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REPORT ON CHANGES IN THE GERMAN ARMY COMMAND.

Last week you asked me to get Sedgwick's opinion on the recent changes in the German Army High Command. Here it is. The report is well worth reading in its entirety, as evidence that Hitler now believes the war is lost and is moving towards "National Bolshevism" instead of "National Socialism".

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PART XV

December 17, 1942

OBSERVATIONS ON THE APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL KURT ZEITZLER TO
THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF

The appointment of General Kurt Zeitzler to the post of General Staff (Chef des Generalstabs) - a post formerly held by General Franz Halder - marks a turning point of World War II.

Zeitzler, being Gestapo Chief Himmler's protégé, as well as Himmler's representative of Hitler's headquarters, has thus at least temporarily displaced the last of aristocratic Junker tradition within the Army: for, Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the German High Command (Chef der Heeresleitung), is essentially bourgeois, and as kindly devoted to Hitler as a dog to his master.

Zeitzler's appointment constitutes not only a clear victory of Himmler over the quasi-aristocratic Goering-wing of the Party; it quite evidently represents an all-out, eleventh hour decision on Hitler's part to Nazify the Reichswehr root and branch, and to exclude, prophylactically as it were, any and all real and imaginative Juntas, sabotage-plots, intrigues, and separate peace-moves emanating from the German conservative opposition.

In this connection it must be remembered that Hitler is quite regularly shown, by certain members of his entourage, English, American, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese

and other newspaper-clippings that deal with underground-movements and all manner of Reichswehr machinations. It is an interesting fact that - while Hitler as a rule ignores, or pretends to ignore the voices of foreign newspapers - he has been known on sundry occasions to take drastic action on the basis of such clippings - especially when they were substantiated by repeated previous reports from the Gestapo to the same effect.

It will be recalled that the American Press for some months past has again been reflecting on the chances of an impending Reichswehr peace-move, headed by Generals von Bock, von Brauchitsch, Ritter von Leeb, and Guderian. These generals were reported to be secretly working toward a peace-agreement, to be arrived at through the sacrifice of Hitler and the Party.

Leaving aside the question of the relative advisability and justifiability of brooding about such highly delicate news-items, and leaving aside the question as to whether or not the chances for an auspicious Reichswehr-move of such a nature - provided such a plan existed at all - were nipped in the bud by being thus corroboratively brought to Hitler's attention, the probability almost amounting to a certainty remains, that Hitler, upon being handed respective clippings foretelling a Reichswehr coup d'état, finally became restive and precipitately

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decided on the appointment of Gestapo-pruned Kurt Zeitzler.

Every dictator has, it seems, his own peculiar assortment of night-mare-phantoms. In Hitler's case this chamber of Horror-Dreams, besides including delusive visions of various attempts on his life, contains the lurid tableau of a Reichswehr-Putsch.

Some years ago (ca. 1935) a prominent German living outside the Reich, produced a book which ended with a paragraph approximately as follows:

"...And then a morning will dawn, on which Germans will awaken to find that Germany has changed overnight. People will be crowding before placards bearing the announcements:

Germans!

Supreme power has been seized by the Reichswehr! Hitler and all Nazi leaders were arrested last night, and are behind lock and key. The N.S.D.A.P. has been dissolved by State-decree. The S.A. and S.S. formations, as well as all other military and semi-military organizations of the Hitler-Party have been disarmed...." etc. etc.

(Dr. S. has quoted this passage from memory.)

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While this passage furnishes the libretto, as it were, to Hitler's above-mentioned Reichswehr-Putsch-Tableau, it also reflects a certain wishdream-pattern, which (as early as 1934) could not infrequently be met with in oppositional circles of both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy.

Dr. Sedgwick remembers, for instance, a case when - it was in the fall of 1934 - a very patriotic, high-ranking officer confided to him a view which culminated with the projection of a sort of "Night of long Knives", in the course of which all the Gauleiters excepting of course the persons of Hitler and Goering and a few others were to be liquidated.¹ Dr. Sedgwick was tempted to consider this opinion at the time in the light of a temperamental outburst, and not as entirely representative of even the German conservative Junker - and officer-cast. There is, however, no doubt that this view, or rather sentiment about persons and things connected with the Hitler party and Hitler personally, has since then steadily waxed in scope and intensity. Reason enough for Hitler - who is usually quite well informed concerning such matters - to undertake the abrupt elevation of the Gauleiters from simple district Party-leaders to district Defense-Commissioners, with powers plenipotentiary over the military commanders. Refusal on the part of an army officer to recognize the supremacy of the Party would consequently constitute high-treason.

