JODL: We must definitely do that. We could only drop them into the blue if we could bring the whole division in in one wave and let it come down any old how.

HITLER: But who can guarantee that he won't smell a rat straight away? Every airfield is swarming with Italians and when a lot of parachute troops come down – what then?

JODL: I think we can do it if we give out that the paratroops are on the way to Sicily. If the Italians seem hostile to the paratroops while they're landing ...

HITLER: They won't do that.

JODL: I don't think so. But the moment they jump that's something different.

HITLER: Then some of them will scam and the thing's gone wrong. We must be clear about that.

GÖRING: There's one parachute division in Sicily.

Setting Sun

JODL: Yes, there are parachute troops everywhere.
GÖRING: Perhaps we could arrange to deal direct with the Italians about transport aircraft ... say that we're merely flying to Rome and landing there ... primarily to get air space ... we'll have to have them to back up the first wave.
HITLER: I wouldn't say that the parachute troops ...
GÖRING: No, the first!
JESCHONNEK: 1 Parachute Division.
GÖRING: Save supplies for them. We can say officially that we don't ... but we require trains to bring them to Italy. That would be the first wave. Then they fly back and we say officially: we can only get as far as Rome; airfields forward of that are destroyed; we can't fly further because of yesterday's losses. They'll lap up all that. We have had losses flying to Sicily. In my view we're risking too many crews flying there, so we can't go further than Rome. We'll tell the Comando Supremo officially that we want trains to Reggio for the parachute troops so that they can cross to the division they belong to. And then the second wave arrives.
JESCHONNEK: Another point is that if they're all to jump, not all the aircraft arriving are fitted.
JODL: We should perhaps reinforce this area and that over there. The supply situation in Sicily is all right for the immediate future. (*Produces the Wehrmacht report.*) May I ask for a decision. In my view this is what must happen: a liaison officer must fly to Rome to tell Kesselring verbally about the Rome operation and Student must get there at the same time so that he can also be put in the picture.
HITLER: We don't need two. Student should come here first and take the liaison officer with him.
GÖRING: Get Student here straight away.
JESCHONNEK: That'll take longer if I may say so. General Student is in Southern France.
HITLER: All the same the thing's not going to happen first thing tomorrow morning. How long will it take him to get here from Southern France?
JESCHONNEK: General Student can get here today. Then he can leave early tomorrow.
HITLER: I think it's right to get General Student here, then he can take the thing over.

East-So

KEITEL: He can
HITLER: We ha
of the ...
JODL: That's g
chute troops
another. But
HITLER: They'
GÖRING: Kesse
the parachut
HITLER: Becau
GÖRING: No, b
Rome area a
must await th
together.
HITLER: Yes.
WARLIMONT: N
the eastern M
ing to plan. F
the commanc
Rommel had
ceived no ord
ments satisfac
arrived. It w
over of comm
enquiries in I
In addition, I
new distributi
new situation
Crete is unch
HITLER: What's
WARLIMONT: ...
urgently nece
between Mon
there is at pre
HITLER: This re
worry that ...
KEITEL: The ini
quent movem
WARLIMONT: H
It was origina

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

KEITEL: He can also deal with the Government.

HITLER: We haven't got as far as that yet. After all the first echelon of the ...

JODL: That's got nothing to do with the Rome operation. Parachute troops arrive, other troops arrive, one train leaves after another. But if they jump the alarm will be given in Rome.

HITLER: They'd cotton on straight away.

GÖRING: Kesselring merely says that because of the threat here the parachute troops ...

HITLER: Because of the losses here?

GÖRING: No, because of the threat here they must land in the Rome area and go on to Reggio by rail. We could say that they must await the arrival of the second wave so that they can go on together.

HITLER: Yes.

WARLIMONT: Nothing important to report from the South-east or the eastern Mediterranean. Our own movements went according to plan. Early today Colonel-General Löhner paid the visit to the commander of the Italian XI Army which Field-Marshal Rommel had planned. The upshot is that this Army has received no order from Rome. He said he considered the arrangements satisfactory but could not conform until the order had arrived. It was agreed with Rome yesterday that the takeover of command should take place. It now remains to make enquiries in Rome and press that the order should be given. In addition, my Führer, C.-in-C. South-east has reported the new distribution of forces which he considers necessary in this new situation. (*Produces a paper*). The situation in Rhodes and Crete is unchanged.

HITLER: What's happening here?

WARLIMONT: ... reinforced Regiment 92 because he considers it urgently necessary to get some German troops into the area between Montenegro and the northern Greek frontier where there is at present nobody.

HITLER: This regiment is more or less here. There is no need to worry that ...

KEITEL: The initial movements always take the longest. Subsequent movements always go quicker than ...

WARLIMONT: He had detailed 100 Jäger Division for this area. It was originally intended for the Peloponnese but has been

Setting Sun

making slow progress because of the block on the railway. This one also is intended to move up to defend the coast of Albania, if necessary.

HITLER: It can't do that.

WARLIMONT: The important points, my Führer, are these two bases, Valona and Durazzo. The whole Konstantin plan is based on the assumption that no further forces will be available from the East. It must be emphasized that these two bases should be occupied so that at least we have the main ports in German hands.

HITLER: But they're unprotected.

WARLIMONT: They're not strong bases.

HITLER: When does Weichs get here?

KEITEL: He should be here tomorrow. He leaves Nuremberg today and should be here early tomorrow.

ROMMEL: Is Weichs probably coming here?

HITLER: Does that worry you?

ROMMEL: No.

HITLER: I don't know how Weichs' health is; he's a very calm chap.

KEITEL: I've spoken to him and he's ready for anything.

HITLER: He must be a really outstanding officer.

KEITEL: Weichs was originally with mountain troops.

WARLIMONT: C.-in-C. South-east's other proposals deal with ... to get the available divisions nearer the coast with the proviso here that 1 Armoured Division should be in reserve at the Isthmus of Corinth so that it can be employed towards the north as well. Apart from 1 Armoured Division there's only one single division and that must stay up front. And the four fortress battalions.

HITLER: Apart from this division there's only one there?

WARLIMONT: He wants to push up 117 Division nearer the western and southern coasts. 104 Division and 1 Mountain Division have similar orders. Then in here can come a further battalion from the Brandenburg Regiment which is at the moment employed on an anti-guerilla operation. One division is already here in the area west of Belgrade, and the other will follow shortly.

HITLER: When does the police regiment arrive?

WARLIMONT: The one from Finland? That was due to leave

East

Danzig o
down her

HITLER: I

WARLIMONT

HITLER: A

WARLIMONT

until he

occupy t

Jäger Div

It's not y

HITLER: W

WARLIMONT

will not l

occupy t

HITLER: W

ROMMEL: V

position.

the road

there's w

it must j

situation

got up to

HITLER: W

GÖRING: A

instructi

down the

HITLER:

WARLIMONT

that all

moment

HITLER: T

GÖRING: T

WARLIMONT

forces; t

event of

question

situation

HITLER: T

WARLIMONT

come un

A

East-South Tug-of-War up to the Collapse of Italy

Danzig on 1 August. It will take at least fourteen days to get down here.

HIMMLER: It could come down this way.

WARLIMONT: 18 Police Regiment is due in this area.

HITLER: And the Prinz Eugen?

WARLIMONT: It was supposed to move here but it must stay here until he gets reinforcements because it may be necessary to occupy the coastal fortifications. The same applies to 114 Jäger Division. That leaves 297 Division in the Belgrade area. It's not yet ready.

HITLER: We must quickly ...

WARLIMONT: If you agree then, my Führer, 100 Jäger Division will not be moved down here to Crete, so that we can at least occupy these two main bases.

HITLER: What do you think, Rommel?

ROMMEL: Well, these two divisions are not in a particularly good position. Yesterday the southern division had been cut off by the road being blocked and it was being supplied by water; there's water both to right and left of it. It can't get to the coast; it must just protect the road. The Bavarian Division is in a bad situation too. It's got water both to right and left and has not yet got up to the coast. There's nothing to be done with the Italians.

HITLER: We can more or less count them out.

GÖRING: As I've said, my Führer, perhaps we ought to give them instructions that they should try and disarm the Italian divisions down there because otherwise they'll sell their weapons.

HIMMLER: I got that across the Italians yesterday.

WARLIMONT: C.-in-C. South-east has given general instructions that all weapons are to be removed from Italian troops the moment they show signs of wavering.

HITLER: They'll sell them!

GÖRING: They'll sell the buttons off their pants for English pounds.

WARLIMONT: He then asks about reinforcement by Bulgarian forces; this would make additional divisions available in the event of an attack. He has discussed this with the King but the question is whether the latter will stick to it in the present situation.

HITLER: That we shall have to see.

WARLIMONT: Finally he asks whether the area Fiume-Trieste will come under his command if Italy collapses.

HITLER: Lohr does? What an idea! That area will be under Rommel, it's part of Italy.

WARLIMONT: Yes, part of Italy.

HITLER: He couldn't deal with it with the forces he has available.

WARLIMONT: Can we now get on with this instruction regarding 92 Regiment?

HITLER: He can get the other one across first. I think we want a strong armoured force here which can drive down either here or down there.

WARLIMONT: That ought to be held in Salonika ready to move.

HITLER: Anyway, we've already used armoured divisions here.

GÖRING: Yes, but the result was ...

KEITEL: We went right down as far as the Peloponnese.

GÖRING: ... that's against infantry divisions...

KEITEL: Sepp Dietrich roared right through them with his division.

GÖRING: As soon as a firm decision is made. One can't avoid taking one here. We must have a firm stop line here so that these people can't come on and that those people there are secured in the rear.

WARLIMONT: In the interior there was a discussion on 23 July with leading representatives of Mihailovic. The most important results were: all sabotage plans to be put into operation forthwith ... cessation of hostilities against Tito and co-operation with him as ordered by the King of Yugoslavia.... Roosevelt and Churchill are supposed to have given a guarantee to re-establish the State. Stalin is said to have shown no interest. Preparations for landing 20,000 parachute troops - that's of course Balkan exaggeration. We must push through the Serbian home guard, Serbian frontier guard and Serbian volunteer corps. No action is to be taken for the moment against these forces. Then there are some additional instructions.

These records show that once the initial confusion had been overcome the aims of the German High Command, reduced to their essentials, were as follows: in Italy to put plan Alarich into operation as far as possible, including securing the Alpine passes, but not to give Rome any excuse finally to renounce the German alliance - as a result Field Marshal Rommel was still held back in readiness in Munich;²⁷ to prepare to evacuate all German troops from the larger islands; to limit the defence of Italy to the northern

Apennines and the
tions south of this
throughout the Ba
as laid down in p

These were the
busiest periods o
plans for a coup b
and the liberator
plans and in any
had to do with an
this period, once
room was general
only the initiated
ever made no secu
in Rome; the sa
both had initially
that in the form
cable if the mov
to be carried out
was but much pl
odd form of acti
quarters as 'a ga

THE BREAK-UP

During the few v
of Italy on 8 Sep
the headquarter
clarity. Two war
in the East, the
concerned so bu
the other was b
distribution of fi
situation in the
attack by overw
salient. Similarl
South, Zeitzler
Grenadier divisi
no previous disc
In the Medit

Apennines and therefore not to send newly-arrived German formations south of this obstacle; on the French Mediterranean coast and throughout the Balkans to take over all sectors held by Italian troops as laid down in plan Konstantin.

These were the jobs of OKW and they resulted in one of the busiest periods of its existence.²⁸ Meanwhile Hitler pursued his plans for a coup in Rome, the re-establishment of the Fascist regime and the liberation of Mussolini. OKW had no part in these special plans and in any case it was hard to see what these foolhardy ideas had to do with any possible future German-Italian strategy. During this period, once the military presentations were over, the map room was generally cleared of all but an extremely restricted circle; only the initiated remained behind; they included Jodl who however made no secret of his opposition to the raid on the Government in Rome; the same applied to Field Marshal Kesselring, though both had initially agreed to it.²⁹ By 5 August Hitler had realized that in the form so far envisaged this part of his plan was impracticable if the move of additional German formations into Italy was to be carried out peacefully. Initially nobody knew where Mussolini was but much planning for his liberation continued, resulting in an odd form of activity, aptly described by a member of the headquarters as 'a game of cops and robbers'.³⁰

THE BREAK-UP OF THE AXIS

During the few weeks between the end of July and the final collapse of Italy on 8 September 1943, the disastrous aberrations caused by the headquarters' state of schizophrenia stood out with particular clarity. Two wars were being conducted so to speak side by side, one in the East, the other in the South. Each kept the high-level staffs concerned so busy that neither really realized the pressures to which the other was being subjected. Jodl, for instance, in his paper on distribution of forces in the autumn, had made light of the existing situation in the East, although the main event there had been an attack by overwhelmingly superior Russian forces against the Orel salient. Similarly in spite of the extremely serious situation in the South, Zeitzler refused to make available more than one Panzer Grenadier division, the SS-Leibstandarte. In both cases there were no previous discussions between the two staffs; Hitler alone decided.³¹

In the Mediterranean action against the enemy was for several

weeks confined to the small Etna bridgehead. OKW was far more occupied in imposing Hitler's will on our own ally and countering the measures taken by Rome. (After the war the then Chief of the Comando Supremo stated that in his orders of the end of July 1943 precautions against German action took precedence over defensive measures against any possible Anglo-American landing.) We were therefore under double pressure both from within and from without, and our pre-occupations regarding future developments on both fronts formed a tangled web; tension became all the greater when opinions within the headquarters began to differ regarding the ultimate aims of the Italians. Only Hitler and Göring remained unshaken in their belief that 'treachery' was at work; in spite of this even Hitler felt that it was better to try to keep Italy on our side, hoping for a new turn of events as a result of the liberation of Mussolini. Grand Admiral Dönitz, who spent much time at the headquarters, now became one of his most intimate advisers, in addition to Jodl; on purely military grounds both were inclined to keep the alliance in being, even with a non-Fascist Italy. They were supported by Kesselring and Rintelen in Rome, who for their part would hear of no questioning of the sincerity of the new regime; though with less emphasis, Field Marshals Rommel and von Rundstedt were of the same mind. All however were pressing for the twilight period to be brought to an end and some clear relationship established as soon as possible; in this they were at variance with Hitler who, for instance, continued to postpone the evacuation of Sicily in order that this should not be an excuse for the Italians to renounce the alliance, and in this Dönitz agreed with him for reasons of maritime strategy.³²

The first task of OKW in this situation was to adapt plans Alarich and Konstantin to the new developments. By the end of July they had been brought up to date, combined so that a single plan was applicable to Italy, the Balkans and the West and issued in writing under the code name 'Axis'. For the first time Field Marshal Rommel was now provided with a full Army Group staff; he was given certain reserve formations in the Innsbruck area with which to secure the Alpine passes, in particular the Brenner, but as before was not allowed to appear in person.³³

We were now trying to filter as many additional formations into northern Italy as possible. From the end of July this, together with Rommel's instructions, led to repeated conflicts with the authorities in Rome and in some cases also with local Italian headquarters. The

procedure was all wild threats and essential military who as a result result generally which in their d value to them. By our precautionar most important : on the other han tions should be trying to put off to be taken and it could not be kep has recorded a p tinued defence of situations: 'the F the points of vie

The highlights the two German-present at the fir two weeks after t second and last o Tarvisio meeting find some way of at that time they I Axis partner. Hitl victory. The mee ians had made th Under these circ from either of the

The Tarvisio m the Chiefs of the Keitel; Hitler had a personal meetin; German object in OKW had theref the discussions pr prevent the enem Balkans: an equal

* D.T. Itu
had to also

ad. OKW was far more
own ally and countering
ar the then Chief of the
of the end of July 1943
cedence over defensive
ican landing.) We were
within and from without,
developments on both
me all the greater when
to differ regarding the
nd Göring remained un-
at work; in spite of this
keep Italy on our side,
f the liberation of Muss-
nuch time at the head-
ate advisers, in addition
ere inclined to keep the
ly. They were supported
or their part would hear
regime; though with less
Rundstedt were of the
he twilight period to be
ship established as soon
Hitler who, for instance,
sically in order that this
renounce the alliance,
s of maritime strategy.³²
on was to adapt plans
pments. By the end of
mbined so that a single
d the West and issued in
first time Field Marshal
ny Group staff; he was
ruck area with which to
Brenner, but as before

ditional formations into
July this, together with
icts with the authorities
alian headquarters. The

procedure was almost invariably the same; Hitler would go off into wild threats and imprecations; OKW would then try to get the essential military points accepted via General von Rintelen in Rome, who as a result had a most difficult and uncomfortable job; the result generally was that the Italians at least gained a little time, which in their difficult situation was undoubtedly of considerable value to them. By these methods we finally succeeded in completing our precautionary move forward to the northern Apennines – the most important aspect of the preparatory measures for plan Axis; on the other hand we had no clear concept of how further operations should be conducted should Italy collapse. Hitler was still trying to put off the evil day when long-term decisions would have to be taken and in this case could hide behind the excuse that orders could not be kept secret from the Italians. Grand Admiral Dönitz has recorded a phrase actually used in connection with the continued defence of Sicily but applicable to innumerable other similar situations: 'the Führer considers that there is much to be said for both points of view and has not therefore finally decided'.³⁴ *

The highlights of the period following the fall of Mussolini were the two German-Italian meetings in Tarvisio and Bologna. I was present at the first which took place on 6 August, little more than two weeks after that at Feltre; only Jodl and Rommel went to the second and last on 15 August. It is more or less certain that at the Tarvisio meeting the Italians had already made up their minds to find some way of escape both from the alliance and the war – though at that time they possibly still hoped to do so in agreement with their Axis partner. Hitler still refused to consider any outcome other than victory. The meeting in Bologna took place five days after the Italians had made their (secret) request to the Allies for an armistice. Under these circumstances there was little likelihood of any result from either of the two meetings.

The Tarvisio meeting was between the two Foreign Ministers and the Chiefs of the Comando Supremo and OKW, Ambrosio and Keitel; Hitler had brusquely refused an invitation from Badoglio to a personal meeting on the grounds that he was a Head of State. The German object in the discussions was to clarify relations with Italy; OKW had therefore prepared a programme for the military part of the discussions practically identical with that for Feltre. It included: prevent the enemy setting foot on the Italian mainland or in the Balkans: an equal number of German and Italian formations to be

375

* D.T. It was his plan and I had
had to recognize the wisdom of it

employed in southern Italy with a stronger German backup in central and northern Italy; agreement on strategy at all higher staff levels. Hitler's instructions were that there should be no more than a general politico-military *tour d'horizon*. It would be enough he said to listen and 'put on an act of good faith'; there must be no reference to a possible evacuation of Sicily. His instructions on security were even more detailed: we were only to appear as a body; we were to undertake no individual negotiations and under no circumstances were we to eat or drink anything which had not previously been tasted by our hosts. As the German special train arrived at Tarvisio station, where the Italian train was already waiting, between each pair of windows along the corridors of the two coaches stood an SS man with sub-machine gun at the ready!

The morning conference was attended only by the heads of the political and military delegations. Ambrosio evaded all questions regarding his appreciation of the situation and future Italian intentions. On the other hand he protested against the manner and rapidity of recent German troop movements into Italy, culminating with the statement that in Rome they had the impression that they were no longer 'master in their own house' and that OKW seemed to regard Italian territory merely as 'a glacis for the defence of Germany'. Keitel rejected these accusations but, being bound by Hitler's instructions, could not give any details of his own views. Both sides then went to lunch in the restaurant car of the Italian train, where Hitler's warnings were completely disregarded. Thereafter a military discussion took place in which each side manifested complete agreement with the wishes of the other as regards disposition of forces, but once more no mention was made of command organization. The meeting ended with a plenary session at which Ribbentrop declared that Germany would carry on the war together with Italy until victory was won and Ambrosio gave an explicit assurance that, within the limits of her capabilities, Italy would continue to fight on the side of her ally. Plans for the combined defence of the Apennines were to be discussed later at a time to be mutually agreed.³⁸

In spite of this significant postponement, we on the German side were inclined to agree that Ambrosio's assurances and his agreement to German requirements represented an advance in the Italian position. Ribbentrop and his suite went back to the Wörther See for a one- or two-day visit to the Schloss Hotel, from which it was

said all visit
night in the
furt to Wolfs

We had no
that very day
had arrived
agreements fi
Italians were
produced se
Italian nava
even as Gibra
came reports

In view of
once more ur
occasion Jodl
be conducted
in succeeding
posal made at
Italians could
appreciation
German force
Kesselring. A
noteworthy p
of Allied land
northern Ape
of defence. K
the reinforcen
but this was
proceed furthe
this had alrea

The new m
Italians thems
to withdraw to
some of their c
discussion of t
expected 'on t
command orga
bastion of For
designated the
tative. On the

said all visitors had been cleared; Keitel and his staff spent the night in the train and on the next morning flew back from Klagenfurt to Wolfschanze.

We had no sooner got back to the headquarters than fresh news that very day threw doubt upon Keitel's report. Two Alpini divisions had arrived in the area of the Brenner and, contrary to recent agreements for combined protection of the roads over the passes, the Italians were now demanding withdrawal of the German posts. This produced severe new disagreements; on the other hand light Italian naval forces were at this time acting vigorously as far even as Gibraltar; from Southern France and even from the Balkans came reports of satisfactory contacts between the allies.

In view of these contradictory reports we, in the headquarters, once more urged that the situation should be cleared up, on which occasion Jodl was to be heard muttering that the negotiations should be conducted quite differently and that he would have no difficulty in succeeding where we had failed at Tarvisio. Taking up the proposal made at Tarvisio, it was proposed that at a further meeting the Italians could be forced to show their hand if we produced our own appreciation of the situation and a plan for the distribution of German forces based on data to be provided by Rommel and Kesselring. A new memorandum was therefore drawn up, the most noteworthy points of which were that for the first time the possibility of Allied landings in the Bay of Salerno were mentioned, and the northern Apennines were again given as the final and principal line of defence. Kesselring went further and repeated his proposals for the reinforcement of German troops in Sardinia and southern Italy but this was flatly rejected by Hitler. The latter still refused to proceed further with the evacuation of Sicily, though unobtrusively this had already gone quite a long way.

The new meeting we wanted was in fact triggered off by the Italians themselves. On 11 August they made known their decision to withdraw to Italy their Fourth Army from southern France and some of their divisions from the Balkans. In reply OKW demanded discussion of these questions, emphasizing at the same time that it expected 'on this occasion fully to clarify the overall strategy and command organization for the defence of Italy and of the southern bastion of Fortress Europe'. Rome agreed to the meeting and designated the Army Chief of Staff, General Roatta, as its representative. On the German side Hitler hoped for great things from the

divisions, 7½ armoured and Panzer Grenadier divisions and one parachute formation were made available for the East from the West, South and South-east. An Army Order issued by Hitler on 28 October 1943 begins with the words: 'I have transferred to the East divisions from the South and West in order that, by a counter-attack, the enemy forces which have crossed the Dnieper may be annihilated. This attack will result in a decisive reversal of the situation on the entire southern flank of the front.'¹⁷ These reinforcements however became available not as a body but in dribblets, generally too late, and in insufficient numbers to affect the crisis which had meanwhile worsened; this was primarily the fault of Hitler and his refusal to take decisions in good time. About this time even Bormann became 'much concerned over the war situation' and confided to his 'party comrade' Goebbels: 'it is so hard to get the Führer to make any decision'.¹⁸ Goebbels further comments in his diary on the situation in the East as follows:

10 September 1943: The depressing thing is that we haven't the faintest idea what Stalin has left in the way of reserves.

8 November 1943: Himmler was especially opposed to Manstein, whom he regards as a first-class defeatist. The crisis in the southern sector of the Eastern Front would not have had to become so serious had a man of real calibre been in Manstein's place.... The Führer received Manstein in the HQ. Contrary to expectations, the interview is said to have passed off well, and it is assumed that Manstein is to return to his post. I (Goebbels) regard this as a grave disaster.

(On 16 December 1943 Jodl notes in his diary: 'the Führer expressed himself most forcibly to Speer and myself on the defeatist attitude in Manstein's staff as reported to him by Gauleiter Koch.)

15 November 1943: The situation in the East is causing us great anxiety. What is it to lead to? The Soviets have reserves at their disposal of which we hadn't the faintest idea.

The following extracts from the shorthand records of the briefing conferences held on 27 and 28 December 1943 give a shatteringly graphic picture of Hitler's lack of decision in this difficult situation.

Fragment no. 7

Discussion with Colonel-General Zeitzler, 27 December 1943

ZEITZLER: My Führer, I believe that this is the winter offensive.

HITLER: Quite right, but all the same what completely new armies has the enemy got? He's just got the same old forces.

ZEITZLER: He's got nine armoured corps completely rested. They've done nothing for weeks.

