

The field gray colossus



Keitel (r.) is indispensable to Hitler

The first in a series of four articles which present an enlightening view of the strength and weaknesses of the German army in personnel and materiel begins here with an introduction to the two men—one is more Hitler's right hand than Goering—who represent the high command.

• • • The German army is the greatest business enterprise in the world. It has a million employees on its payrolls—the active officers and soldiers—and, at a conservative estimate, feeds another ten million workers in the munitions industry. Actually the army employs all of Germany. Military needs alone determine the way of life in the besieged fortress into which 80 million Germans have more or less willingly formed themselves.

The yearly turnover of the gigantic combine is unknown. Germany is the only country which does not publish its defense expenditures.

The only thing certain is that the combine must collapse the moment it can no longer expand, just as the inflation empire of the German millionaire manipulator Hugo Stinnes and the match king Ivar Kreuger's house of cards collapsed when they had reached the limit of their expansibility.

For Germany's "war economy," international armament reduction would be the final catastrophe. The army must be preserved as a market. It must keep on growing day by day.

Are the Generals Backing Up Hitler's Policy?

Hitler has conquered his own army by his open-handedness. The troops know that they can never be so well off as under the present regime.

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They need no longer fight to win. Conservative generals have submitted or been cast aside.

Hitler's generals today are glad that they need no longer bother with politics. The German army does not preach war, does not warn of the need of peace. At command it marches, at command it halts. At command it clicks two million heels. Its temperature is permanently at the freezing point. The day after the Munich Pact, a high general, asked his opinion of the future, said: "I don't know. I haven't seen the papers."

What Happened to the Reichswehr's

The German army seems more like a dynamo than like a creation of human brains, nerves and ambitions. All the same, it is the personal achievement of three men. Generals von Seeckt, von Schleicher, and von Fritsch built up, in addition to the force of 100,000 allowed by Versailles, the illegal "Black Reichswehr," which was benevolently winked at by the Republic, and whose continuation and development now form Hitler's nation in arms.

Once he was in power, the Fuehrer tolerated no other gods but himself. For the creators of the army he had no use. Generaloberst Hans von Seeckt was shoved off to China, and died soon after. Kurt von Schleicher was shot June 30, 1934, by Goering's personal agents. Generaloberst von Fritsch fell from favor with the Fuehrer at the last German maneuvers carried out for Mussolini.

He remarked to the guest of honor, "In case of trouble, of course, I and I alone command the Germany army." Hitler and Goering were standing close by when the remark was made, and they smiled amiably—never a good sign. On February 4, 1938, Mr. von Fritsch was discharged. Although in the meantime he had been made a *Regimentsinhaber*—an honor hitherto reserved for foreign monarchs and victorious generals—he is absolutely on the shelf. Now Hitler and Hitler alone is in command.

Is Hitler a Strategic Genius?

Adolf Hitler is still a couple of steps short of Napoleonhood. The fact that he could not rise above the rank of corporal

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in four years of World War justifies some doubts of his military ability. He does love to use military expressions in conversation, and is fond of showing off his sometimes astonishing knowledge of technical details. His special pet is the navy, and not exclusively his own. He is particularly proud of knowing by heart the name of every unit in the American navy. But he still can never help seeming like a movie fan parading his familiarity with inside Hollywood.

And he will never forget the days of his political start as an underpaid stool-pigeon of the Reichswehr command in Munich. He learned then that a sergeant is a higher being. If today he bellows without restraint at top-ranking generals, he has many bitter memories to pay off.

Nevertheless he is timidly careful not to interfere in those generals' work. He wants to own the army, but he will never try to command it.

Who Will Be the Hindenburg of the Next War?

Germany is the only country in the world with no minister of war. Hitler is afraid of personal competition, so the command of the army is divided. There is a "Supreme Commander of the Army," and a "Chief of the Supreme Command of the Defense Forces." The latter is Generaloberst Wilhelm Keitel; the former, Generaloberst Walter von Brauchitsch.

This Herr von Brauchitsch will be the Hindenburg of the next war — not the master mind, but the front man of the German army.

He is 56 years old, and recently married. He comes from East Prussia, the domain of conservatism. Eastern Germany, patrician, always a step behind, with the hereditary landed property that rules it and the deep-rooted misery that populates it, corresponds in the Reich more or less to the South in America.

It is Brauchitsch's personal job to unite the tradition of the old army with the spirit of Nazism. He does this by sending a respectful birthday telegram every year to Wilhelm II, the hermit of Doorn, but taking extreme pains that the message never gets published.

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In looks he is the typical Prussian aristocrat—tall, lean, smooth-shaven, with countless little wrinkles recording the smiling experiences of a pleasantly active life. The gentlemen officers are still more or less among social equals so long as His Excellency von Brauchitsch is at least nominally their head. He seldom appears in company with the Fuehrer.

What Is the Secret of the "Sphinx," Keitel?

On the other hand, there is never an event in Hitler's neighborhood which Generaloberst Keitel does not take part in. Whether Schuschnigg was visiting Berchtesgaden, or Chamberlain, Godesberg, he was always in the next room.

The Fuehrer wanted to display to the last Austrian Chancellor the absolute dependability of his army. "Keitel! Keitel! Keitel!" roared Hitler in a voice your lowest servant would not answer to. But the Chief of the Supreme Command of the German Defense Forces was instantly on the spot. Stiffly he clicked his heels. "At your service, my Fuehrer." Such servility had never been the custom among German officers. Why does Keitel overdo it?

Judgments on the General differ. The only subject of agreement is that he looks absolutely inconspicuous. He is a bourgeois type. He is not tall and not short, not thin and not fat. His face is neither exciting nor unpleasant. He is correct.

His slightly gray hair is correctly parted on the side. His small mustache is correctly trimmed. The upright wrinkles between his light-colored eyes rise in correct gravity. He wears his uniform not as a costume but as an ordinary business suit.

Is Mr. Keitel disguised nevertheless? Are mysterious plans and hopes hidden behind the mask of the honest citizen? In the army they call him the "Sphinx."

The rumor persists that by his exaggerated paladin devotion he wants to earn his place in the empty space in Adolf Hitler's will—the space where the Fuehrer will write the name of his successor, the next head of the German state. At any rate Mr. Keitel has succeeded in holding the place at Hitler's right hand on every solemn occasion. Not even the ubiquitous

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Goering has been nearly so indispensable of late. ● —*René Kraus*

NEXT WEEK: Why Hermann Goering, for all his titles, offices and dignities—more, probably, than any other man on earth—is the most deeply disappointed man in Germany, denied the two things he wants most passionately . . . Of the private opinion of him held among other German generals . . . The story of Goering's Jewish master-mind—the definitely non-Aryan Mr. Milch who helped the now No. 2 Nazi in pre-Nazi days in Germany, which favors Goering, strangely enough, never forgot—and of the present mutually advantageous accord between them . . . Intimate personality profiles of the members of the gang that makes the world tremble. A strange crew, they are, one of whom is called "General Death" by his own men; another alone holds secret in his head the precise moves to be made by the German air force in the first days of the next war . . . A cold, factual discussion of the exact seriousness of this air menace and of Germany's own air vulnerability . . . To what extent the Anglo-German naval agreement has affected Britannia's rule of the waves . . . and of what may be expected when this agreement terminates . . . Comparison of the two navies in quantity and quality, personnel and materiel.