1. The battle cry of this Putsch was to be: "With Hitler against the Party-bosses." ("Mit Hitler gegen die Parteibonzen.")

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The year 1943 - the decennium of Hitler's assumption of power - is drawing near, and Hitler has probably felt in his soberer moments that this tenth year of his dictatorship might possibly be his last. Viewed from any point, Germany's and "New Europe's" interior condition must be regarded as exceedingly grave. Things have miscarried. Collaboration with France - the conditio sine qua non of a Nazi New Europe - has broken down. Matters will soon have reached a point, where Hitler will feel that he can no longer trust a single Frenchman - not even the most ardent collaborationist. Hitler realizes what this will mean, and with what menacing developments the year 1943 is fraught. In reality Hitler no longer has any choice - but having to choose, he has chosen Himmler as the ultima ratio. Himmler, and Himmler's Gestapo represent Hitler's final argument. Beyond Himmler there is nothing but "FATE" - and the last mad throw of the political desperado.

Himmler marks the final phase; very much as when physicians, having given up all reasonable hope for a patient, resort to the administration of camphor, Digitalis, Morphine... harbingers of an impending funeral. It can thus be asserted that Zeitzler is important as a political symptom, rather than a military personality. The name of Zeitzler will come to stand for ruthless Nazi-radicalism all along the line.

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In this connection Dr. Sedgwick remembers how, in 1923, Hitler (speaking of family names in general and his own name in particular) jokingly expressed the view that the name of a real national-socialist revolutionary should by rights begin with "H", and - most important of all - end with "er". To Dr. Sedgwick's surprise, Hitler mentioned quite a number of names such as SCHOENEKER, LUBER, DREXLER, STREICHER, BRUECKNER, ESSER, WEBER, FEDEH and POEHNER. "Names ending in "er" seem to have a certain masculine and aggressive snap which makes one understand, respect, and remember them better." Then, growing somewhat more serious, Hitler ended by saying: "Yes - if one comes to think of it, these family names ending in "er" have not at all done so badly: Luther, Duerer, Schiller, Bluecher, Wagner....quite some names in German History, you will agree."

In effect, the new Himmler - Zeitzler combination actually represents the institution of a gestapolitical double consulship, which, by its interposition between the central sun (Hitler) and the Nazi satellites, will not fail to cause the gradual eclipse of the latter. This temporary obscuration will also extend to the sphere of the formerly resplendent planet of the Reichsmarschall.

The fact is that for Goering and his more conservative, monarchistically-minded wing, things are beginning to assume an

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almost sombre aspect. Hitler has been obliged practically to surrend himself to Himmler and the Gestapo. Himmler thereby appears, for the time being, to have become the uncontested master of Hitler's antichamber. Himmler, not being a friend of Goering's, will doubtlessly be in a position effectively to reduce Goering's chances of seeing Hitler privately - in which design Himmler unquestionably will be enthusiastically aided by the plebeian Hitler entourage, all of which abominate the fat Reichsmarschall.

In the eyes of Hitler's inner circle (Ribbentrop excepted) Goering is just a reactionary, a miles gloriosus, who - being intrinsically of monarchistic tendencies, and thoroughly non-Braun-Haus-minded - remains a dangerous, anti-proletocratic factor for the future. They deprecate Goering especially in his capacity as Hitler's presumptive successor: for, most of this august company fear political, if not physical liquidation at the hands of "under Hermann" - should Hitler die. Goering, to their mind, is the type of the arch-praetorian, who (in case of Hitler's death) would not hesitate an instant to substitute if necessary the Reichswehr for the S.A. and S.S., and who might aspire (by cleverly using the suppressed, monarchistic clauses of von Hindenburg's Last Will) to the rôle of a regent à la Horthy.

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Goering has recently been reported as having visited Italy in connection with the establishment of improved precautionary methods against British and American air-raids. Goering, who travelled in an armoured train, was almost surely accompanied by his pet prince: viz. the Prince of Hesse, husband of Mafalda, and son-in-law to King Vittorio Emanuele. As this prince has for years been Goerings indispensable contact-man for the Italian Royal Family, it is almost certain that Goering saw the King, General Badoglio, and others - besides meeting Mussolini and the Cianos.

It is known that Goering, no less than the King of Italy (and to some extent Mussolini also) was against the mad scheme of von Ribbentrop, which culminated in the Polish Campaign of September, 1939. The logical sequence of this clearly permits the assumption that Goering and the King of Italy (at present) look at World War II with very much the same sceptical eyes. As a result they will both be regarded by the jusqu'au boutistes as representing the advocates of compromise, or even reactionary defeatism.