HITLER: That's right, but they're still the same old forces. He's got no new ones. One thing I don't understand. In these armoured corps, the tanks alone are no good to him. They always say they lose a lot of men in the tanks; some are burnt and some shot up.

ZEITZLER: He's in the same boat as we are. We've no worries about tank personnel. We've always had replacement crews.

HITLER: I'll think over all that again this evening.

ZEITZLER: All right, but I would like a decision. Every day is valuable.

HITLER: Well the decision stands.

ZEITZLER: Can I give the order? That at least would help.

HITLER: Yes, you can give it. He's got one division available.

But to give up this* - it's all very well, Zeitzler to talk in a solemn voice and say it's gone. But when we get to the position where it really has been lost, then friend Manstein won't take any responsibility for it.

ZEITZLER: That's obvious.

HITLER: We're going to have a difficult time; there's going to be a major crisis here** and that will have an immediate effect on Turkey. They want to force Turkey into the war by 15 February. If there is a crisis in the Crimea then they'll make propaganda out of it. Then friend Manstein will refuse to take responsibility and will say that's a political affair.

ZEITZLER: Yes, and it will be very serious because we shan't be able to save much.

HITLER: We shan't be able to save anything. The consequences will be catastrophic. They'll be catastrophic in Rumania. This is a major position here. As long as we can remain here and here and as long as we have the bridgeheads, construction of airfields here will be a risky business.

ZEITZLER: Yes; this will only happen if we do nothing up here and let things develop and then there's the whole question of the future in First Army area.

HITLER: Watch out now; we've had one or two cases like this

* The Southern bend of the Dnieper.

** The Crimea.

where everyone
turned out the

ZEITZLER: It's ju

HITLER: I agree
for nothing. B

entirely new a
When you say

merely the cor

ZEITZLER: That

HITLER: The cr

recuperate ar
already seen l

resources. He
to nothing.

ZEITZLER: It's ju

ally so as to s

HITLER: No, I c

ZEITZLER: All t

He just didn't

HITLER: That's

he's like one
when he's lai

ZEITZLER: But

HITLER: He mu

In my view t
troops isn't g

ZEITZLER: Tha

take account

HITLER: When

pointing this
corps people.

not always t
wrong on th

point trying

you one thin

and led perl

still leading i

from certain

here, or; we

quite impossi

where everybody said that all was lost. Later it suddenly turned out that we could stabilize the position.

ZEITZLER: It's just that this is such a vital area for us; it's so close.

HITLER: I agree entirely. I didn't release 4 Mountain Division for nothing. But there is nothing to show the enemy's got an entirely new army; it's merely forces which have been rested. When you say this is the beginning of the winter battle - it's merely the continuation of the same battle; they're not different.

ZEITZLER: That's why I haven't yet called it the winter battle.

HITLER: The enemy wants to ensure that we have no time to recuperate and so goes on fighting. That's all. But you've already seen here that somewhere he comes to the end of his resources. Here he's fought himself out. Gradually it all came to nothing.

ZEITZLER: It's just a question whether he didn't do that intentionally so as to start again up there.

HITLER: No, I don't think so.

ZEITZLER: All the same he doesn't seem to be in any difficulty.

He just didn't push on here.

HITLER: That's because he can't do any more. You mustn't think he's like one of the old giants who simply becomes stronger when he's laid out.

ZEITZLER: But he's kept going for so many months in a row.

HITLER: He must get out of breath one day. I've read this report.

In my view the decisive thing is that in fact the morale of the troops isn't good. That's the decisive point.

ZEITZLER: That's why I always pass on these reports. I have to take account of things like that.

HITLER: When all's said and done, I'm the one who's always pointing this out. I talked about it here with the armoured corps people. They say the infantry's just not fighting. That's not always the case. Some divisions fight well and nothing goes wrong on their front. When someone says to me: there's no point trying to work on the morale of the infantry - I'll tell you one thing, Zeitzler, I'm a man who has personally built up and led perhaps the greatest organization on earth and I'm still leading it. I've had cases where the news has come through from certain areas: we shall never beat the Social Democrats here, or: we shall never get the better of Communism here; it's quite impossible we shall never get rid of it. It was always clear

A

Setting Sun

that it all depended on the local leaders. If this is the general view that it's all quite right and there's no point in trying to raise the morale of the infantry, all I can say is: I once heard a major talking and I said to myself it's useless talking to the troops, I've listened to it umpteen times and it's useless. Of course if an officer says to me there's no point in talking to the ordinary soldier all I can say is: that proves that you've no influence. Next door there's another chap in charge and he's got his people in the palm of his hand. You've got no influence and you must get out.

ZEITZLER: Yes, the troops mirror their commander.

HITLER: Yes, invariably.

ZEITZLER: And I'm quite clear, if the troops are bad the commander is either dead or he's a bad commander.

HITLER: When commanders get killed a bad one comes along. That's clear.

If he runs out of breath here and we can do it with the forces we have available, then later we'd be tearing our hair out. This won't be the end of the matter but if we can twist the thing round here – Manstein is just washing his hands of these forces. He knows well enough they'll attack here. He says they won't make a frontal attack because then they'll wear themselves out. He's not going to go on; he's just washing his hands of it in order to make himself feel happy. Unfortunately I can't do that; I can see the time coming when this affair's going to work up into a crisis. I can see all the consequences it will have. That means decision. People go on saying: we'll fight on to victory – all that fighting on to victory means to me today is to stabilize the thing somehow.

ZEITZLER: That's quite clear. If we can stabilize, from our point of view that's victory. But we can't beat him.

HITLER: We can't expect anything more at the moment. But we mustn't forget that last winter we were in a frightful position. Nevertheless by May we had so far recovered that we almost thought we ourselves could attack and in July we did actually attack.

ZEITZLER: It's just that we're so very stretched. The moment one gets things organized, something new happens and we're under pressure all over again.

HITLER: The happy moment will be when they can dig themselves



Facing War on Two or More Fronts

If this is the general point in trying to raise I once heard a major talking to the troops, I've senseless. Of course if an talking to the ordinary that you've no influence. charge and he's got his he got no influence and commander.

troops are bad the commander.

bad one comes along.

we can do it with the we'd be tearing our hair after but if we can twist just washing his hands of they'll attack here. He says cause then they'll wear on; he's just washing his feel happy. Unfortunately coming when this affair's see all the consequences it people go on saying: we'll to victory means to me w.

stabilize, from our point eat him.

at the moment. But we are in a frightful position. recovered that we almost did in July we did actually

wretched. The moment one happens and we're under

they can dig themselves

in and build a defensive position. We must weed out the commanders in the really bad divisions as soon as we can. That we must do. I've studied this report and all that I can say is that it's quite clear that there are divisions here which are absolutely wretched. But when a commander says there's no point in trying to influence the men all I can say is: there's no point in your influence. You've not got the force of character to influence anybody. What he says is the absolute truth. The only thing is he's looking at it merely from his point of view. He's completely lost his influence. I know that. During the First War I knew regimental commanders whose influence was rock-bottom because they didn't take anybody seriously. Then we had other regimental commanders who could get things organized in a flash even in the worst situations and had the troops as steady as a rock. It just depends on the man. In those formations I've had something to do with* I know precisely if a formation has a good commander or not. You can see from looking at the formation, just like in a mirror.

Then I think back to my local organization. At each election I had districts where I knew for sure on the evening of the election that we would win. Why? I can hardly say: it might be Franconia or Cologne - Cologne was as red as could be - or East Prussia. What of East Prussia! It was completely reactionary and against us. Or Mecklenburg or Thuringia. Thuringia was scarlet but in one place I had Koch, in another Sauckel and in another Ley. They were the chaps. In other places unfortunately I had no really good man and there it was difficult. I knew exactly! The good districts were those where there was a good leader.

It's just the same today. Things went wrong in Kassel not long ago. No harm in talking about it. The man was sacked of course. He wasn't up to his job. No good saying; 'yes it was easy in Berlin and Hamburg'. On the contrary it was more difficult in Hamburg. There we had a chap who was as tough as steel, who couldn't be broken by anything, while the chap in Kassel simply broke down. He wasn't up to it. In fact the commander is a reflection of the state of his troops and the state of the troops is a reflection of the character of the commander.

Often it can be disastrous. For instance a good commander

* The Waffen-SS.

arrives, gets killed, another arrives and gets killed too. Naturally every case of that sort has its effect on the troops. If the troops are particularly fond of their commander, if a good commander goes, the effect is always worse than if a bad one goes. We have all experienced that. That's also possible. But one thing's certain: if the morale of the troops is bad, it's always something to do with their commander.

It's easy to say these things. We've been through it, Zeitzler. We've withdrawn to a shorter line and found we couldn't hold that either. Alternatively we would certainly have been able to hold it if we had been more mobile and units had had more spirit of self-sacrifice. Then we'd have been able to save a lot.

We've had a classic instance. The whole Nevel catastrophe was caused by the small-minded selfishness of the two Army Group commanders who acted like little egoists and wouldn't help each other. Now we've got to hold a longer line; that's all right; it must be all right. I can see the consequences here; they're very far reaching.

ZEITZLER: Both for the troops and for this position.

HITLER: For the troops it's catastrophic. We've simply got to defend this second Stalingrad* if at all possible. We can't just cold bloodedly turn our backs on it because it's got nothing to do with Field Marshal von Manstein's Army. We can't do that; we must remember there will be men lost here.

Next point: you may say - more important purposes. But perhaps we can achieve the more important purposes without that. Something else may happen. It may happen that Turkey enters the war. In Rumania it all depends on the Head of State. If he loses his army here - you must read the letters he's been writing to me.

ZEITZLER: No. My only thought is that the disaster might be even greater. That's my only reason.

HITLER: Yes, we must see. I've been wondering whether we can take the risk of putting 16 Division in down there.

ZEITZLER: I thought that over and over yesterday. I said to myself last night: we must think whether to bring down 16 Division.

HITLER: Zeitzler, I must say one thing: this is not as difficult a decision as that about the Crimea. If we withdraw here, the

* This means the Crimea, which had been cut off by land.

Crimea is 1
cumstances
bringing up
three forms
becomes m

ZEITZLER: W
the future :
we can on
salient. In)

HITLER: It's
couple of d
it's the wo
forced to w

ZEITZLER: Ne
big issue.

HITLER: Of c
but it woul
the Crimea
the worst p
in the last a

[There follows]
detailed discussi
tactical detail on
Appendix p. 536

Fragment no. 11
Meeting with C

HITLER: Let's
it over this
tion here w
that can ha
with the Fir
on fighting ;
worst we m
and Nikopo
economic ar
there is mu
there, so tha
ments.



called too. Naturally
troops. If the troops
if a good com-
if a bad one goes.
possible. But one
is bad, it's always

through it, Zeitzler.
found we couldn't
certainly have been
le and units had had
e been able to save a

le Nevel catastrophe
es of the two Army
egoists and wouldn't
a longer line; that's
e consequences here;

osition.
We've simply got to
possible. We can't
cause it's got nothing
Army. We can't do
n lost here.

ortant purposes. But
ant purposes without
happen that Turkey
nds on the Head of
t read the letters he's

he disaster might be

ring whether we can
vn there.

rday. I said to myself
y down 16 Division.

s is not as difficult a

: withdraw here, the

ut off by land.

Crimea is lost. We must think very hard whether in these circumstances we should take 16 Division. We should then be bringing up 44 Division and one division here and 16. That's three formations if the worst comes to the worst until the other becomes mobile.

ZEITZLER: We can spare them for the moment. But looking into the future it's going to be difficult up there. In the long run we can only get things organized if we withdraw from this salient. In my view it's been just as bad at Petersburg.

HITLER: It's not so bad. If we withdraw there ... take out a couple of divisions. It's not so bad as it is here. It's here that it's the worst; so it will have the worst effects. We might be forced to withdraw a bit here in order to save a division.

ZEITZLER: No. That wouldn't be so bad but if you think of the big issue.

HITLER: Of course it would be unfortunate because of the Finns but it wouldn't be so bad as it is down there. I think the loss of the Crimea is the worst thing that could happen. It would have the worst possible effect on Turkey. The Finns can't give up; in the last analysis they've got to defend themselves.

[There follows here Fragment no. 10, the record of a long and detailed discussion, primarily between Hitler, Jodl and Zeitzler, of tactical detail on the Eastern Front. The record is to be found in Appendix p. 536.]

Fragment no. 11

Meeting with Colonel-General Zeitzler, 28 December 1943

HITLER: Let's look at this now. I thought all this over. I thought it over this way and that last night. We can't clear up the situation here without a considerable increase in forces. The worst that can happen in the North is that there might be trouble with the Finns. That may suit us quite well. They've got to go on fighting anyway. Then down here if the worst comes to the worst we may lose the Crimea, the iron-ore area of Krivoirog and Nikopol. So if we don't clear up this affair! Now from the economic and supply point of view the loss of these areas down there is much more serious for us than the loss of those up there, so that I've decided to bring up the necessary reinforcements.



I can't take anything of any size from the West. We can only get the necessary forces by taking them out up there. This is what I thought. If the worst comes to the worst we must make do with the formation which is here in the Oranienbaum what's-its-name. That should be more or less enough to cover the business at Narva. We must hold this along here for as long as possible so that he can't get in there. That means that these formations here are more or less available. With what is here we can more or less pack up and occupy this line. I think that even now we could get twelve divisions out of Army Group North.

ZEITZLER: Yes. Then it fits very well that Küchler is to come tomorrow. I'll work all this out today and submit it to you. The railway business is going very well. Then we've got the two groups, 16 Armoured and 1 Armoured; they've got some offensive capacity and we must concentrate them. Down here we can pull out 4 Mountain Division and 17 Armoured Division and as second echelon we bring along 101 Division and 16 Panzer Grenadier by rail. They can get on the move straight away with the two others between 6th and 8th or possibly 12th. Then we have one further echelon. Can I get things going on these lines?

HITLER: Yes.

ZEITZLER: Now there's this question: Manstein is complaining that the Fourth Panzer Army has got rather too large a front. He's right. Now I wanted to suggest that down there we take over Sixth Army (Sixth Army has only one corps) and place the corps direct under the Army Group and then I would be for the idea - I can talk to Manstein again - that we should bring Sixth Army up here instead of Hollidt and put Hube in there. I have more confidence in Hube than in Hollidt. There are mobile formations up there and Hollidt has no experience with mobile formations.

HITLER: Here we stay on the defensive.

ZEITZLER: Yes. Hollidt should do more there, and Schörner is there too. It's not so bad there. If you agree I will get that going.

HITLER: Yes.

ZEITZLER: Now the tanks. Since 7 December the following have arrived: for First Panzer Army 294, for Fourth Panzer Army 94,

Fa

for Eighth Pan
rail and haven

HITLER: But tell
Army Group

we brought up
a thousand ass

ZEITZLER: It's h
them 100 and

HITLER: He carr
In fact he's th

ZEITZLER: He sn
Army Group C

ago. Apart fro
So may I no

first division ca

Many lessons em
I have no doubt for
is that which took p
see p. 536) in that
the Supreme Com
issued an instructio
the other theatres
presence of both Cl
little difference. Th
things only be one-s
of weighing the pro
were continuous as
there were other ser
the following incide

OKH had for so
to be withdrawn be
was opposed to any
eye on the Finns,
drawal, though it w
though he was frequ
show. In order to a
urged on him by the
strategic disadvanta

for Eighth Panzer Army 154, total 542. They are mostly still on rail and haven't yet got to units.

HITLER: But tell me one thing: how many tanks have we given Army Group South including those of the five divisions which we brought up here. So far as I can calculate it's had well over a thousand assault guns and tanks.

ZEITZLER: It's had everything which came up. Last month I gave them 100 and this month a further 80.

HITLER: He carries on as if he was being treated like a Cinderella. In fact he's the only one who's had anything.

ZEITZLER: He snaps up more or less everything. We started giving Army Group Centre something for the first time two or three weeks ago. Apart from that Army Group Centre's been badly treated.

So may I now get this going straight away, my Führer? The first division can start moving this evening.

(Conference ended)

Many lessons emerge from these wearisome dialogues – wearisome I have no doubt for the reader too. The longest and most important is that which took place between 11 pm and 1 am (fragment no. 10; see p. 536) in that it showed once again the dire consequences of the Supreme Command's schizophrenia¹⁹. Hitler had recently issued an instruction that all questions concerning both the East and the other theatres of war should be submitted to him only in the presence of both Chiefs of Staff, Jodl and Zeitzler;²⁰ but this made little difference. The advice given to him could in the nature of things only be one-sided and he kept to himself alone the prerogative of weighing the pros and cons and giving orders accordingly. There were continuous arguments about the distribution of forces but there were other serious conflicts of interest, an example of which is the following incident:

OKH had for some time been pressing for Army Group North to be withdrawn behind Lake Peipus and Narva. As always, Hitler was opposed to any loss of territory; moreover in the north with his eye on the Finns, he was even less inclined to approve a withdrawal, though it would have shortened the front considerably and though he was frequently urged to do so as the conference records show. In order to avoid having to face up to the tactical necessities urged on him by the Army he turned to Jodl and got him to list the strategic disadvantages which the loss of the head of the Gulf of

beginning should be made with rolling up the entire Allied position in Normandy!

This was a completely unrealistic object but the Supreme Commander clung to it, issuing a bewildering series of orders following each other with ever-increasing rapidity, and with equal rapidity being overtaken by the even faster-moving course of events. An end was finally put to this method of command when the encirclement of the army in Normandy in the Falaise pocket on 19 August brought another disastrous defeat. The Operations Staff War Diary indeed records that 'a good half' of the troops thus encircled fought their way out, characterizing this as 'one of the great feats of arms of this campaign'. But this is no excuse for the Supreme Command; by clinging rigidly to impracticable plans it had once more sent a great army to death or imprisonment without having any major strategic object to justify the sacrifice. Shortly before this Hitler had taken two further decisions; on the one side - too late! - he had ordered up a further six-and-a-half divisions from the Straits area to Normandy; on the other side - too soon! - he had ordered up for immediate employment in the West four groups of the jet fighters which were gradually becoming available in increasing numbers; the Luftwaffe wanted to wait another week when three times that number could have been used in a large-scale surprise operation. Neither of these two decisions however could now alter the outcome.³³

Field Marshal von Kluge was dismissed on 17 August. Hitler suspected him not only of complicity in the 20 July *coup* but also of trying to make contact with the enemy in order to surrender. On 15 August, when for some time it was impossible to get in touch with Kluge from the headquarters, he unexpectedly gave vent to his suspicions in front of the entire audience at the briefing conference. Shortly thereafter in Wolfschanze he himself briefed for their new command positions in the West the two junior generals to whom reference has already been made in another connection. Only Keitel was present. Hitler then expressed the following opinions about Kluge and in the same breath about Rommel and the consequences of 20 July:

Fragment no. 46

Discussion between the Fuhrer, Lt General Westphal and Lt General Krebs on 31 August 1944 in Wolfschanze

HITLER: You know that Field Marshal Kluge has committed

D. T. P.
deeply
are que
wa

A

Allied position

Supreme Com-
orders following
h equal rapidity
of events. An end
the encirclement
19 August brought
War Diary indeed
ncircled fought their
feats of arms of this
eme Command; by
ce more sent a great
any major strategic
Hitler had taken two
he had ordered up a
area to Normandy;
d up for immediate
fighters which were
nbers; the Luftwaffe
that number could
on. Neither of these
come.³³

17 August. Hitler
July coup but also of
to surrender. On 15
to get in touch with
ly gave vent to his
briefing conference.
riefed for their new
r generals to whom
r connection. Only
owing opinions about
nd the consequences

stphal and Lt General

luge has committed

suicide. He was anyway under serious suspicion and if he hadn't committed suicide would have been arrested straight away. He sent his staff officer away. But it didn't come off. English and American patrols pushed forward but apparently they didn't get in touch with him. He sent his own son into the pocket. The English have announced that they are in touch with a German general and the officer who was probably the contact man has been arrested. He was a prisoner of the English and the story is that they let him go; anyway this was the tale he told. But there were other reasons for arresting him. This was the man who was supposed to be the intermediary, who according to the idea of all these people was predestined to change the course of fate so that we should surrender to the English and then march with the English against Russia - an idiotic idea. And then what a criminal idea - giving up all that German territory in the east. They seem to have been ready to give up everything back to the Vistula ... possibly to the Oder ... might as well say the Elbe. 15 August was the worst day of my life. It was only by accident that this plan didn't come off. It's the only way you can explain everything the Army Group did; otherwise it would all be completely incomprehensible.

The staff of Seventh Army (meaning Army Group B) - I must say this to you - is not in good shape. You would be wise, General Krebs, to take with you people from here whom you can trust, of whom you are sure and whom you can charge with a complete clean-out of this staff. The fact unfortunately is that, when successful, Field Marshal Rommel is a great and spirited commander but when the slightest difficulties occur he turns into a complete pessimist.

He (Rommel) has done the worst thing a soldier can possibly do in cases like this; he's been looking for some way out other than the military way. In Italy he prophesied imminent collapse. That hasn't happened so far. Events have proved him completely wrong and I have been justified in my decision to leave Field Marshal Kesselring down there; I reckoned that politically he was an incredible idealist but that militarily he was an optimist and I don't believe you can be a military commander unless you're an optimist. Within certain limits I think Rommel is an extraordinarily brave and able commander.

D.T. Bad character is equal to a deeply rooted disease in those who are successful first. In defeat, Hitler was at his worst, and I was finally

Conway Chase
who is
wrote staff with him

I don't regard him as a stayer, and that's what everybody thinks.

KEITEL: Yes, it's looked more and more like that.

HITLER: I've just said: the time's not ripe for a political decision.

I think during my life I've given adequate proof that I can win political victories. I don't need to tell anybody that I wouldn't miss an opportunity to do so. But of course it's childish and naive to hope that at a time of severe military defeats a favourable political moment will arrive when one could do something. Moments like that arrive when you've had victory. I've proved that I've done everything to come to terms with England. In 1940 after the French campaign I offered an olive branch and was ready to give things up. I wanted nothing from them. On 1 September 1939 I made a proposal to the English or rather I repeated the proposal which Ribbentrop made to them in 1936: I proposed an alliance in which Germany would guarantee the British Empire. It was primarily Churchill and the anti-German crowd around Vansittart who were against the proposal; they wanted war and today they can't go back on it. They are reeling to their ruin. The moment will arrive when disagreements between the Allies will be so great that the break will come. Coalitions have always failed right throughout history; you just have to wait for the moment, however difficult that may be. It's been my particular job ever since 1941 never to lose my nerve and whenever something collapses always to find ways and means of patching it up somehow. I must say: no greater crisis than the one we've had this year in the East could be imagined. When Field Marshal Model arrived Army Group Centre was nothing but a yawning gap. It was more of a gap than a front and finally it became more of a front than a gap ... and then to go and say that these divisions in the West had been totally immobilized, that they had no German equipment, that they had God knows what for rifles, that we had sent all the trained divisions to the East, that there were only training divisions in the West, that we only used the armoured divisions in the West for reinforcements and sent them off to the East as soon as they were trained! If I'd had 9 and 10 SS Armoured Divisions in the West the whole thing would probably never have happened. No one told me about it and then people make a



Invasion

what everybody

political decision.
proof that I can
anybody that I
t of course it's
severe military
arrive when one
ve when you've
thing to come to
ch campaign I
ve things up. I
1939 I made a
proposal which
I an alliance in
Empire. It was
crowd around
cy wanted war
reeling to their
nts between the
Coalitions have
st have to wait
e. It's been my
my nerve and
ys and means of
r crisis than the
nagined. When
tre was nothing
an a front and
and then to go
een totally im-
t, that they had
all the trained
ing divisions in
ons in the West
East as soon as
oured Divisions
ever have hap-
people make a

criminal attempt at a *coup* here* and think that they can side with the English against the Russians or – the next idea, that of Schulenburg – with the Russians against the English or – the third and damned silliest – play off one against the other. Too naive altogether!

... Carry on the fight until there's a prospect of a peace that is reasonable, of a peace tolerable for Germany which will safeguard the existence of this and future generations. Then I'll shoot him. I think it's pretty obvious that this war is no fun for me. I've been cut off from the world for five years. I've not been to a theatre, a concert or a film. I have only one job in life, to carry on this fight because I know that if there's not an iron will behind it, the battle cannot be won. I accuse the General Staff of failing to give the impression of iron determination, and so of affecting the morale of officers who've come here from the front and when general staff officers go up front I accuse them of spreading pessimism.

It's tragic to see young officers being courtmartialled and telling the court ...

... A section of the General Staff, the head of which is completely right, that is Gehrcke and so far we've not found a single man who had anything to do with this business. But there are other sections, Quartermaster, Organization, Foreign Armies, etc. who've been led into this deplorable business by their Chiefs.

