

OFFICE OF US CHIEF OF COUNSEL  
APO 403

TO : Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan  
FROM : Dr. Jay V. Glebb  
SUBJECT: Statement by the five German Generals

27 Nov 45

The paper presently reviewed is a statement by five of the foremost German Generals: Brauchitsch, Manstein, Halder, Warlimont and Westphal. The 63 typewritten pages are divided into 6 chapters, lettered A-E, of which the 5 first chapters give in chronological requence a clear sketch of the development of the German Army from 1920-1945, while the sixth chapter, somewhat out of picture with the rest of the statement, treats of the activities of the High Command since 1942, a subject which could just as well be treated in the preceding 2 chapters. If a suggestion based on source analysis is not out of place here we might offer a guess that the sixth chapter was written by a person different from the one who wrote the first 5 chapters and that this chapter as a kind of a supplement was attached because it did not fit well with the rest of the statement.

The present manuscript follows in the main contents the previous statement by Gen. Halder. Almost the same criticisms which could be levelled against the single-handed attempt of Halder can be raised against the present statement signed by the five German Generals. Both of the papers are Apologias of the German Army more specifically of the German General Staff. But they are not Apologias in the sence that they try to defend the German Army, from accusations of crimes and transgressions against peace and humanity, but Apologias for the defeats of the Army. These German Generals are not apologetic for the misery they had caused all over the world. Instead, they are trying to explain why battles were lost because of Hitler's ignorance of strategy and tactics and how they could have been won if Hitler had listened to the advice of the generals.

The article is more conspicuous for what it lacks than for what it contains, namely, the lack of ethical basis. To these generals war, if succesful, would justify any means leading to the achievement of the aim. Characteristic in this respect is the refusal of Manstein in 1944 to join the Anti-Hitler conspiracy in the German General Staff because he had hoped that Germany could still win the war. Characteristic is also the note on the relation of the Army to the Party: "The national and social ideas of the NSDAP appealed undouptedly to many men of the Army. But the noisy

methods, the extreme antisemitism were considered repugnant"(p.7). It was not the methods of the NSDAP which were repugnant to the so-called gentleman of the Army, but it was the nonsense to which they took exception. It was not the antisemitism which they abhorred but the extreme methods employed by the Party. These German militarists could in cool blood issue the order to shoot 50 and 100 French hostages for the life of a single German but they abhorred the consequences which might result from sending 50 000 or 100 000 Poles or Russians or Jews to the furnaces of Majdanek or Oswiecim. It was not the crime that was offensive to them but the degree of the crime.

Although the article is divided for chronological reasons into 6 chapters a deeper analysis of its contents allows us to break it into 2 logical parts: The first part dealing with the history of the Army before Hitler and the second part dealing with the Army after Hitler took over the Reichschancellery in 1933. The aim of white-washing the Army from all responsibility for the rearmament, planning for war and war-leadership necessitated different treatments of the subject in the 2 respective parts. The general tenor of the 2 parts appears to be:

In the pre-Hitler period: Everything done by the Reichswehr was in strictest adherence to the limitations imposed by the Versailles Treaty.

In the post-Hitler period: Hitler alone was responsible for the planning of wars of aggression; the Army, trained as it was by v. Seeckt to be apolitical, could do nothing but obey orders.

That neither of these implied opinions is true is apparent to everybody who is even superficially acquainted with the history of the German Army after the First World War. It should suffice to discuss here briefly a few of the more conspicuous points. The generals would like us believe that in the Twenties Germany produced only wooden machine guns (p.1), built no new fortifications (pp.1f.), had no mobilization plans (pp.8f. and 21f. obvious contradiction!) and that in general the armament industry in Germany remained confined to the concerns permitted to manufacture under the Versailles Treaty (pp.1 and 9). An objective reading of v. Bock's story in connection with his activities inside the so-called "Black Reichswehr" is enough to prove the contrary. The Inter-Allied Control Commission far from being happy about the progress of German disarmament in 1925 (p.10) was able to prove hundreds of cases of transgressions by the German militarists.

The alleged apolitical aspect of the Army (pp.5 and 63) by which the generals are trying to explain the lack of interest manifested by the Army in the Nazi political machinations is belied by the active political participation of such Army leaders as Ludendorff, Hindenburg and Schleicher in the pre-Hitler period and of Fritsch, Brauchitsch and Keitel in the subsequent Hitlerian period.

It might be of course true that the Army in general looked with suspicion (rather jealousy) upon the abnormal growth of the semi-militaristic organization SA (p.16), but on the other side the Röhm Putsch, resulting in the death of Schleicher from the Army and of Röhm from the SA, proved conclusively that at least some circles in the Army had worked in conspiracy with the SA (see on this subject the opinion of the British Intelligence in the PID Handbook II p. 165).

That the Army was kept in complete ignorance of the number of concentrations camps and of the conditions in them (p.18) is a total impossibility. This is a screen behind which millions of Germans are trying now to justify their lack of opposition to the Hitler regime. In the case of the Army it is impossible to plead ignorance because the Army itself furnished frequently personnel to man the concentration camps.

The present article written by some members of the OKW as well as of the Army General Staff is attempting to absolve from responsibility the majority of the officers in both organizations (p.25), but it is interesting to note that in his own article Warlimont, an OKW man, placed the responsibility for the war-planning in the hands of the Army General Staff, while Halder, an Army General Staff man, in his previous article, placed all the responsibility upon the OKW.

It would be interesting to hear what the Russians would say concerning the statement: "As far as it is known Hitler's order (referring to the shooting of the Soviet commissars) has not been applied by the Army" (p.42).

How can one believe that the SD activities in the Zone of operations of the Eastern Front were unknown to the German Army Commanders? (p.45)

The responsibility of the Army for the mistreatment of partisans (pp.53f.), hostages (p.54) and commandos (p.54f.), for the destruction of installations and goods (p.55), recruiting of labor (p.56), and persecution of Jews (p.56) are greater than one might be led to believe from the innocent remarks of the generals. By mistake, but appropriately enough, the removal of population is discussed under the heading "Destructions"! (pp.55f.)

In finishing I'd like to make one more personal remark. I have studied long enough the Wehrmacht to see the tremendous differences in personalities between the Wehrmacht leaders and Nazi bigwigs. To me personally men like Brauchitsch or Rundstedt are relatively attractive when compared with beasts of the type of Himmler or Kaltenbrunner. But I am not blinded by this attraction to the fact that these Prussians had freely and willingly cooperated with Hitler in the plans to enslave the world. Therefore my severe criticism of the German Generals.

They should be punished not only for the crimes committed in the past but also to prevent them from bringing on us or our children a new world catastrophe in the future. If my memory serves me right, the Roman law expressed this idea in a sentence:

"Punitur non quia fecit, sed ne faciat."