Beyond the Zeitzler appointment, and the significant Himmler-sponsored elevation of the Gauleiters to district Reichs-Defense-Commissars; beyond the advancement of Generals

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Jeschonnek and Galland, and beyond the appointment of Thierack as successor of the late Reichsminister of Justice, Guertner, (cf. Dr. Sedgwick's report No. VIII sub. Dr. Frank - pp. 1-6) there is another set of appointments which proves that Hitler, in clearing the deck for decisive action, is reducing Goering's sphere of influence.

Evidently Hitler has realized that his glamorously begun Blitzwar of September, 1939 is on the point of degenerating into a most stupid, possibly fatally stupid War of Attrition. The Blitzwar having proved a fiasco, and German towns experiencing the counterpart of what happened to Coventry, Hitler needs a scapegoat. The most promising provisional candidate for this rôle seems to be Hermann Goering.

As has been stated before, the Goebbels - led entourage of Hitler hate and fear Goering. For years Schaub, Brueckner, Heinrich Hoffmann, von Schirach, Bouhler, Bowmann, and Goebbels himself have been intriguing against the gaudy and opulent régime of the Reichsmarschall. Hitler has listened to this propaganda for years, without doing very much about it. Today, however, Hitler knows that the decisive round has come for the Third Reich. All is staked on one card, and he can no longer take chances. Hitler has consequently removed all doubtful factors, and in doing so has promoted some of his most intimate associates and Round-table-members to the posts of war-ministers. They are: Doctor Brand, Professor Albert Speer, and Director Jacob Werlin.

SS LEADER BRAND: Since 1932 physician in ordinary to Herr Hitler. In 1932 Brand saved Brueckner's leg, if not his life. Brand is completely devoted to Hitler. As a type, Brand is the personification of courtesy and tact. Talks little - has no opinions. Brand's wife - a nice, quiet lady - used to hold (in 1930 or so) the German championship for swimming over 300 meters. Brand's appointment as health dictator and final authority on all medical matters cuts across the path of Goering. Normally, the logical man for this post would have been Goering's Dr. Leonardo Conti, who was in charge of medical Party matters in 1933 ff. Dr. Conti has been Goering's physician and protégé since 1932.

ALBERT SPEER: former assistant architect of the late Professor Troost of Munich. Urbane, mild-mannered, and self-effacing, he is completely devoted to Hitler. Successor to the late Fritz Todt, the "road-builder of the Third Reich." (Autobahnen etc.) - Speer's appointment as Minister of Productions and Armaments is an unmistakeable snub for Goering, who as will be remembered - was proclaimed by Hitler Czar of all German War Production in September 1939. Speer's ministry must be considered a blind - devised for the purpose of concealing from the public (and Goering) the fact that Hitler himself has taken charge of a department legitimately belonging to Goering's sphere.

JAKOB WERLIN: Werlin, years ago, was the Munich Representative of Daimler-Mercedes Motoren A.G. Werlin, silent, smiling, suave, and epicurean, used to see a lot of Hitler, who often visited his show-rooms at the Lenbachplatz in Munich. In 1929, Hitler began to buy Mercedes cars - one after the other - for himself, and for the Party. Subsequently, Werlin approached Goering in Berlin with a view to selling him Mercedes cars also. Goering, however, would not warm to Werlin's offers. Goering eventually decided in favor of the Dresden firm of Horch. The reason was simple: Goering got his car for practically nothing. Today Hitler's automobile advisor of the early days has become German Reichs-Transport-Chief, and Inspector of the entire German Motor Industry. It should not be difficult to imagine how Goering feels about Werlin - and how Werlin feels about Goering.

"GAMBETTA HYPOTHESIS"

What is in Hitler's mind: Does his nullification of the Reichswehr - does his program of nazifying the Reichswehr by the Gestapo - combination Zeitzler-Himmler imply that he has realized that this World War II is gradually developing into kind of World Civil War? Wherein the use of politically trained armies such as the S.A. and S.S. would be more effective, and consequently more important for the maintenance of the Nazi

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Party State and its ambitions. Is Hitler preparing himself to play the rôle of a second Gambetta? If that should be the case, it will be good to keep in mind what Hitler said to Dr. Sedgwick in the spring of 1923, concerning guerilla-warfare and Gambetta, and the necessity of possibly sacrificing one third of the entire population of Germany. (cf Dr. Sedgwick's Report No. XIV pp. 6-12).