I was the target for what happened here. If it had succeeded it would have been a catastrophe for Germany. It did not succeed and so now we've got a chance finally to lance this boil. But we can't discount the damage done to us externally; what do the Rumanians, the Bulgarians, the Turks, the Finns and the other neutrals, etc. think? What damage has it done to the German people – of course now the ... has got under way and things are coming to light which make your hair stand on end. The German people's kept its mouth shut so far but now everybody's talking ... frightful things are going to come out in the East; they're only just becoming clear; the scandal that German officers exist who make overtures, that there are German officers and generals who surrender; but that's all similar to what's just happened in the West. That's the most

* See Comment on this, page 415 above.

shocking thing that's happened yet. I believe that you, Westphal, are going to a staff (Commander-in-Chief West) which has hardly been infected at all. In the first place Field Marshal Rundstedt is completely straight and above suspicion. Blumentritt is also completely all right and personally above suspicion. I merely think that he's not got the training to run a staff like that and that he's overburdened by the whole thing. There's nothing against him at all.

KEITEL: The only one in the staff was a Q officer, Colonel Fink, who was posted there a few weeks before. He was one of Wagner's creatures.

HITLER: I myself twice promoted him (Field Marshal von Kluge). I gave him the highest decorations. I gave him a big gratuity so that he should have no worries and I gave him a big supplement to his pay as Field Marshal. So for me this is the bitterest and most disappointing thing which could happen. The way he got into it may well have been a tragedy. Perhaps he just drifted into it - I don't know - and perhaps he couldn't see any way out. He saw that quite a number of officers had been arrested and was afraid of what they would say. The most heavily implicated is his nephew and he said so to the court, whereupon the President, Freisler - and he was right - brought the sitting to an end straight away so that he could check the evidence and interrogate the Field Marshal. He was already dead. So naturally Freisler said to himself: this must stop somewhere or everyone will lose confidence in the Wehrmacht commanders.

It's like a western thriller.

When you look at all these people, Stieff and all that crowd - they are a shattering lot. Way back I dismissed a man like Colonel-General Hoepfner not merely because he disobeyed an order but because he'd turned into a miserable little character. Kluge himself was convinced that he must go. Now I've been proved right. During the trial it was obvious to everybody present what little men they were. The public said: how could these people ever have become officers?! Yes, how could they? I had to take what was available and I've tried to get the best ones up to the top.

The staff you'll be taking over, Krebs, is undoubtedly a rotten one; you must be clear on that. I can only say to you: make

sure you
Field M
We'll
Whate
the Gr
any me
of the
and wh
time, a
mouth
Thin
and yo
But I'n
I do
Germa
If it be
lead th
wanted
to a br
least m
my mc
that he
formati
were s;
Actual
missed
craft ca
drove t

As far as
in the vague
arrange for
would, whe
logical conc
the war wa
a letter to H
who was as
than a proof
ter.

Kluge's si



you, Westphal, West), which has Field Marshal Blumentritt above suspicion. I run a staff like the thing. There's

er, Colonel Fink, was one of Wag-

Marshall von Kluge). I gave him a big gratuity I gave him a big sup- I think this is the bit- I should happen. The Iedy. Perhaps he just he couldn't see any of officers had been I could say. The most I said so to the court, he was right - brought that he could check the Marshal. He was already I think this must stop some- in the Wehrmacht

left and all that crowd - I dismissed a man like I because he disobeyed I miserable little charac- he must go. Now I've I as obvious to everybody I public said: how could I Yes, how could they? I've tried to get the best

is undoubtedly a rotten I only say to you: make

sure you clean the shop up as quickly as possible; that you get Field Marshal Model ...

We'll fight on the Rhine if necessary. That's quite all right. Whatever happens we'll go on with the battle until, as Frederick the Great said: one of our damned enemies is too tired to fight any more and then we'll get a peace which will secure the life of the German nation for the next fifty or one hundred years and which, above all, will not besmirch our honour for a second time, as happened in 1918. This time I'm not going to keep my mouth shut. Then no one said anything.

Things could have turned out differently ... a split-second and you're rid of it all. You can rest and have peace forever. But I'm grateful to fate for letting me live on. For I think ...

I don't want to broadcast this. I don't want to put the German Wehrmacht to the shame of going on talking about it. If it became known that Field Marshal Kluge was planning to lead the entire army in the West to surrender and himself wanted to go over to the enemy, that might perhaps not lead to a breakdown of morale of the German people but it would at least make them despise their Army. So now I'd rather keep my mouth shut about it. We have merely told the generals that he committed suicide. He did commit suicide. The information given out previously was false. That was ... people were saying that he had already ... and had had a stroke. Actually he was waiting for the English patrol which ... they missed each other. He lost his ... when the ground-attack aircraft came in. He stayed where he was, couldn't go further and drove back again. ...

As far as I know it is still uncertain whether there is any truth in the vague accusations that Field Marshal von Kluge was trying to arrange for a surrender in the West.³⁴ Had he done so however he would, when all said and done, merely have been drawing the logical conclusion from Hitler's view that if the invasion succeeded the war was lost. Shortly before he committed suicide he had sent a letter to Hitler begging him to bring the war to an end; for anyone who was as close to the Field Marshal as I was, this was no more than a proof of the clarity of his vision and the integrity of his character.

Kluge's successor as Commander-in-Chief West and at the same

time Commander-in-Chief Army Group B was Field Marshal Model; he was hurriedly briefed in the headquarters and then despatched westwards to make the impossible possible once more. In fact this change meant that at the moment of greatest danger the western theatre was leaderless. Hitler was much more interested however in getting hold of Kluge's body as quickly as possible and wreaking his vengeance upon it.

On 15 August the Allies landed on the Mediterranean coast and southern France went up in flames. This was a move which clearly threatened to dislocate the entire German position in the West and seeing it coming even while I was away at the beginning of August, General Freiherr von Buttlar had been pressing continuously for some clear strategic direction should the coasts of central and southern France have to be given up as well as Normandy. Jodl however would go no further than to agree to the issue of the written instructions for the fortification of the rear position already planned. Nevertheless on 7 August the staff produced a draft order following up their previous proposals, confirmed this time by the conclusions of the initial studies of the special staff under Lt Colonel Kleyser which had just been formed by Hitler. The draft proposed that withdrawal should be begun forthwith from Brittany to the Maritime Alps, but Jodl turned it down on various pretexts and instructed that it should be pigeonholed for use only in extreme emergency. A second draft was prepared by the staff on 9 August but it was not until the evening of 13 August, when definite information on both the place and time of the Mediterranean landing arrived, that Jodl could be persuaded to take it along and urge for a decision. As Jodl had anticipated, however, even now Hitler turned it down and refused to give 'operational instructions for the western theatre including Nineteenth Army, beyond those necessary for the tasks immediately ahead'. Commander-in-Chief West who had been pressing somewhat half-heartedly in the same direction as OKW, had therefore to do the best he could with the 'general mission' of destroying the enemy in the Alençon (Normandy) area and 'defending with all available resources' the south coast of France against the new landing now imminent.

As soon as news began to arrive on 15 August, it became clear that the somewhat loosely organized German defence on the Mediterranean coast was in a position of hopeless inferiority - there had for instance been no air forces in the area for a very long time. Even

then Hitler
what Hitler
until the
agree to
west of
few hour
tend his
the force
position
defensive

As far as
years after
ate France
there was
made no
earlier than
did he re
pressed g
East once
have don
Falaise, I
in other
command
seemed to
falsity of
into the a

19 Aug
position
Buhle),
enemy
be mov

The conce



then Hitler merely made a series of disconnected remarks about what Nineteenth Army should do if things went badly. It was not until the afternoon of the next day that he could be persuaded to agree to the withdrawal of 'non-operational headquarters and units west of the line Orleans-Clermont-Ferrand-Montpellier'. Only a few hours later however on the same evening he was forced to extend his order and instruct 'Army Group G to disengage, apart from the forces remaining in Toulon and Marseille' and to take up a position in the area of Dijon on the southern flank of the planned defensive line.

As far as I remember Hitler seemed extremely downcast that four years after the brilliant victory of 1940 he should be forced to evacuate France. Although the enemy invasion had now succeeded and there was practically no prospect of further resistance in the West, he made no reference to the opinion he had expressed only a few months earlier that this would be decisive for the outcome of the war. Nor did he refer to the fact that this meant the end of the vaguely expressed general strategy for 1944 - to recover the initiative in the East once the invasion had been defeated. None of those who might have done so reminded him of it. Yet on 19 August, the day of Falaise, Hitler's attitude was similar to that following Stalingrad; in other circumstances it might have done credit to a defeated commander and statesman, but in his case, that of a man who seemed to have lost all qualities of leadership, it showed up the falsity of his views and dragged his people and his country further into the abyss. Jodl's diary shows what his attitude was:

19 August. The Führer discussed the equipment and manpower position in the West with Chief of OKW, Chief Army Staff (General Buhle), and Speer. Prepare to *take the offensive in November* when the enemy air forces can't operate. Main point: some 25 divisions must be moved to the West in the next one to two months.³⁵

The concept of the 'Ardennes offensive' had been born.

Ed Marshal
and then
once more.
danger the
re interested
possible and
an coast and
which clearly
the West and
ng of August,
tinuously for
central and
rmandy. Jodl
issue of the
ition already
a draft order
time by the
ter Lt Colonel
raft proposed
rittany to the
pretexts and
ly in extreme
Fon 9 August
finite informa-
an landing ar-
and urge for a
Hitler turned
for the western
cessary for the
Vest who had
e direction as
h the 'general
rmandy) area
coast of France

ame clear that
n the Mediter-
- there had for
ng time. Even

A

The Death Throes

GUDERIAN: All that's necessary is for the Reichsmarschall to give his agreement.

HITLER: I am giving the agreement now. We have got a Defence Staff. We have got an organization the envy of every country in the world, OKW. No one else has such a thing. It hasn't been much talked about merely because the Army Staff didn't like it.

KEITEL: (*as usual using stronger words to express the same idea*)*: Has in fact fought hard against it!

HITLER: (*taking up Keitel's expression*): Has in fact fought hard against it! After we had fought for years to get this organization.

GUDERIAN: 3 Air Fleet has such a large number of lorries.

THOMALE: (*MT Inspectorate*): We must flush them out.

KREIPE: (*Chief of Staff Luftwaffe*): We've already lost so many using them on Army jobs (*refuses*).

HITLER: All the same I am convinced that taking into account their job, the Luftwaffe is better off for lorries than the Army. No doubt about it. But this is not the point – we don't want to quarrel about trifles but ... (*takes no decision*).

In the spring of 1944 further efforts were made to set up certain special unified Wehrmacht organizations, but these made no better progress. Basically Hitler was opposed to any form of unification and he now shied away from giving orders to the Navy and Air Force to which their Commanders-in-Chief were likely to be opposed. Keitel merely seized upon Hitler's attitude as an opportunity to avoid the obligations which his own better judgment and the pressure of his staff might have brought upon him.⁸

COLLAPSE OF THE FRONTS AND ALLIANCES

In these circumstances I was profoundly thankful to escape from a headquarters in which all thought was governed and all initiative stifled by injury and sickness, by silence and denials, by mistrust of everybody and above all by Hitler's personal thirst for revenge. Yet I long remained depressed that I should have had to leave just at this moment when events at the front, as the following account will show, demanded a last despairing effort to ward off the catastrophe that was upon us.

* All words in italics are the author's.

Of
ginnin
the R
still re
South
and th
Ruma
people
Anton
upon
at the
being
imme
negoti
drawn
Hunga
tion b
decla
armist
In I
occupi
of bein
by the
rout; o
ranean
Seine,
central
by the
sure of
initiati
the city
English
blockec
An even
and asl
ment w
ceased;
The
hands o
as a res

A

The Death Throes

term decision but Hitler apparently felt that his repertoire of tactical expedients was not yet exhausted and all could still be saved that way. His flow of speech was incessant. He refused all sensible measures; he demanded the impossible. He clung undeterred to his principle of static defence and could not be persuaded voluntarily to give up anything or even to consider any long-term plans, however obviously necessary they might be. One or two highlights from individual theatres of war best illustrate the situation.

As regards south-east Europe when Hitler briefed me for my trip to Normandy during the night 31 July-1 August he delivered himself of the following:

Naturally the Balkans are the major worry. I am entirely convinced of one thing: if the Turks, just like the Finns, were today to be convinced that we could stick it out, they would not lift a finger. All these people are worried only about one thing: that perhaps they might fall between two stools. That is their worry. If therefore we could contrive to fight a really decisive defensive battle somewhere or to win some victory somewhere - if we could contrive to re-establish these people's confidence that we shall stick it out and that we are withdrawing merely to shorten our front - then I am convinced that we shall be able to get Turkey to adopt at least a wait-and-see policy. It is no joy to the Turks to see the strongest European anti-Bolshevist and anti-Russian power eliminated and replaced by a completely unstable counterweight of questionable value and reliability in the form of the Anglo-Saxon powers. That doesn't please the Turks.

Then naturally in Bulgaria they are beginning to think: now what happens if Germany collapses? Small powers like us can't get away with it. If a great power can't get away with it, we can't.

So in my view there is something else which is dependent upon stabilizing the Eastern Front. In the last analysis the attitude of all the small Balkan states is dependent upon it - the Rumanians - the Bulgarians - the Hungarians - and also the Turks.

Nevertheless we must take certain precautions. The most essential initial precaution for us is and remains to secure the Hungarian area (... vital importance ...).

The second and equally important is of course the attitude of Bulgaria. Without Bulgaria it would in fact be impossible for us to secure the Balkan area and so continue to get iron ore from Greece.

Any
Dalmat
An E
view w
if the cr
In the
are real
I can
Balkans
as a re
Allies: t
islands
They w

Yet wh
east was s
Hitler's at
Serbia an
proposals
Mihailovic
Instead of
survey of t
only real p
point of cr
plain and
the south-
many mu
Jodl summr
not be all
Communi
there is no
Rumania.
German p
affairs; the
Red Army
end. This
military s
disastrous,
which OK
South-east

Any English landing in the Balkans or in Istria or on the Dalmatian islands would be a matter of the utmost danger.

An English landing could produce catastrophic results. In my view we cannot stop a landing on the islands, etc., in the long run, if the enemy employ major forces. There is only one question here. In the last analysis I believe the question is whether the Allies are really in agreement about this area.

I can hardly believe that the Russians would hand over the Balkans to the English. It may well be that something will happen as a result of tension between the Russian Bolsheviks and the Allies: that the English will try to lay hands at least on the Aegean islands for themselves. Theoretically at least that is conceivable. They will certainly not act in concert.¹⁰

Yet when, on 22 August, the German commander in the South-east was summoned to the Headquarters by the Operations Staff, Hitler's attitude was quite different. Tito had broken into southern Serbia and our object now was to obtain Hitler's agreement to proposals for co-operation with the nationalist leaders Nedich and Mihailovic in a common effort against Communism in the interior. Instead of giving a decision Hitler went off into a long historical survey of the 'danger of a greater Serbia', saying that they were 'the only real people in the Balkans'. Although the Russians were on the point of crossing the Dniester and Pruth, breaking into the Danube plain and so driving deep into the rear of the entire coastal front in the south-east, Hitler would hear of nothing other than that Germany must 'determinedly resist all plans for a greater Serbia'. Jodl summarized his point of view as follows: 'a Serbian army must not be allowed to exist. It is better to have some danger from Communism.' It seems almost incredible that in these discussions there is not a word about the possibility of a change in the attitude of Rumania. It took place only twenty-four hours later; yet the German political authorities had no inkling of the true state of affairs; they simply thought that the threatening approach of the Red Army would lead the Rumanians to defend themselves to the end. This was an instance in which the dichotomy between the two military staffs within the Supreme Command was particularly disastrous, for there was no clear dividing line between the areas for which OKH and OKW were responsible. The commanders in the South-east could do nothing to improve this situation since, as in all

A

The Death Throes

1944 (half of them on each day). As he had done ten days before in Berlin to General von Manteuffel, he now made a long speech, explaining in addition to the main military reasons, the political motives which had led him to his decision.⁴⁰

War is of course a test of endurance for those involved. The longer the war goes on the more severe this test of endurance. This test of endurance must under all circumstances continue as long as there is the slightest hope of victory. The moment all hope of victory disappears people's determination becomes insufficient to withstand the test of endurance, in the same way as a fortress will go on fighting as long as there is hope of relief. It is therefore vital from time to time to destroy the enemy's confidence in victory by making clear to him by means of offensive action that his plans cannot succeed. A successful defensive can never achieve this as effectively as a successful offensive. In the long run the principle that the defensive is stronger than the offensive does not hold. We must not forget that the total manpower available on our side is still just as great as that of the enemy. We must not forget that a considerable proportion of our enemy's strength is tied down in east Asia facing Japan, facing a power which, even without China, comprises well over one hundred million men and from the technical equipment point of view is a major factor.

Nevertheless we must be clear that, although a prolonged, stubbornly conducted defensive may wear down the enemy, it must in all cases be followed by a successful offensive. From the outset of the war therefore I have striven to act offensively whenever possible, to conduct a war of movement and not to allow myself to be manoeuvred into a position comparable to that of the first World War. If this has nevertheless occurred, it has resulted primarily from the defection of our allies, which naturally had its effect on operations. Wars are, however, finally decided when one side or the other realizes that the war as such can no longer be won. Our most important task therefore is to force the enemy to realize this. He will realize this most quickly when his forces have been annihilated and his territory occupied. If we ourselves are forced onto the defensive, then it must straight away be our task from time to time to make it clear once more to the enemy by means of ruthless offensives that he has nevertheless

* his dreams, his theories, his insights late at night

not
The
miss
may
Tha
surv
rise
reco
and
anda
was
year
that
trans
reali
come
arme
- the
whic
war
say
gentl
were
depu
put
stead
carri
event
have
Russi
year
other
must
Th
there
partn
enemi
oppos
and
empir

ad done ten days before in
now made a long speech,
tary reasons, the political
0.40

those involved. The longer
est of endurance. This test
ances continue as long as
The moment all hope of
tion becomes insufficient
the same way as a fortress
ope of relief. It is therefore
my's confidence in victory
offensive action that his
ensive can never achieve
ive. In the long run the
han the offensive does not
l manpower available on
the enemy. We must not
f our enemy's strength is
facing a power which,
ver one hundred million
point of view is a major

, although a prolonged,
ear down the enemy, it
ssful offensive. From the
to act offensively when-
ement and not to allow
n comparable to that of
rtheless occurred, it has
ur allies, which naturally
however, finally decided
the war as such can no
therefore is to force the
is most quickly when his
erritory occupied. If we
en it must straight away
clear once more to the
that he has nevertheless

not won the war but that it will be continued without flinching. The psychological effect upon the enemy must be increased by missing no opportunity to make it clear to him that, whatever he may do, he can never reckon upon us surrendering. Never, never. That is the decisive point. The slightest sign of an inclination to surrender means that the enemy's hopes of ultimate victory will rise once more, that his population, which has lost all hope, will recover its hope and be prepared once more to accept all afflictions and privations. This is the danger of publishing defeatist memoranda as was done in 1917, or of publishing official documents, as was done in that year, which had been known to the enemy years before and which attempted to keep up morale by stating that some miracle would happen, and that this miracle would transform the situation at a stroke. The enemy must be made to realize that under no circumstances can he succeed. Once he comes to realize that - from the attitude of the nation, of the armed forces and finally as a result of the severe reverses he suffers - then one day his nervous energy will collapse. That will happen which happened to Frederick the Great in the seventh year of his war and which can be accounted his greatest success. People may say: yes, but then the situation was different. It was not different, gentlemen; at that time all his generals, including his own brother, were near to despairing of success. His Prime Minister and deputations of Ministers from Berlin appeared and begged him to put an end to the war since it could no longer be won. The steadfastness of one man made it possible for that battle to be carried through, and the miracle of a change in the situation eventually to arrive. The counter-argument that this would never have happened had there not been a change of Sovereign in Russia is totally irrelevant. For if he had surrendered in the fifth year of the war a change of sovereign in the seventh year - in other words two years later - would have meant nothing. One must await the moment.

The following must also be considered, gentlemen. In all history there has never been a coalition composed of such heterogeneous partners with such totally divergent objectives as that of our enemies. The states which are now our enemies are the greatest opposites which exist on earth: ultra-capitalist states on one side and ultra-Marxist states on the other; on one side a dying empire - Britain; on the other side a colony, the United States

ones, his
glif

★

The Death Throes

waiting to claim its inheritance. These are states whose objectives diverge daily. And anyone who, if I may use the phrase, sits like a spider in his web and follows these developments can see how hour by hour these antitheses are increasing. If we can deal it a couple of heavy blows, this artificially constructed common front may collapse with a mighty thunderclap at any moment. Each of the partners in this coalition has entered it in the hope of achieving thereby his political objectives ... either to cheat the others out of something or to get something out of it: the United States' object is to be England's heir, Russia's object is to capture the Balkans, to capture the Straits, to capture Persian oil, to capture Iran, to capture the Persian Gulf; England's object is to maintain her position, to strengthen her position in the Mediterranean. In other words one day – it can happen any moment, for on the other side history is being made merely by mortal men – this coalition may dissolve, always on the assumption that under no circumstances does this battle lead to a moment of weakness in Germany.

We have of course had our points of weakness from the beginning of the war, weakness consisting primarily in our allies. It was a major source of weakness for us that we had no strong states as allies, only weak states. But all the same for a time they did their duty by us. We must not complain and we must not wail about it. We must merely realize with thankfulness that for a time at any rate these states fulfilled their purpose. We were enabled for years to make war far from the borders of the Reich. Even now we have only been driven back to our frontiers in places. In many areas we are still far from the old Reich frontiers. In any case, as before, we are now carrying on the war from a situation which gives us every possibility of holding out and sticking it through, particularly if we can eliminate the danger here in the West.

Gentlemen, on other fronts I have accepted sacrifices – sacrifices which could perhaps have been avoided – in order to make it possible to act offensively again. When at this moment I speak of an offensive, the man who is exposed to the rigours of the battle, particularly those who are suffering from the enemy's complete air superiority, may perhaps be worried and may say: 'can one even think of such a thing? It wasn't like this in 1939 and 1940; then more or less everyone was convinced that the war

could be won by
men! I did not v
I wrote memora
not have had to
to get across my
West. ...

The official v
and that was wh
the fact that we
offensively agai
thought was lun
The course of ex
imagine where v
France. The obj
ence between t
enemy's army h
to an enemy we ha
men. But as re
apart from the
factor to which
strength: in 1940
total of about 10
used in the off
some of them v
months before a
of class. The forma
of class. But on th
of class either. Som
units too and h
the first official anno
in weeks they have
of colossal figures –
lost. So he is fou
on two sides are a
enemy may have
we have the bett
had years ago
A speech like thi
some effect, howev
inadequacies. Gene

could be won by an offensive in the West.' On the contrary gentlemen! I did not write memoranda in order to knock at open doors. I wrote memoranda in order to break down closed doors. I would not have had to hold innumerable repetitive conferences in order to get across my conviction that we had to act offensively in the West. ...

The official view was that we should conduct a defensive war and that was what I had to combat in those years. People accepted the fact that we must act offensively against Poland. But to act offensively against France and against England, that people thought was lunacy, a crime, a Utopia, a hopeless undertaking. The course of events proved the opposite. We cannot today even imagine where we should have got, had we not then dealt with France. The objection may be made that there is a major difference between 1940 and the present situation: at that time the enemy's army had no battle experience, and now we are facing an enemy we have learned to know in war. That is true, gentlemen. But as regards relative strength there is little difference, apart from the Luftwaffe – that is of course a most important factor to which I will come in a moment. As regards relative strength: in 1940 we carried out our offensive in the West with a total of about 100 divisions, say 110, and of those about 86 were used in the offensive. They were not all first-class divisions, some of them were improvised formations formed only a few months before and some could not be really regarded as first-class. The formations available for this offensive are not all first-class. But on the enemy's side his formations are not all first-class either. Some of our units are tired but the enemy has tired units too and has suffered heavy losses. We have just had the first official announcement from the Americans that in three short weeks they have lost more than 240,000 men. Those are simply colossal figures – far greater than we ourselves believed they had lost. So he is fought-out too. From the technical point of view the two sides are about equal. As regards armoured forces, the enemy may have more tanks available but with our new Marks we have the better tanks.'

A speech like this, made to unprejudiced soldiers, must have had some effect, however aware they may have been of shortages and inadequacies. General von Manteuffel wrote: 'on the credit side the

picture of the appreciation of to see the full of favourable

mn Mist) - the ber. The enemy initial successes which was not fel's Army later ough they were ir sister army on rters was carried tely the prisoner ed to realize that the movement of victory, getting oming more im- good idea of the remaining enemy must be cut off ey will then sur- oint of Bastogne, greater proportion in spite of all the y began to make sm but gradually forced on to the Chief. West asked 'limited solution' erly clung to the ous ideas.

erxes against the changed; Supreme had already been the enemy had been discussion sensive at the last ry of Alsace and

To the End of 1944

Lorraine'. The OKW Operations Staff had made a preliminary study of the operation in October and produced a draft before the end of November; this was now resurrected preparatory to a new second offensive.⁴² They managed to convince themselves in Adlerhorst that this operation would not only produce further partial successes but in view of the movements which it would force upon the enemy, would allow the front, which had meanwhile bogged down in the Ardennes, to get going again, cross the Meuse and reach its original objective. This concept was based on no true strategic appreciation and the resources required were even less likely to be available than they had been for the Ardennes offensive. Yet on 28 December 1944 Hitler propounded it in glowing terms to the commanders concerned as the following extract from *Fragment no. 27* shows.

In general the plan for the operation is clear. I am fully in agreement with the measures which have been taken. In particular I hope that we can push the right flank* forward rapidly so as to open up the approaches to Zabern and then push straight on into the Rhine plain and liquidate the American divisions. Our objective must be the destruction of these American divisions. I hope that by then the fuel situation will allow us to concentrate fresh forces, to regroup** and to strike a further blow as a result of which I am completely confident that, as our forces increase, we shall be able to destroy additional American divisions. For by that time our forces should have become somewhat stronger. I hope that I can support this next attack with ... additional divisions, one of them a first-class one from Finland. Unless this operation is cursed with bad luck from the outset it should in my opinion succeed.

I do not need to explain to you again how much depends upon it. It will to a large extent be decisive for the success of the first operation.*** If we can carry out these two operations A and B, and if we succeed, the threat to our left flank*** will automatically vanish. We shall then start the third battle straight away and smash the Americans there completely. I am entirely convinced that we shall then be able to turn left.

Our first object must be to clean up the situation in the West by

* From the area Zweibrücken-Büsch.

** In Upper Alsace.

*** In the Ardennes.

offensive action. This object must be fanatically pursued. There may be some who in secret will object saying: 'yes but will it come off?' Gentlemen, the same objection was raised to me in 1939. I was told both verbally and in writing that the thing could not be done; that it was impossible. Even in the winter of 1940 I was told: that cannot be done. Why don't we hold on in the Siegfried Line?; we've built the Siegfried Line so why don't we let the enemy bang his head against it and then possibly attack him afterwards? Let him come on first; we may be able to advance later. We've got these wonderful positions; why run unnecessary risks? What would have happened to us if we had not attacked then? It's exactly the same today. Our relative strength is no less than it was in 1939 or 1940. On the contrary if in these two attacks we succeed in destroying both these American groupings* then the balance will swing clearly and finally in our favour. In the last analysis I am counting on the fact that the German soldier knows what he is fighting for.

The only thing which is not in our favour this time is the air situation. That is why we are now forced to take advantage of the bad winter weather. The air situation forces us to do so. I cannot wait till the weather gets better. I would be happier if we could somehow hold on till the spring. I would then perhaps be able to make available an additional 10, 15, 20 divisions and we could attack in the spring. But in the first place the enemy also would have got 14 to 20 new divisions across. Secondly I do not know whether the air situation will be any better in the spring than it is now. If it is not, the weather in the spring will give the enemy a decisive advantage, whereas now there are at least some weeks before there can be carpet-bombing of troop concentrations. That means a lot.

You will realize from the following how important it is to bring this thing off: the enemy now knows all about the flying bombs. He has of course completely rebuilt some of them. We know that. He is already producing them. There is no doubt that, just as we are harassing England's industrial areas all the time with these flying bombs, they will be able practically to demolish the Ruhr area by massive use of them. There is no protection against them. We should not even be able to use fighters against them. I would rather not talk about the heavy rockets. There's absolutely no

* In Alsace.

ly pursued. There
g: 'yes but will it
as raised to me in
that the thing could
the winter of 1940
we hold on in the
e so why don't we
then possibly attack
be able to advance
y run unnecessary
e had not attacked
e strength is no less
in these two attacks
n groupings* then
r favour. In the last
man soldier knows

this time is the air
ke advantage of the
s to do so. I cannot
appier if we could
perhaps be able to
sions and we could
: enemy also would
ldly I do not know
the spring than it is
ll give the enemy a
at least some weeks
ncentrations. That

ortant it is to bring
at the flying bombs.
em. We know that.
ubt that, just as we
he time with these
demolish the Ruhr
ction against them.
ainst them. I would
ere's absolutely no

defence against them. Everything therefore indicates that we must clear up this situation before the enemy gets super-weapons of this sort into service.

The German people have breathed more freely in the last few days. We must make sure that this relief is not followed by lethargy – lethargy is the wrong word, I mean gloom. They have breathed again. The mere idea that we were on the offensive again has had a cheering effect on the German people. And if this offensive can continue, as soon as we get our first really great victories – and we shall have them for our situation is no different from that of the Russians in 1941 and 1942 when everything was against him, when he had an enormous front but when we went over to the defensive and he was able to push us slowly back by limited offensives – if the German people see this happening, you may be sure they will make every sacrifice which is humanly possible. They will answer every call. They will be afraid of nothing – whether I order a new levy on clothing or a new levy on something else, or whether I call for men – the young men will come forward with enthusiasm. The German people will react. I must say that the nation acts as well as anybody could expect. There are no better people than our Germans. Individual bad examples are merely the exceptions which prove the rule.

Finally I wish to appeal to you to go into this operation with all your verve, with all your zest, with all your energy. This is a decisive operation. Your success will automatically bring about the success of the second operation. The success of the second operation will automatically bring about the collapse of the threat to the left flank* of our offensive. We shall then actually have knocked out half the enemy forces on the Western Front. Then we will see what happens. Then there will be 45 additional German divisions and I do not believe that in the long run he can stand up to those. We will yet be masters of our fate.

Now that the date has been fixed for New Year's Eve I wish to say that I am particularly grateful to all those headquarters which have done the gigantic work of preparation and which have taken upon themselves the great risk of being responsible for it. I consider it a particularly good omen that this has been possible. Throughout German history New Year's Night has always been a night of good omen for our arms. For the enemy this New

* In the Ardennes.

A

The Death Throes

Year's Night will be an unpleasant surprise. He does not celebrate Christmas: he celebrates New Year. There could be no better start to the New Year than dealing him a blow like this. And when on New Year's Day the news spreads through Germany that we are on the offensive again in a new area and are succeeding, the German people will say to itself that, although the end of the old year was miserable, the new one has begun well. That is a good omen for the future. Gentlemen, I should like to wish each of you personally good luck.

Gentlemen, there is one thing more: secrecy is a pre-requisite for the success of this operation. Anyone who has not got to know about this operation should not know about it. Anyone who must know something of it, should know only what he needs to know. Anyone who must know something of it should not be told earlier than is necessary. That is imperative. And no one should be allowed to go up to the front who is in the know and who might possibly be captured. That is also imperative.

Before the operations in Alsace (code name 'Nordwind' (North Wind)) could have any effect upon the area of the main attack in the north Hitler was forced, at the beginning of January 1945, to the conclusion that 'continuation of the Ardennes operation now offers no prospects of success, since Army Group B is now faced with fifty per cent of the enemy forces'. All movement in Alsace also soon came to a halt but it was several days before Hitler's advisers could persuade him that this meant the definite end of his ambitious plans in the West. It was not until 14 January, the day before the headquarters returned to Berlin that the Operations Staff War Diary finally admitted that 'the initiative in the area of the offensive has passed to the enemy'.

Marked by vast sacrifices in blood and treasure the story of the war in the West was nearing its end.

A fitting
Hitler an
Armoured
December
both for I

Not lo
letters.
the Sev
army in
any me
mandat
But ne
you rea
But the
eternal
the mi
in an
themse
determ
is a w
fanatic
human
get no
acter,
ride th
badly
away.
only b
thorou
fanatic

A

CHAPTER 2

Disintegration to Capitulation

A fitting introduction to the last phase of the war is a talk between Hitler and General Thomale, Chief of the Inspectorate General of Armoured Forces; it took place in Adlerhorst during the night 29-30 December 1944. Hitler was at his best in conjuring up day dreams both for himself and other people. He said (*Fragment no. 30*):

Not long ago I was reading a volume of Frederick the Great's letters. In one of these letters he wrote (it was in the fifth year of the Seven Years War): 'I started this war with the most wonderful army in Europe; today I've got a muck heap. I have no leaders any more, my generals are incompetent, the officers are no commanders, the troops are wretched.' It was a devastating estimate. But nevertheless that man got through the war. What's more if you read the estimates about the Russian troops, they're wretched. But they carry on just the same. So the important things are the eternal human qualities, the qualities which are really basic to the military profession. Military qualities don't show themselves in an exercise on a sand model. In the last analysis they show themselves in the capacity to hold on, in perseverance and determination. That's the decisive factor in any victory. Genius is a will-o'-the-wisp unless it is founded on perseverance and fanatical determination. That's the most important thing in human existence. People who have brainwaves, ideas, etc., will get nowhere in the end unless they also possess strength of character, perseverance and determination. Otherwise they merely ride their luck. If all goes well they are up in the air; if things go badly they're down in the depths and give up everything straight away. One can't make world history that way. World history can only be made if, in addition to high intelligence, in addition to thorough knowledge, in addition to continual alertness, a man has fanatical determination and the courage of his convictions which

will make him master of himself. That's what matters to the soldier in the last analysis, that at the moment of crisis he feels that those who command him have these qualities. Some don't like it, those are the bad ones. But the good ones feel that they are playing some part; they say: 'why have we had to make all these sacrifices? But we shall only have to go on doing so as long as the war lasts'. That's certain. No one can last for ever. We can't, the other side can't. It's merely a question who can stand it longer. The one who must hold out the longer is the one who's got everything at stake. We've got everything at stake. If the other side says one day: 'we've had enough of it', nothing happens to him. If America says: 'we're off. Period. We've got no more men for Europe', nothing happens; New York would still be New York, Chicago would still be Chicago, Detroit would still be Detroit, San Francisco would be still San Francisco. It doesn't change a thing. But if we were to say today 'we've had enough', we should cease to exist. Germany would cease to exist'.

This is no bad description by Hitler of the general politico-strategic concept on which German Supreme Headquarters was working at the close of the war. It was most simply expressed in the slogan that we must not lay down our arms 'at five minutes to twelve', as National-Socialist theory maintained had happened in November 1918. But for the man who was at the helm of German destiny the moment at which the decisions for war and victory would present themselves lay hidden in the mists of his political and military wishful thinking. In the forefront was his conviction that the enemy coalition would collapse, and he was continually thinking that he had discovered new indications of it. Secondly his 'faith' was based upon our 'miracle weapons'; they were a remarkable achievement of German engineers and craftsmen but there was no reason to think that they would have a 'lightning' or even early and decisive effect comparable to that later achieved by the first atom bomb.¹ Meanwhile both the people and the Wehrmacht were left largely in the dark over the real situation; their last energies were whipped up by a propaganda presentation of the Allied demand for unconditional surrender² and – though with more caution – of the news of the horrors perpetrated by the Russian rabble when the Red Army first entered East Prussia.

Such reasoning might do some good politically, but no military

war plan could b
time even Hitler

So in this final
and its strategy w
between attempts
nor resources wer
continuously over
of a determination
day-to-day activi
ments capable of
sessed of the devil
churned out orde
to receive them.
directly involved i
this lead with self

Hitler's leaders
but the last crazy
faults and his own
Geneva Conventi
and as a stimulus
At the beginning
Reich Chancellor
Wehrmacht that
it if they were t
followed the orde
was relinquished
supply depots we
bare necessities of
only fourteen days
to the soldiers on
will, unless you k
and if necessary ki
– a scurvy reward
which had borne t

Keitel was the
all their details. A
(referring to Mai
solutely clear. It
oath we had swor
In the middle

omination to Hitler, he
ent'; Jodl unfortunately
Marshal's deep religious
the proposal down flat
rian was 'appalled' at
do nothing; eventually
Himmler was totally in-
f command of military

place almost exclusively
ral Germany; both the
tacks were overwhelmed
in ever sharper disagree-
which Jodl was careful
fronts in the truest sense
he frontiers of Germany,
empted to exert a real
all he did was to shuffle
dwindling reserves of
on which the OKW
direction of operations
which forces from the
across the Drava, now
'the East'.¹⁷ The fact
was thanks only to the
Freiherr von Weichs
had been much initial
uns, they succeeded in
essfully from the whole
which Supreme Head-

ve tried to calm Hitler
uzzling order' General
Wehrmacht Aide, had
nt by Hitler and had
ier to Commander-in-
drew from the bend of
Vistula with his Army.
wild threats on this
in-Chief of the Army

Group to which he belonged, Colonel-General Reinhardt, were dismissed but no further action was taken against them.¹⁸

This was the time at which the Allies were re-drawing the map of Europe at Yalta. Oddly enough it was also the moment chosen by German Supreme Headquarters to realize that there were considerable potentialities, at least of a propaganda nature, for the conduct of the war against Soviet Russia in the Russian General Vlassov, who had been captured in the summer of 1942. The Press and Propaganda Section of the Operations Staff under General von Wedel had long been trying to get support for Vlassov's idea of forming a 'liberation army' to fight Bolshevism. As in all other political matters however, Hitler was unwilling to undertake obligations which might later tie his hands in setting up 'the new order' in Europe. In November 1943 Jodl had stated in his speech to the Gauleiter that 'the inclusion of foreigners in the forces must be approached with caution and scepticism'. In September 1944 (much too late) Himmler, who was responsible for all foreign troops in German service, was authorized to conclude an agreement with Vlassov, in theory designed rapidly to produce one to two divisions. What Hitler and Göring thought of this reinforcement is shown by the discussion at the briefing conference on 27 January 1945 given in the following extract from *Fragment 24/25*:

GUDERIAN: Vlassov wanted to make some statement.

HITLER: Vlassov doesn't mean a thing.

GÖRING: And the idea is they should go around in German uniform. One sees these young chaps everywhere. That only annoys people. If you want to lay hands on them you find they're Vlassov's people.

HITLER: I was always against putting them into our uniform. But who was for it? It was our beloved Army which always has its own ideas.

GÖRING: They're going around that way at the moment.

HITLER: I can't put them into anything else because we haven't any uniform. At the time I wanted to put the foreigners ... we'll do anything; Mr von Seeckt sold German tin hats to the Chinese. People have got no pride. They'll put any old good-for-nothing into German uniform. I was always against it. I was always against putting the Cossacks into German uniform. They ought to have been given Cossack uniform and Cossack

A

The Death Throes

badges of rank to show that they were fighting for us. Much more romantic. It never occurs to the Englishmen to dress up an Indian as an Englishman. We're the only people who've got no shame because we've got no character. Otherwise one wouldn't go peddling German tin hats to other people. The English let the Indians go around as natives.

GÖRING: Vlassov's people have got themselves so involved over there that they'd be punished if they were caught.

HITLER: Don't say that! They'll desert just the same.

GÖRING: That's all they can do – desert; they can't do anything else.

GUDERIAN: Are we to get the division forming at Münsingen operational as soon as we can?

HITLER: Yes, get it operational.

FEGELEIN: The Reichsführer hoped that he would be given command of both divisions.

HITLER: Vlassov would desert.

GÖRING: Deserting's all they can do. At least they won't be eating.

This was probably why Jodl's diary of 12 February says no more than: 'propaganda announcement about the employment of Vlassov troops. A warning for the Soviets'.¹⁹

It will now be clear that in the closing years of the war German Supreme Headquarters and its military staff put no real drive behind the formation of a co-ordinated war plan or as the phrase then was 'overall strategy'. Similarly the part played by the Headquarters in the strategy of the OKW theatres of war was limited almost entirely to matters of detail, to interference and to criticism. In the far North once the withdrawal from Finland and the construction of a defensive position on the Lyngen Fjord had been completed, all that remained to be done was to co-operate with the Navy, which in this case carried the main responsibility, in getting the largest possible number of formations back across the Skagerrack onto the mainland. Hitler however was still preoccupied with the possibilities of landings in Norway, and so in January 1945 there was some movement in the opposite direction, one ski brigade being sent north. Jodl meanwhile got his staff to examine whether, in view of the overall situation, the entire sweep of the coasts and frontiers of Norway could or should be defended.²⁰ For political and economic

reasons Hitler v part of the count years, but troops hostilities.

In the South-completed, but F should be retain serious losses in l of German offic mander-in-Chief a vengeful enem handed over to l death as prison.

In Italy the o unchanged in sp although further Headquarters. F as Commander-quarters' repeat he stated that: withdrawal, sinc morale and det Vietinghoff how March, protest along with his ir to this principle their last great a the whole plain had no fuel an thereupon issue the Alps, but th split and on 26 killed while fle appeals for 'far tance' – but the exhortations to they bore no re mander-in-Chie to an end by a long since been

Div. is in danger of being cut off from the north it must pack up.'

That a note such as this could come from the Chief of an overall Operations Staff in a situation in which everything was at stake may appear extraordinary. No less extraordinary was the effect which the presence of Hitler was still capable of exerting; Kesseling's report on the meeting runs:

As I drove back from the Führer's Headquarters in the night 15-16 March I had the impression that Hitler stubbornly believed that we could defeat the Russians in the East and that what was happening in the West neither surprised him nor particularly worried him. He took it for granted that once the Russian front had been consolidated, he would be able with the forces so released and his newly-created divisions to clean up in the West. He was equally convinced that his orders to increase supplies would be carried out to the letter.²⁸

The most graphic picture of the activity and atmosphere of the headquarters at this period is given by Jodl's diary and fragments of the record of a briefing conference both dated 23 March 1945 - i.e. shortly after the beginning of the Allies' Rhine crossing. Even at this late date Jodl's diary merely contains the usual details: '559 (Division) has 14 tanks; 190 Division has 4 battalions and 3 artillery battalions; 14 ammunition trains and 18 petrol trains are on the move.'

There follow one or two unpleasant remarks on non-military matters; obviously echoing Hitler he says: 'there are one and a quarter million workers in the Ruhr area. They are lying around eating their heads off and doing nothing - they must work on the railway.' This was all the thanks the workers in the Ruhr got for all they had done for the war industry, and for their tenacity under years of bombing.

The picture is completed by the record of the briefing conference at which the only senior officer present was General Burgdorf, the Chief Military Aide.

HITLER: The greatest danger really seems to be the second bridgehead, the bridgehead at Oppenheim.

BURGDORF: Because the enemy managed to bring up his bridging equipment so quickly.



HITLER: A pontoon bridge!

HEWEL: The Rhine isn't all that wide there.

HITLER: It's a good two hundred and fifty yards! It's only necessary for one man to go to sleep on a river obstacle and a frightful catastrophe can occur. The existence of the upper bridgehead has probably saved some of the formations down below. If it hadn't existed and if the enemy had used all his forces to push southwards up the Rhine, no one would have got away. The moment one lets oneself be pushed out of the fortified zone that's the end of it. The commanders have handled this wretchedly. From the top down they've drummed into the troops that it's better to fight in open country than in here.

BURGDORF: Minister Goebbels is asking for authority to turn the east-west avenue in Berlin into a runway. It would be necessary to remove the lamp standards and clear the Tiergarten for twenty yards either side. He thinks it would be a good idea because the east-west avenue could then be widened later.

HITLER: Yes, he can do that. But I don't think all that's necessary. Fifty yards is wide enough.

ZANDER: I've got here the last three radio messages from Hanke* (produces them).

HITLER: I'd like to see all the last radio messages.

ZANDER: They're in the protected accommodation in the Party Chancellery; I'll get them along.

HITLER: Get them along straight away! A telegram arrived in which he said that the enemy is now using very heavy artillery and that he's nothing to counter it with. He asked for heavy infantry howitzers. But as usual people have been messing around with the infantry howitzers. The Army Group was supposed to supply them. But I've ordered them to be supplied from the main depot and I've had it checked straight away whether heavy infantry howitzers are available there. Buhle registered astonishment. In fact they had to be furnished by the Replacement Army. The Army Group had no infantry howitzers. It took an unconscionable time. Then they said they wouldn't fit into the aircraft - then that they would go in if stripped - then that they couldn't land. Actually they're just afraid to land. Now they say that if they get the howitzers in they can't put in any ammunition. All we're talking about are

* Gauleiter of Lower Silesia trapped in Breslau.

six ai
for ar
stand
block
in. T
the h
roun
can't
can l
BURGD
HITLER
aren't
sixty
VON BE
lamp
HITLER
thirty
VON BE
HITLER
usc c
comp
JOHANN
bank
VON BE
but v
HITLER
BURGD
HITLER
off fr
VON BE
HEWEL
BURGD
HITLER
long
BURGD
about
HITLER
one t
anoth
say t

A

Disintegration to Capitulation

six aircraft and six cargo gliders. Something else can be used for ammunition. But Hanke is a tank man – he doesn't understand. If they really want something to shoot the enemy out of blocks of houses there are better weapons; but we can't get them in. There are no better weapons which can be got there than the heavy infantry howitzers. But if you merely put in eighteen rounds a gun, that's a mess. With eighteen rounds a gun you can't do anything – although of course an infantry howitzer can level a house down to the cellar with one shot.

BURGDORF: Can I give Minister Goebbels the go-ahead?

HITLER: Yes. But I don't see why it's got to be made wider. We aren't going to land a *Goliath* and that's only one hundred and sixty feet wide.

VON BELOW: If JU52s are going to land in the dark the street lamps will cause trouble.

HITLER: All right for the street lamps; but to level twenty to thirty yards of the Tiergarten either side ...

VON BELOW: That's hardly necessary.

HITLER: There's no need for more than fifty yards' width. It's no use either because it couldn't be reinforced either side. That's completely useless.

JOHANNMEYER: It's merely a question of the pavement and the bank.

VON BELOW: I don't believe levelling for twenty yards is necessary but we must get rid of the street lamps.

HITLER: He can remove the street lamps.

BURGDORF: Then I can pass that on.

HITLER: It's just occurred to me: ME162s and ME262s could take off from the east-west avenue.

VON BELOW: Yes, it's long enough.

HEWEL: But not with the Victory Column in the middle.

BURGDORF: That would have to be demolished.

HITLER: It's almost two miles to the Victory Column. That's long enough ...

BURGDORF: Then there's another question: what's to be done about Guderian's leave at this moment?

HITLER: I'd like to get a final medical report about Wenck and one the doctor will stick to. One moment he swears he's fit and another that he isn't – finish – period. All they do is talk and say that on such and such a day he can come out of hospital.

A

The Death Throes

Now they apparently don't even know whether he's got to have an operation.

BURGDORF: The doctor told us he thought it essential that Wenck should stay in hospital until 15 April, though he is agitating to get out earlier.

VON BELOW: May we stop the smokescreen, my Führer, when you are not at the Obersalzberg? The smoke screen is put up every time we go there and we're running short of acid.

HITLER: Yes, but that's the end of everything, we must be clear about that. That's the last protection we have. The bunker will be alright and I don't mind about my house but the complete set-up will go. If Zossen gets shot up one day where shall we go then? One heavy attack on Zossen and that's the end of it. Probably a good part of it's gone already.*

BURGDORF: It's quite all right to work in. The buildings are still all there, and there are enough huts. If the huts are destroyed then it can't be used.

HITLER: I saw that picture. It showed a three foot concrete wall. That's army concrete they used there. It oughtn't to have been demolished by one bomb once it had been built.

BURGDORF: I would like to refer to the layout at Air Fleet Reich, which I once visited. If I'd had any idea that a thing like that existed in the neighbourhood of Berlin I'd have said it's lunacy. It could take OKW, OKH and your own staff, my Führer. Then at Wannsee – that's the old anti-aircraft school – they've got a vast bunker; five feet of concrete on top and four floors one below ground and three above. I saw that by chance.

HITLER: No one's ever told me about this.

BRUDERMÜLLER: The first two battalions of the 6,000 parachute troops left the combat area** today and are to be loaded in the Bolzano area. But the Brenner stretch is still out of action as the result of air attack. So we are reckoning on three days before they get to Bolzano. Convoys returning empty will be used as far as possible – but there are not very many of them because little ammunition's being used. The main body will have to get to the Bolzano area on foot.

HITLER: Then they won't get to Bolzano in three days. From there

* There was a heavy air attack on the camp of Zossen on 15 March.

** In the Apennines.

(the combat area)

14 days, at least

BURGDORF: Even

BRUDERMÜLLER

moment. The

are comparative

shooting and

BURGDORF: Can

always unload

since it's only

HITLER: The po

6,000 are to

straight away

briefed in tra

a fresh divisi

operations at l

No need to de

That's two

formations –

interior. We r

Now we m

For instance t

isn't. If it's fit

division. If it's

of 10,000 or

because I can

sion and equi

BURGDORF: The

HITLER: The In

kill a louse,

kill an Englis

up against th

bravely for u

Indian forma

the British. T

they be any l

Indians to t

would be the

use them for

are the India

△

Disintegration to Capitulation

(the combat area) to Bolzano is a good 3 weeks on foot – 20 days, 14 days, at least 10 days.

BURGDORF: Even from Trento to Bolzano is a day's march.

BRUDERMÜLLER: It's very difficult to calculate time at the moment. There are only a few convoys returning empty; there are comparatively few going forward because there isn't much shooting and therefore they don't need much re-supply.

BURGDORF: Can't they go at least partially by rail? They could always unload and load again. Getting on and off rail is nothing, since it's only men with small-arms.

HITLER: The point is to get ready the 7,000 men to whom these 6,000 are to be attached. The 6,000 must be incorporated straight away the moment they arrive. The 6,000 must be briefed in transit on what's happening, so that they can form a fresh division at once. Then they will be fit for defensive operations at least. Then we'll have to see where we'll put them. No need to decide that now.

That's two formations which can get here. The other two formations – I don't know yet, they must be units from the interior. We must improvise something ...

Now we must see exactly what foreign units we still have. For instance the Vlassov division is either fit for something or it isn't. If it's fit for something it must be regarded as a full-scale division. If it's fit for nothing ... it's lunacy equipping a division of 10,000 or 11,000 men while I can't raise German divisions because I can't equip them. I'd rather raise one German division and equip it fully.

BURGDORF: The Indian Legion.

HITLER: The Indian Legion is a joke. There are Indians who can't kill a louse, who'd rather get eaten themselves. They won't kill an Englishman either. It's nonsense purposely to put them up against the English. Why should the Indians fight more bravely for us than they did in India under Bose? They used Indian formations under Bose in Burma to liberate India from the British. They dispersed like a flock of sheep. Why should they be any braver with us? I think that if you could use the Indians to turn prayer wheels or something like that they would be the most indefatigable soldiers in the world. But to use them for real serious fighting that's ridiculous. How strong are the Indians? Anyway, it's nonsense. If you have weapons

A

The Death Throes

to spare you can afford a joke like that for propaganda purposes. But if you've got no weapons to spare, these propaganda jokes are just irresponsible ...

BORGSMANN: General Thomale and General Buhle report that at the moment there's no formation available which can be sent to Oppenheim. There are merely 5 Tiger Mark VIs at Sennelager which will be ready today or tomorrow and could be put in in the next few days. In the next few days there will be a further 2 so that the unit could be raised to a strength of 7. Everything else is already committed, and for the moment nothing else is ready.

HITLER: They are at Sennelager?

BORGSMANN: Yes.

HITLER: Actually they were meant to go to the upper bridgehead.

BORGSMANN: Yes, to Remagen, to 512 Battalion.

HITLER: When can they move?

BORGSMANN: They will be ready today or tomorrow. They could probably move tomorrow night.

HITLER: Then we'll take that up again tomorrow. If we only knew which of the 16 or 17 Tigers they got back could be repaired and when! That would be the most important thing.

In the West the enemy had now crossed the Rhine, and in the East our counter-attack had failed almost before it had begun. A general enemy advance into the heart of Germany was now therefore imminent but German Supreme Headquarters clung on in its 'ivory tower'. Hitler now began to say that the true lesson of the war was that the German people would go under because it had proved to be the weaker in a life and death struggle.²⁶ That being his attitude of mind the sacrifice of our youth, the loss of our country, the flood of refugees, the misery and terror of the bombing meant nothing to him. Guderian made desperate attempts to bring the horror to an end, but he was the only one. On 28 March he showed for the second time exemplary 'moral courage' in protecting his subordinates but on that very day he had to go and, as I had been before him, was thankful to escape from this atmosphere in which he had been confined - though only for a few months and for a few hours at a time.²⁷ Even at this stage Jodl could not pluck up courage to bring finally to an end the division and the dichotomy between the OKW and OKH operations staffs. General Krebs, who had only

just recovered from nominal advising Hitler forces from unhappy 'o in the final for years as sense of humor to Hitler.

Meanwhile changed. The midday corner evening corner April, the ty to defend the Wilhelmshafen Minden and four bridge lost and its condemned propaganda will remain death of Roosevelt politico-strategy the collapse Years War Elizabeth of 1945 ends the earth the turning point

The final quarters to against Berlin orders had dispersed because of next day C move the N issued more west meet

A

APPENDIX A

Additional Fragments of Hitler's Conferences

FRAGMENT NO. 8, 12 DECEMBER 1942. *See p. 296*

ZEITZLER: In general nothing to report here. On the Italian front the enemy got as far as here yesterday and punched a hole twelve hundred yards wide. Then our reserves made a night march here when they arrived at 10 am and so were available if anything happened. It looks as if the situation is more or less all right. If there were to be a counter-attack here this morning it would be advisable to keep the regiment here.

The enemy then attacked again, he felt his way forward – here yesterday and here early today. He made a small penetration here. The Army Group thereupon acted quickly on their own initiative. They put in one regiment of 385 Div. and ordered the remainder of the division into this small sector, so that the Cosseria Division is now available. I think that was right.

There there were only small-scale attacks. The enemy attacked west of Svoboda, penetrated a short way and withdrew again. It looks for the moment as if he's not quite ready. It may be that it was only a holding attack. But with the Italians you never know what's going to happen. The enemy may make a small-scale tactical attack and score a considerable success.

HITLER: They were driven back everywhere here?

ZEITZLER: Only at this point. A regiment of 385 Div. was put in there and the division has taken over command of the sector.

HITLER: But isn't there an escarpment here?

ZEITZLER: Yes, it is in fact tank-proof. There is no report of enemy tanks.

HITLER: If only we'd had another two weeks available these formations would have been here. I wanted to give the Italians

A

Appendices

these tanks. It's just that we've lost 14 days. On the other hand you know, if we'd had three more German divisions there the supply situation would have been difficult, unless the railway was working better.

ZEITZLER: The supply situation is beginning to be somewhat worrying. It was fairly difficult before and now we've got the troops trains. We have to do a jig-saw puzzle every evening with the QMG to get the trains pushed through.

HITLER: Is this feeder line ready?

ZEITZLER: The line's ready.

HITLER: Completely ready?

ZEITZLER: Yes.

HITLER: All the way to here?

ZEITZLER: Yes, it's already in use. It has one or two minor defects, it's not yet been completely ballasted but we're getting everything out of it we can. I've often had to fit supply trains in with troop trains. One can do both at the same time.

HITLER: If you look at the areas of danger this front is still the main danger-point. The Italians are our weakest allies, and there is practically nothing behind them. Schulte's coming up and then there's the Guard battalion. We must tack Schulte's brigade on to them somehow, so that at least we can hold there; that should bolster them up a bit. But when you think that they were attacked only by infantry without tanks, that the ground was in their favour and that they were enormously superior in artillery and yet they withdraw - then it looks black to me. What's the present state of the Cosseria division?

ZEITZLER: Six battalions as far as I know.

JODL: A normal division; it only arrived today. It has not yet been engaged.

HITLER: And what about the Cuneense division? That's an Alpini division.

HEUSINGER: There are three Alpini divisions.

HITLER: They will be better. And what about the Celere division?

JODL: The original ones were Celere, Torino and Pasubio. The Third of March Division is a Fascist formation.

ZEITZLER: There is a Third of January Division and a Third of March Division.

JODL: They are Fascist divisions.

HITLER: He

JODL: They put in he

ZEITZLER: : happened reality.

HITLER: Or he attack:

ZEITZLER: :

of 306 Div to bring

if anythin regiment

HITLER: Ho

ZEITZLER: I

HITLER: Th

be to shoc

ZEITZLER: I

HITLER: Th

charges pe

ZEITZLER: I

short.

HITLER: Th

Div. is the

ZEITZLER: A

pleased to

it up acro

HITLER: But

we've lost

ZEITZLER: C

three mile

detachme

HITLER: Wh

HEUSINGER:

HITLER: Wh

HEUSINGER:

on up fron

HITLER: Wh

ZEITZLER: I

movement

A

Appendix A

days. On the other
more German divisions
been difficult, unless the

inning to be somewhat
and now we've got the
tuzzle every evening with
ough.

one or two minor defects,
but we're getting every-
fit supply trains in with
ame time.

ger this front is still the
our weakest allies, and
them. Schulte's coming
We must tack Schulte's
least we can hold there;
when you think that they
tanks, that the ground
enormously superior in
n it looks black to me.
a division?

day. It has not yet been

vision? That's an Alpini

ions.

: about the Celere divi-

orino and Pasubio. The
rmation.

Division and a Third of

HITLER: Have they been pulled out or are they up in the front?
JODL: They form the reserve, and the reserve battalions have been
put in here.

ZEITZLER: 27 Armoured Div. is also not very strong. Not much
happened on its front. It looks better on the map than it is in
reality.

HITLER: One thing occurs to me. There's nothing at all here. If
he attacks here, there's nothing against him.

ZEITZLER: The most we can do would be to push in one regiment
of 306 Div. That's the only way out. The Army Group propose
to bring down one regimental group as far as this. But then
if anything happens up here tomorrow we'd have to use that
regiment here.

HITLER: How many tanks has 17 Armoured Div. got?

ZEITZLER: Not very many; 58 - all short gun.

HITLER: That's no good, particularly here. All they can do would
be to shoot hollow charge.

ZEITZLER: 11 Armoured Div. has 30 long gun.

HITLER: They can only be used against infantry, and with hollow
charges perhaps against T34s. How many shorts have they got?

ZEITZLER: In all the Div. has 19 Mark IV short and 29 Mark III
short.

HITLER: They can of course use hollow charge but 11 Armoured
Div. is the only one worth having for this attack.

ZEITZLER: Agreed. And he thinks he can make it available. I was
pleased to hear that 11 Div. was more or less free. We can bring
it up across the bridge.

HITLER: But he can't bring it up at all now; if the village has gone
we've lost the bridge too.

ZEITZLER: One can't say how things will go today. That's two to
three miles. Those are tanks of 14 Armoured Div. That is a
detachment from 14 Armoured Div., and that is this group here.

HITLER: When will Schulte's arrive anyway?

HEUSINGER: It's in process of arriving; the first train arrives today.

HITLER: Where's it going?

HEUSINGER: It will be pushed forward to Millerovo and brought
on up from here.

HITLER: Where is my guard battalion going?

ZEITZLER: That will go to 17 Armoured Div. - all in the same
movement.

A

Appendices

HEUSINGER: If the movement goes according to plan it will be completed by the 18th.

HITLER: Then of course we've nothing to put in here, unless if necessary we group this brigade and this battalion together?

JODL: And attach them to 11 or 17 Armoured Div.

HITLER: In order to get a mobile reserve here. We must think about this. At least this battalion's got modern equipment. It might perhaps be possible to attach it to 17 Div. to make it a bit stronger; 17 Div. can't do much at present. Or I was thinking that perhaps we might leave 17 Div. here or bring it across here temporarily and put this newly organized brigade into this area here. It's got 21 tanks. At least it's more or less mobile, and could intervene here.

ZEITZLER: For the moment it looks as if there's no danger here and that will come later.

HITLER: The enemy will attack like lightning. He will suddenly move up and we've got nothing here. What we have there is nothing but a bluff. Of course you can say that we will bring up a regiment from 306 Div. That we must do - it's the minimum. But we can't bolster up the front with any certainty with that alone. So suppose we put 17 Div. in here in order to make 11 Div. available. What is the state of 11 Armoured Div. anyway?

ZEITZLER: 11 Div. is good; it has fought very well and knocked out a lot of tanks. It has 5 battalions in all, 1 of full strength, 4 of moderate strength. 29 medium anti-tank guns, 6 light batteries, 3 heavy batteries. 100 per cent mobility. It has about 3½ days' supply. As for tanks 7 Mark III, 30 Mark III long, 5 Mark IV long, 42 tanks in all. Fighting efficiency rated 2.

HITLER: There's something else we must do. It's just occurred to me as a result of what we've been saying. We must make a distinction between two things when estimating fighting efficiency, ie the battle-worthiness of a unit or formation as such, and the strength of that formation. Strength and fighting efficiency are two entirely different things.

SCHMUNDT: Last time we reckoned on strengths.

HITLER: Otherwise it can well happen that a very brave division bleeds itself to death and is then labelled a second-class division merely because it has fought bravely, whereas another division which has just stayed put will be labelled high-class merely

A

Appendix A

because it's at full strength. A differentiation must be made between strength and classification.

ZEITZLER: That is more or less what Küchler says. I asked him what was the basis of his classification of the police divisions. Here's his answer (*produces it*).

HITLER: Fighting efficiency rated 4. The classification must be based on an overall appreciation of the morale of the troops and the quality of the commanders; that gives one more or less of a picture. The quality of the commanders and the morale of the troops is the real test of quality; then you must take strength into account so as to get a complete picture. One thing by the way: I would rather have a unit which temporarily may be at low strength but is at the height of its morale and led with determination than a unit which may be at full strength but has poor morale. Look here: these people are at full strength; they've not yet fought. I tell you rather than these people here I'd damn sight sooner have one of our own high-quality divisions, even if it was fought out and only 30 per cent the strength of the other. That's the most important point; that's what we must aim at.

One of them is good. We must always ensure that there is something here. Anyway here are three divisions, 297, 29 and 3. We must also think of these three divisions for this business.

ZEITZLER: My real worry over the next few days is to hold on if the enemy really gets as far as this. He meets resistance and then two to three days later something happens here.

HITLER: Then of course it will fold up. If we get away with it, it will fold up. But it's quite clear that this has got the makings of a crisis. Of course the enemy will have difficulties too because he'll be getting himself a long way from any railway.

ZEITZLER: He's now using this railway as far as this point. He has always been able to get engines up as far as this bend. I've been surprised he got it going so quickly.

HITLER: The Luftwaffe really must destroy these two bridges. Christian, this railway must under all circumstances be hampered so that the enemy can't go on using it.

Looking at the big picture I've thought of one thing, Zeitzler; under no circumstances must we give it* up we should never

* Stalingrad.



get it back again. We know what that means. I can't lay on any surprise operations. Unfortunately it's too late now. It would all have gone quicker if we hadn't hung about at Voronezh. Then we'd have got through in the first rush, but it's ridiculous to imagine that we can do it a second time after having withdrawn and abandoned our equipment. We couldn't take everything with us. The horses are worn out. They can't pull anything any more. I can't feed a horse off another horse. If it was Russians I'd say that one Russian could eat another. But you can't get a nag to eat another nag. That's no good so they're a write-off. And a horse can't say: it'll be better in a day or two - give me a feed of oats. It won't be better in a day or two. Anything which can't be brought out by MT will have to be abandoned. There are a lot of heavy howitzers there and they'll all be lost.

ZEITZLER: We've a vast amount of army artillery there.

HITLER: We can never replace what we have there. If we give it up we in fact give up the whole object of this campaign. It's ridiculous to think that I could get there a second time. This winter we could construct a covering position with the forces we have. The enemy can bring up additional forces on the railway. When the ice breaks up he can use the Volga for transport. He knows what hangs on it. So we shall never get this far again. Anyway we've shed too much blood getting there. I think that's obvious, so I would say we should only be able to clean up the centre of the city when the floods come in the spring, for they'll flood this area. There'll be a period, and it will last several weeks, during which this whole area will be completely flooded. The river will be fifteen to twenty miles wide and down there still wider, with a few isolated islands. If you look, there are no built-up areas round the city; it's just an island. The rest is just scrub, and in spring it'll be under water.

KRANCKE: Particularly when the ice gives out.

HITLER: Then we shan't be able to clean the situation up. The artillery will be driven miles away and the enemy won't have anything to worry about.

But the important thing is to hold on to this place. Obviously we've got to clean the business up under all circumstances. Once we've got that, I look at this salient and it reminds me of

Kharke
stretche
HEUSINGE
and the
HITLER:
similar
us is th
is bein
constru
ZEITZLER
and the
HITLER:
tially v
to cons
here sc
and decisiv
It may
be exp
for the
does in
moven
do tha
we can
We co
the fir
the old
will h
wheth
more.
Of c
will b
initial
to bre
then t
castles
availa
Of c
today.
away

A

Appendix A

Kharkov. Here's a salient building up. The Kharkov salient stretched almost as far as Krasnodar.

HEUSINGER: That went down as far as here and then across to here and then up to here.

HITLER: It was perhaps a bit bigger but anyway it's a somewhat similar situation. The only advantage the enemy has got over us is that he has got the railway. Moreover this railway which is being built up towards the Italian front is still only under construction. So that's got nothing to do with it.

ZEITZLER: No that one hasn't. I'd like to bring a railway expert and the QMG along with me tomorrow to discuss this question.

HITLER: The way the whole thing looks it seems clear that initially we never thought he could surround the place. I'd like to constitute a German group with the object of breaking out here so as to finish the business. That will really be the next decisive move. But we must wait and see whether we can do it. It may be that it can't be done because the enemy will probably be expecting it; that leaves nothing but to use our main forces for the old attack, stay put here and wait to see what he does in the pocket. He is probably expecting us to try a pincer movement from both flanks. The question is whether we can do that. We can get formations up to this point provided that we can get the railway going so that we can supply them. We could organize a couple of armoured groups here. I think the first thing is that we must deal with this affair and then do the old attack. If we can get further in this direction, then he will have to withdraw from the salient. Then we could see whether we could get as far as here. We'll hardly be able to do more.

Of course he will be expecting two things. To begin with he will be expecting us to drive forward here. So I think that initially it would be right to attack from south to north in order to break up the whole thing and deal with it in detail, and only then to carry out an attack eastwards. But of course all this is castles in the air. The first thing is to try and make forces available for it.

Of course it's most important to see how the Italians get on today. One thing I don't see and that is how I can possibly get away from here today, Jodl.* I can of course cancel everything.

* To Berchtesgaden.

A

Appendices

JODL: There will be a lot of other problems left in the air too.

HITLER: I agree. We can make up our minds at the last moment.
What are the train connections?

JODL: In general there's a connection every two hours. It's very seldom necessary to go as much as three hours without a connection; as a rule it's every two hours, sometimes more often.

BODENSCHATZ: If the radio is functioning we can keep in touch that way.

HITLER: Can we get anything like a proper picture by radio? Is that possible and how long will it take? Everything has to be encoded. How long will it take to deal even with a minor question?

JODL: That's no good.

HEWEL: One can telephone from the station.

HITLER: From every station?

JODL: It's a bit more difficult from temporary stations than from the permanent ones. But you will get through in any case.

HITLER: If I do go, I'll cut out Berlin. We'll see today and tomorrow.

ZEITZLER: We're going to have some very important days with very important developments.

HITLER: It seems to me this point is very dangerous, because there's nothing there. If only there was something here – good, I see there's a regiment coming up. And here he's moved down another regiment. But that means he is then here now. If we now go and take away 17 Armoured Div. there's nothing here at all. The question is whether at the end of it all we shall think it isn't perhaps so crazy and whether we couldn't get by with the forces of 27 Armoured Div. and the equipment coming up with it; then perhaps we could move in here and combine my guard battalion with Schulte's brigade. Those would be comparatively strong formations. If we could get them up by rail, 17 Armoured Div. could be released. Alternatively perhaps we could leave 17 Armoured Div. here, because the main attack probably won't reach this point, and bring up this brigade which with its 21 new tanks is stronger than 17 Armoured Div. with its old equipment. Anyway, what's the state of 17 Armoured Div?

ZEITZLER: It's got five strong battalions. That's what Manstein wants.

HITLER: J

ZEITZLER

right for

HITLER: V

We cot

Schulte

a crisis.

been lo

JODL: Wa

ZEITZLER

HITLER: J

in three

now he

momen

so-and-

brigade

a fox.

to get 2

that m

to pull

ZEITZLER

a calcu

got to

HITLER:

ZEITZLER

quickly

have t

good i

HITLER:

are be

ZEITZLER

moved

HITLER:

releas

ZEITZLE

up he

HITLER:

three

reason

out, a



HITLER: That's quite clear.

ZEITZLER: Schulte's brigade hasn't been used offensively yet. It's all right for defence. It's pretty strong in anti-tank guns; it's got 50.

HITLER: With the men now arriving it will be up to strength.

We could give up 17 Armoured Div., and if necessary put Schulte's brigade into this area, if that is possible or if there's a crisis. It's only just arriving in the Millerovo area. So nothing's been lost. If necessary we can bring it up into this area.

JODL: Was a new formation organized for this attack then?

ZEITZLER: There's no report of that today.

HITLER: Jodl, you know how it looks. It'll be something like this in three days' time. That bastard'll bring it off. For two months now he's been bringing up equipment and now at the last moment he'll bring up the troops. Suddenly he'll appear with so-and-so many brigades. There'll be nothing behind these brigades and that's ridiculous, but a pack of hounds will kill a fox. If I attack with three or four divisions, I'll guarantee to get as far as that, if there's nothing there. If nothing happens, that means no one's there. What's the last moment for deciding to pull out 17 Armoured Div.?

ZEITZLER: The decision must really be taken today. We're taking a calculated risk in one place or another. Somewhere we've got to take a risk.

HITLER: Can he get it across anyway?

ZEITZLER: Early this morning 23 Div. was pinned down fairly quickly by a flank attack; so it looks as if today 23 Div. will have to stay where it is and 6 Div. will push on. So it would be good if we had something to follow up with.

HITLER: What's happening with the Luftwaffe formations which are being brought up behind?

ZEITZLER: He'll want those to put out a screen here, because this movement's going fairly far.

HITLER: What's happening with the formations which will be released here?

ZEITZLER: There are very few of them. Initially he'll move them up here.

HITLER: Well now, he'll get two formations here and an additional three formations here. Of the latter three, only 29 Div. is at reasonable strength. 3 Motorized Div. I believe is almost worn out, and 297 Div....

△

Appendices

ZEITZLER: It's fairly good, it's still all right.

HITLER: I mean just for a screen.

ZEITZLER: Everybody's very pleased with 297 Div. just now; it's first-class. There was a lot about it in the report. But I don't think the enemy will attack here yet; he has moved everything away. The whole attack depends on whether we can punch a hole through here.

HITLER: Yes. 306 Div. is coming up but has one regiment detached. It has three regiments.

JODL: It's 100 per cent complete right up to the last man. Nine battalions.

HITLER: But one regiment's detached. It has nine 7.5 cm self-propelled, or hasn't it?

JODL: No, towed.

HITLER: It's got 6 and 22 Div. has 18.

ZEITZLER: Yes. It's been reinforced.

HITLER: That one's pretty weak: one 7.5 cm and two 7.6 cm and he's bringing down one regiment from 294 Div. That means there's no reserve up here.

ZEITZLER: I think that's better from the operational point of view.

HITLER: What does that mean here?

ZEITZLER: Movement and armour, the latter dug in.

HITLER: He always digs his armour in, and then comes out again.

ZEITZLER: He always comes out again - it may be an anti-frost precaution.

HEUSINGER: The intelligence picture is that between here and here the enemy has 16 rifle divisions, 2 armoured brigades and 4 cavalry divisions.

ZEITZLER: That can of course alter suddenly. We don't know what he's got back behind.

JODL: But he can't put in a major attack all along the front both against the Italians and here.

ZEITZLER: That's what I say. He'll do something here and something there. But it depends what you think.

HITLER: When has the decision got to be taken?

ZEITZLER: The sooner the better.

HITLER: Is it good enough if we take the decision during the course of the day, so that at least we can wait and see how the attacks get on? If they go well and if the front holds, then I would say that we don't need to use Schulte's brigade up here but we

may well

would be

arrive?

HEUSINGER:

be complet

HITLER: Is S

BODENSCHAT

HITLER: If n

BUHLE: It's

BODENSCHAT

anti-tank

HITLER: I ag

been train

not for def

counter-at

BODENSCHAT

three heav

JODL: 36 hea

HITLER: If v

withdraw

in here. B

able the r

he loses th

ZEITZLER: F

about the

individual

HITLER: It's

fought. H

JODL: No, n

HITLER: The

if we take

JODL: He w

ZEITZLER: I

whole day

down. Bu

HITLER: I th

Div. gets s

bring up t

the lead.]

not get as

△

Appendix A

may well be able to hold it in readiness down there. Then I would be prepared to take a chance and use it. When does it arrive?

HEUSINGER: The first train should arrive today and the movement be completed by 18th.

HITLER: Is Schulte's brigade completely motorized?

BODENSCHATZ: Yes, two battalions completely motorized.

HITLER: If necessary they can push on from Millerovo.

BUHLE: It's a first-class defensive formation.

BODENSCHATZ: It has three companies each with twelve 40 mm anti-tank guns.

HITLER: I agree, but if I attach my guard battalion to it - that's been trained for the offensive. The twenty-one tanks it has are not for defensive jobs; they have been used in many places for counter-attacks.

BODENSCHATZ: Then there's a mixed anti-aircraft regiment with three heavy batteries. It's got enormous defensive capacity.

JODL: 36 heavy anti-tank guns and 3 batteries of 8-8 cm.

HITLER: If we'd got it here, then I'd be happy. Then we could withdraw everything. Then we could push 17 Armoured Div. in here. But today we must wait. With the forces he has available the most important thing is to reorganize. Otherwise if he loses the bridge he can never bring up reinforcements.

ZEITZLER: He will have to go round this way. There is no report about the bridge. The last report was from the Italians that individual soldiers could get across.

HITLER: It's ridiculous having a whole division which has never fought. Has it ever been in battle?

JODL: No, not yet; it's a completely new division.

HITLER: The chaps will put us to shame. The Italians won't mind if we take it away from them.

JODL: He won't make out with one division.

ZEITZLER: He won't get there, and I am afraid that if we wait a whole day it will be more difficult later; he's got himself pinned down. But if we attack straight away it would go through.

HITLER: I think it will go like this: let us assume that 23 Armoured Div. gets stopped here but that 6 Div. gets through. Then we can bring up this new division behind 6 Div. 6 Div. will still be in the lead. In my view the greatest danger is that 23 Div. might not get as far as this. With its 95 tanks I think it must be able

to, but I am convinced that in any case 23 Div. can reach this obstacle. It ought to be able to get the better of what it's up against. According to the latest reports the enemy has 85 tanks in all and 23 Div. alone has 95. How many tanks has 23 Armoured Div. got?

ZEITZLER: 26 Mark IV long, 26 Mark III long; that's good. I am afraid too that it will get stuck here.

HITLER: It may well get stuck there. But then 6 Div. will still go on and the other can follow after. I think in that case the other can merely form a screen. The breakthrough must be made by 6 Div. and on this sector 3 Motorized Div., 29 Div. and 297 Div. must hold. 3 Motorized Div. must try and roll the enemy up behind the obstacle, and 297 Div. too.

ZEITZLER: That means that we shall have a salient there and another there, and for the moment only one side of this salient will be secure.

HITLER: 11 Armoured Div. could look after that.

ZEITZLER: If that is included we might be able to join the salients up. But if it's not in the attack it will get stuck in the salient.

We must have infantry for the defence. 11 Armoured Div. has a comparatively small sector. It has a comparatively large proportion of infantry but few tanks. But one wants a good proportion of infantry for the defence.

HITLER: It will be all right if 17 Armoured Div. arrives with all its infantry - it has fewer tanks than 11 Armoured Div. and is less battle-worthy.

ZEITZLER: Manstein is already collecting together what he can. If he can free 17 Armoured Div. he'll be able to do everything. What secretly worries him is that they both might get stopped. That's understandable.

HITLER: How many tanks have they both together?

HEUSINGER: All in he has about 130 tanks.

HITLER: That's not much. He'd better leave the tanks here.

We've enough tanks. He should use them for the initial assault and then withdraw them at once. Of course it's always possible that the other fellow will make off in a hurry in order to throw everything in here.

ZEITZLER: So as to attack with one group on this side and another group on that side.

HITLER: The armoured division must deal with that.

JODL: It will deal with the area and the force will infiltrate round.

HITLER: That's right. We're holding the line. The enemy's got the advantage here. It's been able to hold here is less effective.

ZEITZLER: We are conducting a mobile operation here.

HITLER: As soon as the armoured divisions are in the direction as necessary, an imaginable situation. We do not wish to be bogged down. I

JODL: If you think it's also. Letting any idea.

HITLER: What's his idea?

ZEITZLER: Nothing. The local reserve

HITLER: They've got nothing behind. Nothing but labour.

ZEITZLER: They're

HITLER: I take it a

ZEITZLER: Those are

HITLER: That's precisely

HEUSINGER: It is that

ZEITZLER: That or

regarded as battle

JODL: But to halt

might possibly at

HITLER: What do you

ZEITZLER: The second

of two train-loads.



Div. can reach this better of what it's up the enemy has 85 tanks many tanks has 23 Ar-

long; that's good. I am

then 6 Div. will still think in that case the breakthrough must be motorized Div., 29 Div. Div. must try and roll 97 Div. too. re a salient there and one side of this salient

r that. ible to join the salients stuck in the salient. ze. 11 Armoured Div. a comparatively large but one wants a good

d Div. arrives with all Armoured Div. and is

together what he can. able to do everything. th might get stopped.

together?

leave the tanks here. for the initial assault re it's always possible rry in order to throw

on this side and another

with that.

JODL: It will deal with it all right. The trouble is the enormous area and the few formations we have. The enemy can always infiltrate round behind again.

HITLER: That's right. But if you fold up this bit, up as far as here we're holding but if nearly half the front gives way then the enemy's got the lot. It can't be worse than it is now. So if they've been able to hold here, they can hold there; the only difference is that previously their supply situation was sound. What he has here is less effective because his supply situation is so difficult.

ZEITZLER: We are going to put an armoured corps in here to conduct a mobile defence, because there's no solid front around here.

HITLER: As soon as the junction has been made, 23 and 6 Armoured Divs. can stop here. Then we can operate in either direction as necessary. It's quite clear that this is not the best imaginable situation. But it must be an absolute principle that we do not withdraw from here* We mustn't let this attack get bogged down. Time is pressing.

JODL: If you think we've got to hold here I would attack there also. Letting anything stay put in this situation is a questionable idea.

HITLER: What's happened there?

ZEITZLER: Nothing in particular. There was a counter-attack by the local reserves in progress.

HITLER: They've got nothing there. Poor devils. There's absolutely nothing behind. They're labelled 'Guards' units and they are nothing but labour battalions.

ZEITZLER: They're Luftwaffe units there.

HITLER: I take it all back - what's that?

ZEITZLER: Those are the groups.

HITLER: That's pretty thin.

HEUSINGER: It is thin, but then there is a division up here.

ZEITZLER: That one up here is the only one which can really be regarded as battle-worthy.

JODL: But to halt 17 Armoured Div. here because the enemy might possibly attack, and then he won't attack - I don't know.

HITLER: What do you hear of 6 Armoured Div.?

ZEITZLER: The second echelon of 6 Armoured Div. is still short of two train-loads.

* Stalingrad.

A

Appendices

HITLER: Do they include the tanks?

ZEITZLER: No, they are unimportant baggage trains.

HITLER: If it's as good as it's said to be, 23 Armoured Div. will hammer all this back into shape and then the idea is that it should move into this area. The main thing is that we should then go all out to re-establish this front. If the division can get across here then we ought to be able to re-establish touch*. Once we've re-established touch then we can quickly widen the corridor, and that will help morale, for the word will go round that touch has been re-established. The moment the first columns get through, however lousy they may be, the world will look different.

ZEITZLER: They are getting very restive and asking to be relieved.

But that would all change in a flash.

HITLER: The moment they know they have got themselves free everything will change. Everyone's had experience of that. I'd like to wait until 2 o'clock to see if we get news of how things are going. Or perhaps we could now have a look and see what the Italian front is like. And Hungarian too. And I would like to say that once the Group has started to get to Millerovo ... and then one could use it in any direction.

ZEITZLER: Then we could use it as a mobile group. There doesn't seem to be any danger here at the moment. But the fronts are very wide.

HITLER: Anyway there are much better formations here; what's the anti-tank defence like?

ZEITZLER: Here it's bad and here it's better again.

HITLER: But here it ought to be quite good. You see the bastard's got across here. Anything further north?

ZEITZLER: No, nothing special further north.

HITLER: One thing is certain; under no circumstances can we take 16 Motorized Div. away. If we do everything will break down in the rear.

ZEITZLER: There's no question of that. It's not my understanding that he has any intention of doing that.

HITLER: Anyway it can't go as quick as all that. The division has to be concentrated first. It would take days before it really arrived. When does 7 Armoured Div. arrive? Doesn't it get here from 28th onwards, or something like that?

* With Stalingrad.

ZEITZLER: 26th
behind.

HITLER: 27th

ZEITZLER: It

HITLER: That

ZEITZLER: Th

FRAGMENT NO.

HITLER: I'll t
that case* t

the East. W

do it witho

the men all

question is

miles (is a

fellows guns

fronts of tw

tion. If you

without an

ammunition

ZEITZLER: Ye

into it, but

HITLER: No,

armaments

programme

steel. The s

out 600 a n

ammunition

behind sch

but it will d

If I withdr

awful confu

enough wh

ZEITZLER: Tl

withdrawal

withdraw t

sector.

HITLER: I've

△

Appendix A

ZEITZLER: 26th is the earliest possible date. At present it's a day behind.

HITLER: 27th then?

ZEITZLER: It could be 27th.

HITLER: That's still fourteen days away. And it takes how long?

ZEITZLER: The fighting troops could arrive in six days.

FRAGMENT NO. 47, 1 FEBRUARY, 1943 (See p. 300)

HITLER: I'll think about this again. I can tell you one thing: in that case* there is no hope of a satisfactory end to the war in the East. We must be clear about that. (ZEITZLER: Yes.) I can't do it without equipment. I can't do it just with men. I've got the men all right but in that case I'd have no equipment. The question is what do we want. We are now on fronts of three miles (*ie average battalion sectors*), but at least I can give the fellows guns and ammunition. If we do this we may well be on fronts of two miles, but I would have no guns and no ammunition. If you think you can fight better on a front of two miles without ammunition than on a front of three miles with ammunition, then of course you're right.

ZEITZLER: Yes, that's a question. At the moment it doesn't enter into it, but it may do later.

HITLER: No, later and now! At this very moment the whole armaments programme is going to the devil. Our entire tank programme would come to a stop - it is dependent on electro-steel. The same with the gun programmes. Instead of turning out 600 a month we would only be able to do 150. The great ammunition programme would come to an end. It's falling behind schedule already. It's now slowing down gradually but it will do so more rapidly. That way I'll never get anywhere. If I withdraw I would lose ... there would be the most god-awful confusion and the enemy would pursue. We know well enough what withdrawals mean.

ZEITZLER: That's quite clear but if we hadn't carried out these withdrawals the situation would be even worse. They must withdraw there and down here - here in the Panzer Army's sector.

HITLER: I've said from the start: I am quite clear that if we can't

* *ie if the Donetz Basin were given up.*



get away with it here, that leaves only the two bridgeheads. That's obvious. If we had done what the good Manstein wanted, there would have been no withdrawal, but everything would have gone to hell. If I had given way to Manstein they would not have withdrawn. There would have been no Panzer Army any more and he wouldn't have got Seventeenth Army back; everything would have collapsed. I've always been worried that he stopped here too long.

ZEITZLER: Now I thought that we could push 337 Div. from France straight away in here behind 4 Armoured Div., and next to it part of 78 Div., and so start building up a bit of a force. And then we must see what happens with the attack by the SS formations. If we move the Reich Division up here, that will of course re-establish the situation. But that'll take time. I rather think that we've simply got to use it down there.

HITLER: We'll see. Everything depends on how quickly 4 Armoured Div. comes up. If 4 Armoured Div. gets half way ...

ZEITZLER: There are fifteen trains on the way. Movement is slow because everything is being destroyed by bombing. Seven trains should arrive today.

HITLER: Once 4 Armoured Div. arrives we've got a force. After that comes 337 Div. There's another force. Then we might lay hold of 78 Div. With those we've got a force with which we might be able to get control of the thing. We must wait and see. If we could get a grip that way it is ...

FRAGMENT NO. 10 (See p. 395)

Discussion between Hitler, Jodl and Zeitzler (first on telephone, later in person) 27-28 December, 1943.

Also present: Field Marshal Keitel, Lt. General Schmudt, Major Borgmann, Sturmbannführer Darges. Conference begins 23.19 hours.

HITLER: Read this, Jodl (*produces a paper*). * No one's reported that. I don't know what he means. Two bridgeheads here? I thought it was a question whether we held one or the other. That's not to say that we may not be able to cut off the head of his salient. We've done that once. We cut off two divisions not long ago

* Proposal by Field Marshal von Manstein for clearing up the situation in the southern elbow of the Dnieper.

and
'no
the
he c
hop
of th
can
'the
as c
thai
can
sect
hop
wes
and
Hov
con
'fin:
N
for :
and
JODL:
HITLE:
JODL:
HITLE:
Tha
hold
here
I th
alon
Tha
that
resul
JODL:]
He i
sing
and
HITLEF
JODL:]
HITLEI

△

Appendix A

and threw back the whole attack. What does he mean by 'not cut off'? That presupposes that he attributes strength to the enemy which he hasn't got anyway – here are the conclusions he draws from this: if he can really make a success of it here, he hopes to make five divisions available. It's quite clear that some of the forces must move straight down here; he assumes that he can release forces from the elbow of the Dnieper and he says; 'they will not be able to get them into the area of Berdichev as quickly as that' (he doesn't need to bring them up here – that's not necessary). 'In case the decisive moment of the winter campaign should arrive in the next few weeks in the southern sector, and we should therefore try and gain a decision. It is hoped' (what does he mean by 'it is hoped') 'to break through westwards to the lower Dnieper via Kirovograd or Krivoirog and that as a result the enemy forces will be finally exhausted'. How can he imagine that the enemy will be exhausted with a concentration like that? He might as well say that he will be 'finally exhausted' here too. That's just juggling with ideas.

Now, the first result of course is ... I have given permission for a withdrawal here, that they should bring up 4 Div. here and then 16 Div. can be brought down here.

JODL: He means the Kamenka position.

HITLER: That goes further south.

JODL: He means this position, which runs west of Kamenka.

HITLER: This position means giving up the bridgehead here.

That's why I've been thinking once more whether we couldn't hold a smaller bridgehead here – there is a smaller bridgehead here – in order to force the enemy to maintain forces here. Now I think the position should not go up here but should come along here but it means that we could no longer hold that. That means losing Nikopol and Krivoirog. He himself estimates that he will want 5 to 6 divisions to 'achieve an operational result'. He's so far got 3 divisions.

JODL: It all depends what your appreciation of the danger here is.

He is optimistic because at the moment the enemy is not pressing very hard here. He obviously takes a very favourable view, and there he is very worried.

HITLER: This is Vinnitsa here. That is quite clear.

JODL: It all depends on that.

HITLER: But he can't get away with it that way. Just read this

△

Appendices

telegram through. It means he's keeping three divisions in line which he could have taken out. 4 Div. is better than any of the divisions he's taking out. 16 Div. which he's taking out from up there is better and he himself is bringing up 17 Div. Remember his earlier forecasts when he said that to clean the thing up properly he would have to have 5 armoured divisions and 3 infantry divisions. He got them.

BORGSMANN: My Führer, General Zeitzler wishes to talk to you.

(Telephone conversation with General Zeitzler.)

ZEITZLER: My Führer, I've had to call you. Manstein has just called to ask what we can do about his telegram.

HITLER: I am just discussing it with General Jodl. The results he pictures of course are nothing but castles in the air. I'd like first to discuss it with General Jodl. Perhaps I'll call you back later. Or can you get over here?

ZEITZLER: Yes, my Führer, I can come over.

HITLER: Then I think you'd better come along. (ZEITZLER: yes.) Thank you.

(End of telephone conversation.)

Perhaps Scherff could come too if he's there.

BORGSMANN: He's sick but I'll ask again.

HITLER: Then leave him where he is; we don't want to wake him up.

JODL: He reports the enemy has 47 rifle divisions and 9 armoured corps here. That reinforces the idea that the main attack will be here. That I agree. The fact that he's no longer attacking in the Crimea is proof that he's waiting for an easier moment.

HITLER: It'll be easier for him as soon as we've gone from here. Then he can do it. He'd have to use a couple of divisions here. If there's no more danger here, what does he want with forces here? If we evacuate here, then he is superior to us here. Here it's all quite simple if, as Manstein thinks, he doesn't intend to cut that off completely. The problem is this: in the operational sense he can't get any decision from this battle. He can't do it; he can't seal it off anywhere. All he can do is bring it to a halt somewhere. He can't do more for the moment.

JODL: I don't think so either because the forces we can make available from here ...

A

Appendix A

HITLER: He can't use those.

JODL: ... no better off than they were last winter.

HITLER: That's ridiculous.

JODL: They've all had an extremely bad time.

HITLER: There's just one division here, the armoured division, and perhaps 3 Mountain Division. The rest's all imagination.

JODL: There's hardly anything to be done with the rest.

HITLER: 4 Mountain Division is worth more than three divisions from here because in the first place it's a good division and in the second place it's up to strength, whereas these are not up to strength.

JODL: It's clear he's had to put something in up here. 4 Mountain has already been ordered up.

HITLER: The first trains with 4 Mountain are on the move today.

JODL: And he's moving 16 Div. up too.

HITLER: The Artillery Division is here too. 'It is rather to be hoped' (that's no way to put it) 'that the enemy will try to break through between Cherkassy and Kirovograd and thereby finally exhaust himself'. What does he mean by 'finally exhaust himself'? There's no point in his breaking through here. He can break through here just as well as up there. That's no proof. There's this one bridge down here, across here. It's important that if possible we hold the lower bridgehead. As long as we've got a crossing the enemy won't be so sure that he can attack here. If the last bridgehead has gone then ... Let me talk to Zeitzler again - it's quite clear he's worried about Vinnitsa. His headquarters is here.

JODL: That's the main railway. That's the last main line.

HITLER: The one via Shmerinka.

JODL: Shmerinka is the main junction.

HITLER: 'Operation' ... I loathe these pompous expressions. That's not an operation; it's nothing but a pompous expression.

JODL: The short point is that he doesn't think he can hold here with the forces he has, that he wants fresh forces and that he doesn't know where to get them from. So he wants to get them from down there by shortening his line.

HITLER: Now that way he gets three divisions, one from here, one from here, one from the centre, and then he takes out another one from here - 17 Div. That makes four divisions. In his last telegram he asked for five, though at that time he had no idea

△

Appendices

that he could get this division or 16 Div. This is worth more than the others.

JODL: That doesn't really make much difference. He's already had four divisions. The danger to the entire flank is still there. It makes no difference whether you cut off that bit and draw in the bridgehead. He is echeloned so far forward anyway that if the enemy pushes through here he'll cut the l. of c. He would have to move up from Odessa if he ... but that can't be the reason. The question is making forces available. It's agreed that he wants more than he's got now.

HITLER: There's no question of clearing up the position by attacking; he can't do that because he can't work with what he's got. That's ridiculous. He's merely using words there to cover himself. Zeitler should be bringing the map with the positions marked on it. He can do practically nothing with that. The most he could do would be to use one or other of the armoured divisions. He could pull out one here himself. In fact he'll get the forces he's asked for, the difference being that they'll be better than those he'd have been able to get out from here.

JODL: The question remains whether we should meanwhile get one or other of the Rumanian divisions into position.

HITLER: ... so that it would be here? I've always wanted to reinforce here. The Crimea can hold on so long as we have at least one bridgehead here. These I suppose are worth nothing?

JODL: Neither worth anything. They are the ones which he* is forming back at home.

HITLER: He won't let go of those he's got at home. He's always got his eye on Hungary. It's madness but ... They're too close up here. They'll lose their nerve. It would be better if he put his headquarters further back here.

JODL: But he's got to hold this rail junction, otherwise it'll be bad.

HITLER: Now there's 4 Div. which we can put into line first, and then 16 Div. here, and then he must attack here with 16 Div., the Leibstandarte and 1 Armoured Div. But to try and pretend that the enemy has got 47 completely fresh divisions and that we can't stop them ... they can be stopped here. At one moment he says they're bad formations and at another that they're completely fresh. That's a report cooked up for the purpose. He's thinking of his own front only and has brought

* Marshal Antonescu.

everything
ought to l
lapsed, of
anything
with these
the enemy
he'll wear
similarly
able'.

JODL: Some

HITLER: If t

JODL: The :

that he w

HITLER: He

forces in

himself o

but I'm v

through h

is.

BORGSMANN:

JODL: It was

this way t

HITLER: We

all that. H

no opposi

Pity - t

it will ha

complete

with the b

JODL: Initia

HITLER: Div

issued wit

broken-do

straight fr

doubtedly

him to ma

and from here

there's a :

training u

about 454

A

Appendix A

This is worth more
ence. He's already
flank is still there.
If that bit and draw
forward anyway that
the l. of c. He would
ut that can't be the
available. It's agreed

position by attack-
with what he's got.
ords there to cover
up with the positions
ing with that. The
her of the armoured
elf. In fact he'll get
cing that they'll be
t out from here.

ould meanwhile get
o position.
ays wanted to rein-
as we have at least
worth nothing?
ones which he* is

home. He's always
.. They're too close
be better if he put

herwise it'll be bad.
t into line first, and
here with 16 Div.,
ut to try and pre-
fresh divisions and
pped here. At one
id at another that
cooked up for the
y and has brought

everything down here. He removed 16 Armoured Div. which ought to have been here, but as a result the whole thing collapsed, otherwise today the front would be here. He can't do anything with these divisions. It's nonsense to try and attack with these divisions; he can't lay on anything. He says he hopes the enemy will attack with these forces here too because then he'll wear himself out, but that's nothing but a lot of words - 'similarly further reinforcements from the West will be unavoidable'.

JODL: Something could be made available from here too.

HITLER: If that can be done something will be available.

JODL: The second concentration is just here. It was only here that he went flat-out, hoping as a result to draw off forces.

HITLER: He's quite happy about this. He even hopes to draw off forces in this direction because then the enemy will 'wear himself out with frontal attacks'. He won't attack frontally but I'm worried that with what he's got left he will drive through here. One can't really tell where the artillery division is.

BORGSMANN: It was shown in the Kasatin area.

JODL: It was attacked from the rear. An attack went in behind it this way today.

HITLER: We must wait and see whether the attack's as serious as all that. He's simply driving round with his armour where there's no opposition.

Pity - there's only a sixteen-ton bridge here. But of course it will have to be packed up. 25 Armoured Div. has been a complete failure from the word go. Yet it was very well equipped with the best equipment

JODL: Initially its men were good too.

HITLER: Dietrich told me that the division had of course been issued with MT. He said: 'if only we had it! We've only got broken-down old lorries, and all theirs were like a new pin, straight from the factory.' But the one at fault here is undoubtedly the Divisional Commander who hadn't got it in him to make anything of the division. So we can't take anything from here. On the contrary they want it up there because there's a similar crisis there. 147 Reserve Div. is I suppose a training unit from the Replacement Army, isn't it? And what about 454?

A

Appendices

JODL: That's on the usual internal security organization - two training divisions have been incorporated, 143 and ... three training regiments.

HITLER: Where are they approximately?

JODL: As far as I know they are furnishing replacements for these divisions here.

HITLER: Could we get hold of them in a crisis?

JODL: We can of course take the cadres. Then there are a further two divisions forming in Poland.

HITLER: What are they like?

JODL: I don't know. That's not my business. Zeitzler's forming them.

HITLER: If we could be sure that nothing would happen in the West for six to eight weeks I would say that we could send them to the West and bring over two divisions from there.

JODL: There's nothing left there except the youngsters; 9 and 10 SS.

HITLER: I can't let those go; they are armoured formations which he is forming up in rear.

JODL: There simply are no other divisions there except those of Class 22 which will not be ready till February. They haven't yet got their equipment. As far as personnel are concerned, they're about the 11,000 mark.

HITLER: And from the Balkans, could we get two from there?

JODL: Of course we could - as usual!

HITLER: Then they must send these two across to Rome.

JODL: They must send these two to Italy so that we can get out 90 Div. and the Hermann Göring.

HITLER: Couldn't we bring this to a halt? So that we move across these two here, the training or reserve divisions?

JODL: One must give up one or the other. We must take 371 Div. That is a normal newly-formed Stalingrad division which, since it was reorganized, has only been used for anti-partisan operations. Otherwise it's at full strength.

BORGSMANN: 147 Reserve Div. is partially employed on railway protection; parts are being used to form new units. As far as the others are concerned we are checking to see what has occurred. I shall have the details straight away.

HITLER: We can't take them off railway protection either. So all this adds up to nothing and he won't get a single additional

formation. That the other
Then Manstein
that. But he has
is to bring the
fer them to this
a risk and to

The first point
from here - if
make sensible
gets through.

JODL: The trouble
enemy will move

HITLER: Where
of it.

JODL: The para-

HITLER: Yes, the

JODL: 2 Parachute

as well as 4 N

HITLER: 9 Div.?

JODL: 97 Jäger

HITLER: I believe

97 Jäger Div.

he can pull out

than 4 Div. a

asked for 5 to

the business w

- one division

then up above

got 4. Not so l

divisions and

he had to give

infantry divisi

did get 8 div

was very mu

We're only ju

that man ha

are incredibl

People are on

His headq

A

Appendix A

formation. This one won't get there a day earlier. It just means that the other fellow will have additional forces available. Then Manstein will say he can't get them round as quick as that. But he hasn't got to get them round; all that's necessary is to bring them up here. He can thin out divisions here, transfer them to this area and then drive in this direction. But that's a risk and to me it's worse than the whole business down here.

The first point is: I am sure he must move his headquarters from here – if people are under pressure like that they'll never make sensible decisions – unless the attack of 1 Armoured Div. gets through.

JODL: The trouble with these strong-point tactics is that the enemy will move into this gap.

HITLER: Where is the Luftwaffe anyway? We never hear a word of it.

JODL: The parachute troops?

HITLER: Yes, the parachute troops.

JODL: 2 Parachute Div. is in this area. 9 Div. is also fairly good, as well as 4 Mountain Div.

HITLER: 9 Div.? No, it's no good. And this here is 3 Div.?

JODL: 97 Jäger Division.

HITLER: I believe it's all right; it always was. 3 Mountain Div. and 97 Jäger Div. are also good. I believe 9 Div. is bad. So really all he can pull out of here is 3 Mountain Div. which is no better than 4 Div. and considerably weaker. Well now, recently he asked for 5 to 6 divisions. He's got one division here as a result of the business we've just approved – that's one out of this 5 or 6 – one division here and another there – that makes three and then up above ... he can pull out 17 Div. so that in fact he's now got 4. Not so long ago he asked for 8 divisions. He got 3 infantry divisions and 5 armoured divisions. But then he can say that he had to give up the infantry. But instead he got an additional infantry division – the Parachute Jäger Division. So in fact he did get 8 divisions. It's a bottomless pit. Then of course he was very much influenced by the jinx of Hoth at Kiev. We're only just beginning to realize what a disastrous effect that man had. He was the worst type of defeatist. There are incredible stories which only come to light gradually. People are only just plucking up the courage to report them.

His headquarters is badly placed in this situation; he's

Appendices

sitting here right on top of the focal point of the battle. His headquarters will be better somewhere else; of course it would then be further away but it would be better. Vinnitsa is of course a bad headquarters for him.

But the move up of the infantry divisions from here isn't going any quicker either. Always the same story; it always takes the same time. He can more or less release whatever he can get from here. He refers to 'counter-manceuvre'. He shouldn't talk of 'counter-manceuvre' but call a spade a spade - running away. Then this affair won't be any good and he'll come back as far as this. (JODL: probably.) Anyway he shouldn't talk of 'counter-manceuvre'.

JODL: He'll merely man the obstacle because as time goes on ...

HITLER: Here he'll get bogged down frontally. What does that mean 'get bogged down frontally'? It doesn't matter now. In any case I'm definitely keeping these forces here. In any other case I'm not so sure I would keep them. When he says he can't get them round as quick as the other fellow, that's the question. He can get all the forces he's got back there round quickly, if nothing's going on here. It's nothing but scheming and fibbing, that's all I think it is.

JODL: The worst problem was the question of holding this small area. Now we've got this and that.

HITLER: And that too. That's a typical example; we should have been able to hold this if at the time he hadn't taken out 16 Panzer Grenadier Div., trailed it round here, so that here everything was pulled out and the whole thing folded up. They were one division short here. No need for that. 13 Armoured Div. could have been relieved earlier. Then it would all have been all right. It was untrue that the line ... we came up against the line which in theory had been fortified. We would have been able to secure this and would have been able ... to ... obstacle which is the last available and which must be held under all circumstances. If we go back from there, that will be a catastrophe. Here we've always got the possibility of going back to there.

Just the same here. They occupy the obstacle which is the one to be held under all circumstances and then if they go on rushing back further, there's nothing you can do. Then everything collapses. He had five armoured divisions at that time;

1, 24, 1
Once
JODL: Th
HITLER: 1
BORGMAN
HITLER: 1
JODL: 14
HITLER: 1
he got
25 from
armour
division
he aske
posed t
all batt
front. 1
pull ou
is 4 M
he take
division
strengt
else on
troops
Here
simply
line lik
work b
round
straight
pulled
BORGMAN
at the
HITLER:
250, 25
BORGMAN
which
HITLER:
JODL: It
HITLER:
JODL: Th

A

Appendix A

the battle. His
because it would
units is of

from here isn't
story; it always
whatever he
manoeuvre'. He
a spade a spade
y good and he'll
way he shouldn't

ime goes on ...

What does that
matter now. In
ere. In any other
he says he can't
at's the question.
round quickly, if
ning and fibbing,

olding this small

; we should have
n't taken out 16
re, so that here
folded up. They
at. 13 Armoured
t would all have
came up against
We would have
en able ... to ...
ust be held under
at will be a catas-
of going back to

acle which is the
hen if they go on
do. Then every-
ons at that time;

1, 24, 25 and the Leibstandarte and - which was the fifth?

Once more: 1, 14, 25, 24 and the SS - 14 Div. was up here.

JODL: That's 16 - here is 14.

HITLER: 14 got here all the same?

BORGSMANN: I'm not absolutely sure, my Führer.

HITLER: It did though.

JODL: 14 Div. came from the West.

HITLER: Yes, from the West. As far as fresh troops are concerned he got 1 Armoured Div. from the Balkans, 14 from the West, 25 from the West, 24 from Italy and the SS; that makes 5 armoured divisions and in addition there were 3 infantry divisions plus a parachute division. In fact he got more than he asked for. He asked for 8 divisions. With them he was supposed to be able to do the whole thing. He got 9 divisions, and all battle-worthy divisions, better than any others on the whole front. Now he wants 5 to 6 divisions. Of this number he could pull out one here straight away; he gets one from here - that is 4 Mountain Div., he gets 16 Armoured Div. from up there, he takes 17 Div. from here; these two must count as at least two divisions. And he behaves as if he hadn't got anything. His strength relative to that of the enemy is better than anywhere else on the entire front. The fact that the morale of some of his troops is bad results from the general attitude up above.

Here it's catastrophic. Look: they couldn't hold this line simply because they didn't make the necessary lateral move. A line like this must be held. These numerous salients of course work both ways; the enemy has them too. If the enemy goes round here and then across here he'll have to give up forces straight away. Then this can't be held any more. When that's pulled in, that can't be held either.

BORGSMANN: 14 Div. came from the West and 24 Div. from Italy at the end of July.

HITLER: They had at least 700 tanks. The Leibstandarte had 250, 25 Armoured Div. had 200, 24 ...

BORGSMANN: About 150. It was in Upper Italy, about the area in which we were.

HITLER: 1 Armoured Div.?

JODL: It had fewer.

HITLER: Something over 100. And 14?

JODL: That had about the same.

A

Appendices

HITLER: It had more than 150. The others were all more or less up to strength.

BORGSMANN: That's about 850 in all.

HITLER: And then he's had many times that as replacements – at least 400–500 tanks.

BORGSMANN: About 100 a month, so that's three to four months' worth.

HITLER: He got many more than that. You must count in assault guns too. He's had a large number of assault gun battalions.

The Tiger Battalion was brought up too. He's had well over 1,500 tanks in this period.

BORGSMANN: This arrived at 23.10 hours today.

HITLER: That's probably a day later?

BORGSMANN: No, just now.

HITLER: There he is sitting in Vinnitsa and he's quite happy. He must move his headquarters straight away. No good – he can't be here unfortunately. The best place would really be Czernowitz; otherwise Lemberg might be better unless the attack of 1 Armoured Div. goes through here. We must see about that.

(General Zeitzler arrives)

I'd like to get two things square, Zeitzler. Field Marshal von Manstein has put in two requirements. One was a few weeks ago – that came to 5 armoured divisions and 3 infantry divisions, ie a total of 8 divisions. That was what he asked for then.

ZEITZLER: I'll check the exact figures.

HITLER: 5 armoured divisions and 3 infantry divisions. He got 5 armoured divisions, and they were the best we had anywhere, most of them straight from rest and training; then he got 3 infantry divisions and a parachute division in addition! So he got 9 divisions. No other sector of the front has been reinforced in the way Field Marshal von Manstein has, although he is no weaker relative to the enemy than anyone else. It simply depends on the morale, and that results from the fact that nothing positive ever comes out of that headquarters. It's a purely negative attitude; it's particularly negative in this area where we've just sacked Hoth. He was particularly futile here. Anyway here he got what he asked for. The day before yesterday we approved the withdrawal here in order that, as he said, he

A

could make 5 to 6 divisions available. He himself didn't reckon he'd get more. He's got these people here and of these formations, apart from 3 Mountain Div., there's nothing as good as 4 Mountain Div. He was given 4 Mountain Div. He gets 16 Armoured Div. from up there. He's got no armoured division as good as that here. He can himself make a division available here and he can take out whatever's best. That means three, including two first-class formations which he wouldn't otherwise be getting.

He'd never have got them merely by withdrawing here. Three first-class formations – he can take one from here – in addition he can pull out 17 Armoured Div. and here 5 Armoured Div., which means he's got two more than he had any right to expect. But he goes on as if nobody had ever allowed him anything. Actually he's had everything he's asked for. The idea that he could quickly bring up these formations here or bring down those here is a pipe dream. Everything in this telegram is a pipe dream. It is just a dream world; there can be no planned operations here any more. I'm happy if we can stabilize the situation; I don't expect more apart from that. This is nothing but words. I don't expect a decisive development or a 'success-counter-mancœuvre' which I have proposed ...

He says here: 'I consider that 4 Panzer Army will not be able, with the present planned reinforcements, to prevent the rail communications, particularly at Shmerinka, being cut. I consider therefore that an immediate decision regarding the counter-mancœuvre which I have proposed ...

That's no 'counter-mancœuvre'. Why don't they call a spade a spade and say 'withdrawal'. I hate these expressions. Why doesn't he say: '... is necessary regarding the withdrawal', for that's what it is, all the more so since it will be a remarkably difficult operation. 'Therefore the move of further forces from the West is unavoidable.' He's no idea what's going on in the West, or whether something is happening there, and anyway, it's none of his business. He must leave it to us where they come from. You've spoken to him again. What does he say now?

ZEITZLER: He considers it absolutely essential that the withdrawal should succeed. As a result forces will be released here.

HITLER: They won't be released. Look here, it's always the same thing. He's always sung the same tune. Of course the forces

Appendices

have become available, but they're then whistled round here and now he's got them in here. It's always the same game: forces become available on both sides, not only on ours. He's got to admit that. But then he says this: (*reads*). What are these consequences he's talking about? Oh, I see!

ZEITZLER: The loss of Shmerinka ... from the area north of Cherkassy ... being moved towards the Crimea.

HITLER: Have you got information about this?

ZEITZLER: It seems to fit. We have an agent's report that 33 trains were on the move down there. That could be a mechanized corps. But of course it's only an agent's report.

HITLER: He talks here about 5 to 6 divisions becoming available – what does this mean: 'as a result 5 to 6 divisions could be released for the left flank of the Army Group'. So in fact he gets these 5 to 6 divisions somehow.

The next bit is pure daydreaming: 'of course enemy forces will also be released in the bend of the Dnieper; he will not however be able to get them into the Berdichev area as quickly as we can'. Where does he get that from? There's no need for the enemy to move his forces up. If we are here, there's nothing threatening him. So he can then withdraw his formations, his reserve formations, and bring them up extremely quickly; if necessary he can withdraw them from the front. The formations on the front are not in fact first-class; I get reports on this every day. I saw today that there's not a single formation even half-trained. There's nothing else ready for battle. What does he want to do? He's got one division here; that must be 3 or 4 Div. That's the only formation that's worth anything. Have you the classifications there, Zeitzler?

ZEITZLER: Yes, I've got them.

HITLER: 'He will not be able to get them into the Berdichev area as quickly as we can. It is to be hoped that the enemy ...' You know, when people say 'we hope that' it means 'that's what suits us and we think the enemy will do what we want'! That's no military way of putting things: 'it is to be hoped that the enemy will use the forces he has available in the bend of Dnieper or on the Nogai Steppe to try to break through westwards via Cherkassy and Kirovograd, via Kirovograd or the lower Dnieper, and as a result finally exhaust his forces in frontal attacks'. What does he mean 'finally exhaust his forces'? If

the ene
Why d
must w
as we
area an
marked
ZEITZLE
HITLER:
battle.
is the
enemy
He'll d
which
and so
time –
here p
bring a
it isn't
from t
quicke
there's
get her
What's
these f
ZEITZLE
stretch
Krivo
Then
mark
HITLER:
ZEITZLE
HITLER:
ZEITZLE
HITLER:
ZEITZLE
way.
HITLER:
along.
about
ZEITZLE

A

Appendix A

ed round here
the same game:
on ours. He's
What are these
north of Cher-

t that 33 trains
a mechanized

ing available -
sions could be
So in fact he

e enemy forces
er; he will not
area as quickly
no need for the
here's nothing
formations, his
ely quickly; if
The formations
reports on this
formation even
tle. What does
must be 3 or 4
ing. Have you

Berdichev area
enemy ...' You
as 'that's what
e want'! That's
hoped that the
end of Dnieper
westwards via
or the lower
rces in frontal
his forces'? If

the enemy can make forces available he will break through again!
Why doesn't he use the same argument here when he says they
must wear themselves out! Here there are just as many forces
as we have - how many divisions has the enemy got in this
area anyway? Have you the order of battle? Have you got it
marked on the map?

ZEITZLER: No, it's not made up yet.

HITLER: Perhaps you could get somebody over with the order of
battle. Well, now, there's a strongpoint here and here, and here
is the Cherkassy strongpoint and a strongpoint here! The
enemy won't do what we hope, he'll do what hurts us most.
He'll do two things: either he'll go across here with the forces
which have been released and attack here from the bridgehead
and so dislocate our position. He can get across here at any
time - we can't stop it, or if he doesn't do that he'll go round
here pulling in that from here. Manstein expects that he'll
bring up the forces from Cherkassy straight away. He says
it isn't possible to do it from Kremenchug, so he won't take them
from there. According to his reasoning we can get up here
quicker from this point than he can from Kremenchug, but
there's no support for that idea. If we clear out here, he can
get here quicker with his forces than we can get up from here.
What's the rail transport position? How are they going to move
these forces anyway?

ZEITZLER: Rail transport is slow here; here you can use this
stretch. I've marked it here, here is the main line and from
Krivoirog the line goes from Saporoshe along here for a bit.
Then it goes here from the area where you see 17 Armoured
marked ...

HITLER: These must go by MT but those must go on foot?

ZEITZLER: They'll have to get these people around this way.

HITLER: Here is 14 Mountain Div. on the move already.

ZEITZLER: It's on the move.

HITLER: For the moment then it's out of the whole business?

ZEITZLER: It'll be a day or two of course before it gets to the rail-
way.

HITLER: Right, but now there seems to be another division coming
along. That's the second that's got to get up here. And what
about 17 Armoured Div.?

ZEITZLER: That will be moved from here. If he can release some

A

Appendices

infantry divisions here, then he'll pull out the motorized formations, move them a certain distance by MT and then do this on foot.

HITLER: It's not certain they can move by MT. The railway's going to be at full stretch with this for the next few days. I don't know whether he's putting an infantry division in up here or what?

ZEITZLER: Yes. As soon as these arrive it'll become available.

HITLER: But first these must be brought up from here?

ZEITZLER: This is the railway here; it goes along here and right through.

HITLER: But he must bring them up this way below here. We can't do more for the moment. Is that today's information marked?

ZEITZLER: I marked this up last night; that's Kasatin.

HITLER: One thing I think is essential: that he should get out of Vinnitsa straight away so that he doesn't lose his nerve. He'll lose his nerve and there's no sense in that.

ZEITZLER: From the technical signals point of view we have made the preparations; Balti, that's about in the centre. That's possible from the signals point of view.

HITLER: Lemberg!

ZEITZLER: Yes, Lemberg's a bit far off. I'll look and see if we can find something, perhaps Tarnopol. He reported last night from Balti that they were preparing that.

HITLER: He must get out of Vinnitsa; there's no sense in that. There must be a special detachment at Vinnitsa to burn the whole headquarters down and blow it up. It is most important there should be no furniture left, otherwise the Russians will send it to Moscow and put it on display. Burn the lot.

JODL: Balti is no good, that's in Transnistria; that's Rumania.

HITLER: Is it in Transnistria?

JODL: No, Balti is Rumanian, it's in Bessarabia.

ZEITZLER: What they mean is Balta.

HITLER: Where is Vinnitsa? I don't think this is right.

ZEITZLER: The communications there are bad. That's the main worry unless we can use the railway through Rumania. The Rumanians have not let us use the railway. I've tried everything.

HITLER: I think it's right that he goes to Tarnopol.

ZEITZLER: Yes, I'll get that made ready.

HITLER: H

ZEITZLER:

spoken to

HITLER: I

ZEITZLER:

them, and

HITLER: H

ZEITZLER:

though.

HITLER: T

ZEITZLER:

it may be

mechanic

HITLER: T

ZEITZLER:

only begi

onwards.

be a batt

HITLER: T

ZEITZLER:

develop

worried a

HITLER: T

what's al

ZEITZLER: I

HITLER: If

whether I

ZEITZLER:

should ha

HITLER: T

was he im

ZEITZLER: I

can get th

situation.

HITLER: It v

little bette

for if we c

way thro

individual

block that

△

Appendix A

HITLER: Have you any news of the attack of 1 Armoured Division?
ZEITZLER: No, my Führer, no result yet, although I've already spoken to him about it.

HITLER: I am convinced they'll get through.

ZEITZLER: It's difficult to say. There are 300 lorries following them, and that makes it look like a mechanized corps.

HITLER: How many men does a lorry carry? Twenty men?

ZEITZLER: The Russians take many more – perhaps twenty though.

HITLER: That makes 6,000 men.

ZEITZLER: It's not necessarily only personnel on these lorries; it may be something else. The number of lorries is about what a mechanized corps would have with it on the move.

HITLER: Then it might be three to four thousand men?

ZEITZLER: My Führer, what I am worried about is that one can only begin to have some effect upon the enemy here from 30th onwards. I am convinced that in three or four days there will be a battle for Vinnitsa.

HITLER: That makes no difference.

ZEITZLER: It makes this difference, my Führer: things may so develop that this area here is surrounded. That's what I'm worried about.

HITLER: There's nothing can stop that. We can't do more than what's already in train – we can't stop that!

ZEITZLER: We could go back to the Kamenka position.

HITLER: If he goes back he must hold there. It doesn't matter whether he holds there or there.

ZEITZLER: Then we should have gained six days, in case we should have to fall back further.

HITLER: The important point is this: when he speaks of operations was he imagining that he could move in here?

ZEITZLER: If you think of the situation developing this way he can get through to here. And then we'd be in a very unhappy situation. Then we'd only have ...

HITLER: It wouldn't make any difference that way. It would be a little better should we have to break our way out here later, for if we cut loose from the l. of c. here we shall have to fight our way through. I think it would be better, Zeitzler, to get the individual formations put in here as quickly as possible and block that. That's the most important point.

A

Appendices

ZEITZLER: Yes, my Führer. Five days ago I wanted to leave things as they were and move the three armoured divisions up there straight away. Then we'd have had three formations available, and wouldn't have got our backs against the wall. But in my view this is all less important than the question of taking something away from here.

HITLER: He could at least pull one division out quick.

ZEITZLER: The affair ought to have worked out on its own. Then we should only have had a short move forward with these three formations and been able to attack through here. But now everything's arriving in dribblets and I'm afraid it'll be the same with the Leibstandarte and 1 Armoured Div., and I'm worried that the formations down here too together with ...

HITLER: Whatever units he can get up here must be put under command of 1 Armoured Div. or the Leibstandarte. He can't work it any other way. He must more or less incorporate them into 1 Armoured Div. or the Leibstandarte. Are they arriving on the line Novograd-Voltchinsk-Zhitomir?

ZEITZLER: They're coming along the main line. If we lose that later we shall have to go over to this line.

HITLER: The important point is that they should be put under command of the Leibstandarte or 1 Armoured Div.

ZEITZLER: In that case we can put them in here.

HITLER: There's nothing else to be done, Zeitzler, but bring up forces to stabilize the position. If the operation here doesn't come off, this operation can't take place; that doesn't alter the overall result. If you hold here or here today, it will be only a question of one day. There they have had to withdraw in a hurry again. This doesn't alter the final result.

ZEITZLER: Formations will become available, that's clear.

HITLER: They won't be able to get the formations which do become available up here any earlier. There's no point in it.

ZEITZLER: Perhaps we could take a big risk here and bolster up the front with the formations released by that.

HITLER: How are we going to get them up there? On paper! If a motorized formation moves up there from here, it'll be played out!

ZEITZLER: We've carried out some large-scale movements.

HITLER: With tanks?

ZEITZLER: The tracked vehicles can move by road like that.

HITLER: The

ZEITZLER: W

HITLER: Nat

ad: They'll ma

ed one can ce

only we ha

we could c

we do that

ZEITZLER: H

HITLER: I ad

see the str

can be mov

straight aw

forces up h

like? Let's

ZEITZLER: H

talions mod

HITLER: 97 J

ZEITZLER: 97

HITLER: 9 Di

ZEITZLER: Hi

morale - 21

couple of de

down there

HITLER: What

ZEITZLER: No

battleworth

HITLER: And

ZEITZLER: No

HITLER: But g

ZEITZLER: Pa

strength, 1

morale, batt

2 battalions

strength, 2 b

weak.

HITLER: It's n

ZEITZLER: No

25 Div. not

has gone de

A

Appendix A

I wanted to leave
noured divisions up
d three formations
ks against the wall.
han the question of

ut quick.
ut on its own. Then
ard with these three
ugh here. But now
aid it'll be the same
iv., and I'm worried
r with ...

must be put under
standarte. He can't
ss incorporate them
Are they arriving on

line. If we lose that

ould be put under
ured Div.
here.

itzler, but bring up
eration here doesn't
hat doesn't alter the
lay, it will be only a
d to withdraw in a
sult.

, that's clear.
ormations which do
re's no point in it.
here and bolster up
that.

p there? On paper!
s from here, it'll be

le movements.

y road like that.

HITLER: They must go by rail.

ZEITZLER: We can't get enough rolling stock up here.

HITLER: Naturally, that's clear, but you won't get them here.

They'll make one division available. You'll get one here and one can come out here. One's already on the move to ... If only we had this business here and we had a division here, then we could drive in here and follow up here. But the moment we do that the enemy will straight away move in here.

ZEITZLER: He could also move in this way.

HITLER: I admit that but he'll no longer be tied down here. You see the strongpoint is here. If we withdraw, the strongpoint can be moved across here straight away. He can scam from here straight away. It's not as Manstein says that he can bring the forces up here quicker. But apart from that, what do we look like? Let's take this list of the formations. First, 335.

ZEITZLER: High morale. Makes a good impression. Four battalions moderate strength, three battalions average strength.

HITLER: 97 Jäger Division?

ZEITZLER: 97 Jäger Division; good, particularly high morale.

HITLER: 9 Division?

ZEITZLER: High morale, good - 17 Div. is good, particularly high morale - 211 Div. is good, also high morale. 67 Div. was bad a couple of days ago. I asked about it a day or two ago. The ones down there were good. 9 Div. was always good.

HITLER: What's the state of 24 Armoured Div.?

ZEITZLER: No classification has been made. It's up to strength, battleworthiness rated 1.

HITLER: And what's 258 like?

ZEITZLER: Not high morale.

HITLER: But 3 Mountain Div. is good?

ZEITZLER: Particularly high morale. 3 battalions moderate strength, 1 average strength, 9 batteries - 302 Div. not high morale, battleworthiness rated 4, 5 battalions average strength, 2 battalions weak. 294 Div. not high morale, 1 battalion up to strength, 2 battalions moderate to average strength, 3 battalions weak.

HITLER: It's no good for anything then. And 123 Div.?

ZEITZLER: Not high morale, although lately it's fought well.

25 Div. not high morale either, it's gone down lately. 304 Div. has gone down too.

A

Appendices

HITLER: Those are the formations he will bring out here first.
What's the state of 257 Div.?

ZEITZLER: More or less all right.

HITLER: Now he must put something in here. He can only take one formation out here and that will be 257 Div. But here he's got nothing but low-morale formations. One formation must come out here. Where's this line? Does it go along here?

ZEITZLER: That's the Kamenka line.

HITLER: Where is the bridge? Is it here?

ZEITZLER: The bridge is here.

HITLER: The Nikopol bridge. The lower bridge?

ZEITZLER: The lower bridge is here. Here is one bridge and here are the ferries.

HITLER: The ferries stop in winter. And the bridges?

ZEITZLER: The pontoon bridges have been taken down.

HITLER: They're not there either, then. That means there's only one bridge.

ZEITZLER: There's the seventy-ton bridge, and then the weather may change.

HITLER: Why change? What do you mean?

ZEITZLER: That for the moment they can be used.

HITLER: That won't last, it'll all freeze up. And then they can come up from below. That's the great danger, that he blows it up once it's frozen and when the business is over it's back where it was. This is of course merely a question. Before this everybody said, if that is blown, then the greater part of this will go under water. So it can't really be as thick as all that.

ZEITZLER: There is about seven inches head of water to come down.

HITLER: Seven inches is not so frightful.

ZEITZLER: But these bridges will be carried away.

HITLER: Another question, Zeitzler: what do these two divisions look like which you've got there back behind? Wait a minute, we'll have a quick look at these two divisions. 46 Div.?

ZEITZLER: Good, particularly high morale.

HITLER: But weak - and 387 Div.?

ZEITZLER: Not good morale - 306 Div. not good either, and comparatively weak.

HITLER: What does 16 Panzer Grenadier Div. look like now?

ZEITZLER: Good. 1 strong battalion, 3 moderate strength, 1

A

Appendix A

average strength. 17 batteries, 25 heavy anti-tank guns, commanded by Schwerin.

HITLER: He wants to bring it out?

ZEITZLER: No, not yet; that was merely an idea; if he should bring it out.

HITLER: Supposing he could make a formation available here?

(ZEITZLER: yes.) Grossdeutschland is pretty weak?

ZEITZLER: Grossdeutschland? Yes, high morale but very weak - 9 Armoured Div. has 6 high morale battalions, 3 moderate strength, 4 weak, 11 batteries - 15 Div. particularly high morale, 3 average strength battalions, 2 weak - 62 Div. high morale, 4 average strength battalions, 1 weak.

HITLER: And what happens if we shorten this bridgehead?

ZEITZLER: He couldn't do that now. He says shortening it would be no good. My own view was that we could shorten it. But of course it wouldn't do much good.

HITLER: He says: two small bridgeheads.

ZEITZLER: I don't know either how he's thought that up. I told him clearly: reduce in depth. He initially wanted to shorten in length. There's no question of that; that doesn't save us much.

JODL: He meant two small bridgeheads.

ZEITZLER: That's probably what he meant, but we must hold just one permanently.

HITLER: Of course I think it's important that we evacuate here as late as possible and if possible that we don't evacuate at all. The enemy won't be able to concentrate forces. That means the forces will be about equal. He'll get across here straight away. But quite apart from that he won't get anything else from the Crimea. That's nothing to do with Manstein. He'll say 'that's Army Group A's job, nothing to do with me'. Just look at the formations he's got here. How many formations are there here? My guess is that there are at least 30 to 35.

ZEITZLER: That's about it.

HITLER: We could put them in here but then the whole thing will be blown sky high from the rear. If he wants to abandon the line in here altogether, he'll have to have those people who are here. He must abandon the line, but that won't save us anything.

ZEITZLER: It will make about ten formations available, three to four down there and five up here.

A

Appendices

HITLER: Five? One's gone already, it's here now. One's gone from here and must be replaced. You must count them in too. Three to four down here? That way he won't get ... the line must be manned, it's not manned now.

Now look, if you look at the thing overall: we couldn't hold here; but now we've got to hold the same size bridgehead; we've got to - and still take formations away!

That was the cry then: back! It was a typical retreat, everybody lost their nerve. Kleist included - everybody back! Nobody can say that this was more difficult than that or than the entire front which we now have. Then we wouldn't have had all these difficulties in the Crimea and needn't have had any forces here. We could have had that here. We mustn't try and make out that we couldn't have held that. It was just that the word went round: everybody back! Sometimes it becomes a real mania. If only we could now have some success somewhere! I have seen two retreats during which I said: we can risk it. During one we bulldozed our way along. So I said: that won't lose us much. So I agreed to that.

The second one I proposed myself. That was from this pocket at Orei. If the attack succeeded we had to get out. That was sensible. But this here has been an idiotic retreat, I must say.

BORGSMANN: There are 27 rifle divisions and 4 armoured corps in the area. Here at this point there are 17 rifle divisions. Then north-west of Krivoirog there are 16 rifle divisions and 1 armoured corps. At Kirovograd there are 24 rifle divisions and 5 armoured corps.

HITLER: Is that here? That comes into it too.

BORGSMANN: In the area of the break-in here there are 13 rifle divisions and 1 armoured corps, at Cherkassy 4 rifle divisions, 1 armoured brigade. In the area of this break-in, 42 rifle divisions, 9 armoured corps, 1 cavalry corps in the first wave and 2 armoured corps in there; 3 armoured corps not yet identified.

HITLER: How many identified armoured corps has he in this area?

ZEITZLER: He's got nine. The others may possibly come along if they come up by rail.

HITLER: I wonder whether we ought to take something out of the bridgehead, although of course the bridgehead is tying down the

main body of the
else, Zeitzler: have

ZEITZLER: Yes, recr
employed on railw

BORGSMANN: That w
are at Korosten; 4

1 artillery battali
143 Div. has 1

are employed with
HITLER: I thought t

JODL: There are two
Class 22 or 21?

ZEITZLER: That mu
well on with their

HITLER: I was askin
perhaps put one

in the hope that
get a couple of oth

nothing available
armoured formati

JODL: There are no
any way suitable

we can take, and
HITLER: Could we

it?

JODL: It's 371 Div.
HITLER: Where is it

JODL: It's at the me
HITLER: In this op

JODL: In a harvest
started in the nex

ZEITZLER: It's in th
JODL: It's under C.

HITLER: Battlewort
ZEITZLER: 371 Div

four in all; the fi
HITLER: How soon

of these divisions
JODL: That's no ge
mean an unnece

A

Appendix A

main body of the enemy. Oh yes, I wanted to ask you something else, Zeitzler: haven't we got two reserve divisions in Poland?

ZEITZLER: Yes, recruits. One division is up in the Korosten area employed on railway guard duty; that's where the big loop is.

BORGSMANN: That was 147 Div. It's got 7 battalions of which 3 are at Korosten; 4 battalions are recruits; 1 pioneer battalion, 1 artillery battalion.

143 Div. has 10 battalions of which 7 are recruits and 3 are employed with Second Army on anti-partisan operations.

HITLER: I thought there was something further back?

JODL: There are two newly-formed divisions in Poland. Isn't that Class 22 or 21?

ZEITZLER: That must be Class 21. If it's Class 21 they should be well on with their organization.

HITLER: I was asking for another reason - whether we couldn't perhaps put one or both of these divisions over to the West in the hope that nothing happens there for a bit and we could get a couple of other formations from there. But Jodl says there's nothing available in the West, that they can't give up any more armoured formations.

JODL: There are no infantry divisions in the West which are in any way suitable for employment in the East. There's only one we can take, and that's destined for Italy.

HITLER: Could we get that along? What sort of a division is it?

JODL: It's 371 Div.

HITLER: Where is it exactly?

JODL: It's at the moment taking part in this operation.

HITLER: In this operation.

JODL: In a harvesting operation east of Zagreb. It will have started in the next few days.

ZEITZLER: It's in the south-east - 371?

JODL: It's under C.-in-C. South-west, as it was before.

HITLER: Battleworthiness rating 2?

ZEITZLER: 371 Div. Two battalions generally good; there are four in all; the first is the best.

HITLER: How soon could it get up here if we replaced it with one of these divisions in Poland?

JODL: That's no good; it wouldn't help at all; it would merely mean an unnecessary delay in its formation. The result would

A

Appendices

merely be that only one division would go to the West instead of two. Then Kesselring would only get 71 Div. and would have to give up the Hermann Göring, ... and go Panzer Grenadier Div. would have to stay there.

HITLER: How long would it take to get here by rail?

ZEITZLER: Where is it?

JODL: South-west of Zagreb.

ZEITZLER: It will be quite some time before we get it here, because rail communications are bad and trains are small.

HITLER: How long once it's got on the railway?

ZEITZLER: Not too long, it should get here in six or seven days.

HITLER: If only I could have put in something here instead of 24 Armoured Div. But if we take that away, then we can't hold here.

ZEITZLER: Yes, we'd be taking a risk. If we were lucky it might be all right. But so far we've not been able to do it. We've always had to use it to re-establish the situation.

JODL: And what are these Rumanian battalions doing there, 5 and 14?

ZEITZLER: We can't use those.

JODL: Not even on security jobs?

HITLER: We must take something from here. What good divisions are there here?

ZEITZLER: There's nothing very wonderful there; 101 Div., 307 Div. Luftwaffe Div. - and they've got enormous sectors. 101 Div. is all right; it's good but it's got a very wide sector. 307 Div. morale's not good.

HITLER: How many battalions has 101 Div. got?

ZEITZLER: Eight strong battalions and one weak.

HITLER: I've had another idea; that we take this division from the Balkans, hoping that we can hold there for a bit. The question is whether we can; then we can take out another formation immediately after 4 Mountain Div.

ZEITZLER: I'll have to get the rail details worked out.

JODL: The relief of formations takes a fairly long time.

ZEITZLER: The Führer's not thinking of relief; he means take the division out first and take a risk there for a day or two.

HITLER: Until the other one arrives.

ZEITZLER: Rail movement round this way takes a long time because we have to go through Rumania.

HITLER: TI
must con
ZEITZLER:
HITLER: TI
there. W
here or tl
divisions
formation
other g
ZEITZLER:
HITLER: OI
stay here
with it, a
ZEITZLER:
HITLER: TI
ZEITZLER:
this - ab
standarte
accept th
go into b
The se
cally this
can arriv
under an
Walloons
but woul
Reichsfü
best to a
have bat
HITLER: I
Nederlan
men?
DARGES: A
HITLER: It
should lo
tion. It's
6,500 or
two batt
odds. Th
Title o



Appendix A

HITLER: That's no good; all formations you take out from here must come up this way.

ZEITZLER: You saw how long it took with 4 Mountain Div.

HITLER: Then we must go round this way. You can't get round there. We can't take all the armoured formations away from here or there will be a crisis. They can't make out with infantry divisions alone. We must have a certain number of armoured formations in here. Then following 44 Div. we could get one other good infantry division.

ZEITZLER: Yes, let's say 101 Div.

HITLER: Of course it couldn't take its artillery with it; that must stay here. No - when the other arrives it will have artillery with it, and I'd naturally much rather put the division in here.

ZEITZLER: Yes, so that it gets into the battle straight away.

HITLER: That's my idea too with Langemark.*

ZEITZLER: I've had a long talk with the Reichsführer today about this - about the possibility of using either 'Reich' or Leibstandarte. In the case of 'Reich' the advantage is that it can accept them quite easily, the disadvantage that it may have to go into battle straight away and even straight from the train.

The second possibility is to attach them to 'Wiking'; technically this is difficult because it must go right round before it can arrive. The Reichsführer doesn't want to use 'Wiking' under any circumstances, because that will bring Flemings and Walloons together. Down here they would be on a quiet sector but would have no formation on either side of them.... The Reichsführer is in favour of using 'Reich'. He says it will be best to attach them to 'Reich'. He says the German personnel have battle experience. Therefore he wouldn't be so worried.

HITLER: I got someone to give me the organization of the new Nederland Legion today. What's its strength overall? 6-7,000 men?

DARGES: About 7,000 men.

HITLER: It's got colossal firepower. Have you got it there? You should look at it! It's worth thinking about this sort of organization. It's got more firepower than any other division and has 6,500 or 7,000 men. But it's weak in artillery. It's only got two battalions. But the third battalion wouldn't make much odds. The others have mostly got only nine batteries.

* Title of a newly formed Waffen SS division not ready for action.



ZEITZLER: Mostly nine batteries.

HITLER: Now that would be a risk which we might perhaps have to take. Would you talk to Kleist and see whether he's prepared to take it on?

ZEITZLER: Yes. They were very worried about 4 Mountain Div.

HITLER: These formations arrived instead of 4 Mountain.

ZEITZLER: The battalions?

HITLER: He'll be getting an additional division here which is of the same strength. Of course we don't know how it'll make out but as far as strength is concerned it is equivalent.

Perhaps not from the artillery point of view because it won't be able to take all the artillery with it. But don't let's deceive ourselves, Zeitzler, he can't lay on any major operations with these formations. If he can't hold there, there will be a pot mess until this arrives here or there.

But that doesn't matter a damn. More to the point is that we must absolutely insist they hold here. For the moment we can do nothing other than take up a covering position with these formations. We can't carry out any form of attack. The infantry divisions are out of the question for any form of attack. They can't do it these days. We saw how 5 Jäger Division achieved nothing. Now that's a good formation but its power of penetration is zero. If they try and attack up there with 12 Div. it'll be exactly the same thing. These infantry divisions have no power of penetration; they can't attack in winter; they just can't do it. Last year we only used armoured formations and Panzer Grenadier divisions in attack. The infantry just can't do it; they're completely useless. The infantry gets stuck in the snow and shot down. They can't take cover properly. There's nothing to do except try and plug the hole. A couple of armoured formations. He must get around that way. If it's possible for him to get 16 Panzer Grenadier Div. out, that's good, but for the moment that's all that can be done.

If he started to get the idea of going back with his army in order to get freedom of manoeuvre – if he goes back in this direction – and then one doesn't know what the army will look like. I read all the reports about these retreats. I could kick myself today that I gave permission for them. It wouldn't have been any worse up forward – on the contrary. But it's just as I said; it's all happened under pressure; the formations

got back
defensive
formation

ZEITZLER:
things go
back.

HITLER: I'
this affai
there we
have bec
back tha
a mania,
half the
battle of
break-thr

220 miles

JODL: But, I
we have
that, oth
call up th
order to s
will colla
happenin
crisis on 1

ZEITZLER: '
Manstein
enemy's 1
that on 2
probably
battle for
Armoured
from dow
that woul
defence li
Korosten

HITLER: Yo
withdraw

ZEITZLER: ?
operation

HITLER: We

A

Appendix A

got back in the hell of a mess. The retreat was worse than any defensive battle. But I'm astounded when you look at these formations how they've managed to recover!

ZEITZLER: My Führer, when they're static for a time, gradually things get better. They get replacements and get their wounded back.

HITLER: I'm astounded how quickly they've improved. As regards this affair, we should have been able to hold that and then there wouldn't have been a crisis here. So that we wouldn't have been cut off. They were afraid that they would be forced back that way, and so packed up straight away! It's becoming a mania, a real disease. After all, this isn't a trifle. It's 220 miles, half the width of the entire Western Front. We talk about the battle of the Marne, but we're doing it all the time. There's a break-through and we give up a colossal front of 220 miles. 220 miles was the entire right wing of the army in 1914.

JODL: But, my Führer, we don't want the sort of crisis where one day we have to say: 'here's another army cut off. We must avoid that, otherwise the whole thing will break down. So we must call up the last division which can be moved from the West in order to save a whole army, otherwise the entire Eastern Front will collapse.' Then we should lose the war because nothing's happening in the West. There can be no question of risking a crisis on the Stalingrad model.

ZEITZLER: That's my view. I've reached the same conclusion as Manstein, but for other reasons. My reasons are these: the enemy's been moving forward at about ten miles a day so that on 29th and 30th he gets as far as this. That means that probably at the end of the year or on 1 January there will be a battle for Vinnitsa. Then the new formations will arrive - 16 Armoured Div. at about twelve trains per day, the Jäger Div. from down there at about three to six trains a day. Of course that wouldn't be a completely satisfactory position because the defence line would be longer. But I don't see any danger from Korosten southwards.

HITLER: You've come to the conclusion, Zeitzler, that we must withdraw the whole front here?

ZEITZLER: My immediate conclusion is that we must start this operation - then we make some formations available.

HITLER: We won't get them up there in time, Zeitzler, for the

A

Appendices

enemy will be able to make fresh formations available on his side too.

ZEITZLER: My Führer, the question is this: either we can more or less stabilize the situation so that the front holds here; in that case it's all right and we should be able to get through with this business. This salient here will soon be a source of danger. We are so stretched here that he can always get through at the angle here. That will remain the main danger. Therefore we want to try to get back here. Second point: things do not go right and he gets over here as far as Transnistria. Then we can do nothing except let these people fight their way back. That'll be difficult because we've only got one bridge.

HITLER: If he pushes in here with his divisions couldn't that be even worse than if we followed....

ZEITZLER: Voluntarily?

HITLER: We've come back this far on our own accord! That's demoralized the troops. They fought all right, Zeitzler. I spoke to innumerable people. They say they just don't understand it when they have to abandon a position where they've spent all their energies digging themselves in. Just think how many rifles we've produced in Germany in the last six months, and how many we've got now; that's the way to calculate.

ZEITZLER: I've shown you the lists every month in which that is given.

HITLER: It just doesn't fit. Each month we've produced more than 200,000 rifles. Of course you may say that the newly formed units get them. No! how many have we got? A total of 6.1 m. has gone down to 5.1 m. It's gone down! That means there's been a loss of 1.5 m. rifles. That happened here in the East. Where else could we have lost rifles like that? Only here! Now that's hopeless. That's the best proof — the number of rifles we've lost. Taking the overall total we've fewer than we had. It's no good saying there have been newly formed units. The total is smaller and they've been lost here in the East as a result of these 'successful withdrawals' during which the men chuck their rifles away.

This is the way it is: the men fight bravely, they repulse the enemy, they are brave and courageous, they fortify all their positions but then the word goes round: back! You can't have a front of 250-300 miles where everything is all right. There's a

break-th

You can

ZEITZLER:

HITLER: N

something

ridiculou

tions.

ZEITZLER:

HITLER: T

The busi

talk to K

ZEITZLER:

to see ho

HITLER: If

move in

we can,

JODL: We

before th

HITLER: H

ZEITZLER:

couple o

Div. is 11

HITLER: Y

division

ZEITZLER:

back.

HITLER: If

mess, an

hard. W

withdrav

ZEITZLER:

There's 1

HITLER: H

withdrav

ZEITZLER:

this way,

HITLER: T

I've got

situation

system th

A

Appendix A

...available on his

either we can more or
not hold here; in that
to get through with
be a source of danger.
they get through at the
danger. Therefore we
point: things do not go
unhindered. Then we can
their way back. That'll
bridge.

sions couldn't that be

own accord! That's
right, Zeitzler. I spoke
just don't understand it
where they've spent all
just think how many
e last six months, and
y to calculate.
month in which that is

ve produced more than
that the newly formed
got? A total of 6-1 m.
n! That means there's
ened here in the East.
like that? Only here!
roof - the number of
l we've fewer than we
on newly formed units.
t here in the East as a
during which the men

avely, they repulse the
they fortify all their
back! You can't have a
is all right. There's a

break-through up there, and as a result back you go 250 miles.

You can't explain that to the troops.

ZEITZLER: I see no hope, my Führer, if he's got here already.

HITLER: Now, this is the way it is; you may say: Stalingrad was something different; that happened over there. But here it's ridiculous. There are good communications here in all directions.

ZEITZLER: The communications are very bad here.

HITLER: They are bad, but nothing on the Stalingrad model.

The business here, that's the most difficult! Well then, you will talk to Kleist to see if they can take the risk.

ZEITZLER: Yes, one thing - concerning 371 Div.; I'll talk to Jodl to see how we can get it out of there.

HITLER: If the worst comes to the worst we can do one thing - move in here and push forward a few battalions as quick as we can, so that at least there's something there.

JODL: We must first find out how long their movement will take before they arrive.

HITLER: How long will it take to get back here?

ZEITZLER: It's simply a question of rail calculations. It will be a couple of days before 101 Div. reaches the railway because 4 Div. is more or less along the railway.

HITLER: You can't do more than that. If you could get one division back ...

ZEITZLER: If the worst comes to the worst we can pull that one back.

HITLER: If you bring it back you get the whole of the front into a mess, and you don't know whether the enemy won't follow up hard. We just don't know. We've seen what the results of these withdrawals are.

ZEITZLER: Up here he thought he could hold on a bit longer. There's nothing to worry about there; the worry is down here.

HITLER: He's got a blob here and he's got blobs there. If we withdraw he may attack again straight away here.

ZEITZLER: It may lead to that. But of course he can still attack this way, even if we don't go back.

HITLER: That's not right either; he's been attacking all the time. I've got another report today about the other fellow's supply situation. This is the most miserable and precarious supply system there's ever been - nothing very wonderful.

A

Appendices

When could we get news how this attack is going? This may indicate a few tanks; one can't really tell.

ZEITZLER: It didn't look that way today. We shan't hear that till this evening. Because we're only in touch by radio.

HITLER: Well try and get the news through straight away. Get in touch with the Army Group; see when you think you can do it.

It's a complete division of seven battalions. Artillery you've got.

ZEITZLER: Nine batteries.

HITLER: Assault guns and anti-tank guns? Heavy or light?

ZEITZLER: Heavy anti-tank guns.

HITLER: Only heavy?

ZEITZLER: One pioneer battalion, one reinforcement battalion.

HITLER: Do you want to take that along?

ZEITZLER: There'll be recruits among them. It means really there are only eight battalions.

HITLER: And this division here has nine?

ZEITZLER: 101 Div. has 1 weak battalion and 8 strong. But two battalions which have been in the East have just been added; we should perhaps leave them here in the first place.

HITLER: Yes, we can leave them here initially.

ZEITZLER: We can leave some artillery there too.

(Conference ended 0109 hours)

T

1 Extract from J
1944. This fig
Files' now hel

'As my Dep
parable value t
He is now f
Führer.'

2 Extract from :
P ... , Major, (c
Army Liaison
Personnel Offi

On 30 Aug
B ... appeared
appointment i
Führer's Head
been in the HC
General Warli
get away with
that I assumed
to the proper c
several occasio
and on paper t

To Major Gen
Chief AG 2.

to be the new type of U-boats
(*Naval Affairs*, 17 February and
7 April).

2. The Allied demand was put in even more severe terms in *Plans and Preparations for Occupation of Germany* which had been issued in the form of an order under the code-name *Eclipse* in January 1945 and of which we were aware.

3. The main events are given in the text but the following details are illustrative:

(a) The following extract from the record of the midday briefing conference 27 January 1945 (Fragment 24-25):

GUDERIAN: ... So far we have withdrawn only the rearward services, workshops, etc. They are back across the Oder. Everything else will be halted on the Oder. The Staff College must in any case close within the next few days. I would like authority to use it together with two companies of the Berlin Guard Regiment to form a firm fall-back position, strong in officers, in this area just west of the Oder to ensure there is no withdrawal there.

HITLER: Yes, and this is where you will bring in the cavalry.

FEGELEIN: You mean the Cavalry Holding and Training Regiment; it's about fifteen hundred strong and is to be put in rear of Colonel-General Schörner.

GUDERIAN: The men will have to be split up among units.

OORING: The only thing is that anything coming back here is bound to be weak in officers; these are good selected officers and they could be used....

HITLER: I agree. There are tens of thousands of men streaming back here and they must be collected and reorganized. They must have officers and the best we can get

too. Otherwise we'll never get a grip of them.

GUDERIAN: They were to start the business here, reorganize and bring them forward.

OORING: But they won't be a formed body I imagine.

HITLER: No, this is merely a stop line to collect them and reorganize them. Only the best officers could do that.

OORING: That's my view as well.

HITLER: And this is where the Cavalry comes in.

FEGELEIN: They can be in action the day after tomorrow.

HITLER: What's the unit called?

FEGELEIN: It's the Cavalry Holding and Training Regiment. It's about fifteen hundred strong.

HITLER: That must be put under command of Schörner to block the roads in the rear.

GUDERIAN: The Staff College can cover the roads from Breslau to Glogau.

HITLER: And from Breslau eastwards we can do it with the cavalry regiment. It's fifteen hundred strong? ...

(b) *Naval Affairs* for the period 1 January to 18 April 1945. This is the best source of information on Hitler's briefing conferences. Matters concerning the war at sea are naturally in the forefront but in addition they give a mass of detail on other subjects such as: the war on land, economic and transport problems, movement of refugees from the east, tricky problems of organization involving the various higher headquarters and ambitious plans for the peace time future. Of particular interest are the following:

1. On 18 January C.-in-C. Navy offered to make available 3,000 men to form a marine infantry

regiment.
cally welcom
Hitler and
days and
the propos
three mari
were forme
Divisions, l
organizatio
forces of fe
given prefe
2. On 13 M
order that
ammunitio
should be r
3. An argu
throughout
over the nu
certain sect
Hitler had
pared on th

(c) On 5
Jodl's diary
with the de
formation o
On 10 April
in the diar
number of
which were
that day fro
the SS.

4. Jodl's diary
states that fr
the Replac
the military
Berlin had
120,000 pho
printer mess
messages.

5. See *Naval*
February 1
427 and Ja
524-5.

6. Reproduced
tives, p. 2
instructions
Weisungen, p

7. Issued by