

# Collier's

January 27, 1945

## HITLER'S FINAL V WEAPON

By Major Erwin Lessner

AUTHOR OF PHANTOM VICTORY

Hostilities inside Germany will not end with defeat of the German army. The Nazis intend to terrorize their countrymen and harass their conquerors with guerrilla forces. This forecast tells how they may be expected to operate, and makes a conservative estimate of their chances of success



These elite SS troops are among the types chosen for the guerrilla army. Only men under 28, completely loyal and in perfect physical condition, are accepted

**O**N OCTOBER 4, 1944, Doctor Josef Goebbels shouted: "The enemy (invading German territory) will be taken in the rear by the fanatical population, which will ceaselessly worry him, tie down strong forces and allow him no rest or exploitation of any possible success."

On the same day, Das Schwarze Korps, mouthpiece of the Elite Guard, gave even more gruesome details: "The Allied soldiers shall find no peace. Death will lurk behind every corner. They might establish a civilian administration, but its leaders would not live a month. Nobody could execute the enemy's orders without digging his own grave. No judge could pronounce sentences dictated by the enemy without being crucified in his own window frame in the dead of night."

These stories are undoubtedly intended to intimidate the Allies into some sort of "negotiated victory" and to frighten Germans who might be disposed to co-operate with the invaders. However, they cannot be lightly dismissed as just another of Goebbels' inventions. The Berlin propaganda minister has managed to develop the only genuine German supertype—superliar—who blends whopping falsehoods with a smattering of truth, until no one can possibly tell which is which.

Information from inside Germany reaches the outer world only in small and incoherent bits to be put together with the help of logic, experience and guesswork. All the signs indicate that the Germans are preparing for intensive guerrilla warfare. Piecing the fragments together, this is how it is likely to work out:

Someday—the exact date is anybody's guess—the Wehrmacht's resistance will suddenly come to an end, without a formal surrender or even a request for an armistice. The Allied armies, advancing rapidly through Germany, will find only a few German soldiers, apparently on their way home. The civilian population will be sullen and uncommunicative—as it already is in the border regions—but there will be hardly any active hostility.

Then, all of a sudden, a guerrilla blitz will strike. On the German guerrilla D-Day, hundreds of raiding parties will strike Allied communications, stores, resting troops and ground installations, trying to inflict as much damage and as many casualties as possible. The raiders will hit and run with lightning speed before the occupying troops can recover from the initial shock. The first blow will be followed by rapid attacks at many points, designed to disrupt defensive measures.

OldMagazineArticles.com



## Hitler's Final V Weapon



Somewhere behind the picture-postcard quaintness of Aussee in the Austrian Alps, thousands of Nazi youths and soldiers are training for guerrilla warfare.

The German guerrillas will be tough, well-trained and well-equipped youngsters. Each man will carry a light automatic weapon, and each platoon will be supplied with heavy machine guns, small mine throwers and a light anti-aircraft cannon. They will ride light motorcycles with a 15-cubic-inch two-cycle engine, while the larger weapons will be carried on heavier motorcycles of the well-known BMW model.

### Nazi Underground Doomed to Collapse

If the Allies are really caught napping, this guerrilla warfare could become a major headache for some weeks, perhaps for a couple of months, but no longer. No matter how well planned and prepared, the Nazi underground warfare has two basic weaknesses which will cause it to collapse. First, the German guerrillas will not have the hope which kept the undergrounds in Nazi-occupied territories fighting: liberation by the victorious Allied armies. Second, the German movement will be organized by highly antagonistic groups, pursuing different objectives and essentially eager to betray one another.

Guerrilla warfare will be prepared by both the army and the Nazi Party. The army, however, will let the Nazis have all the credit for it and will remain backstage, pulling wires. Himmler himself will not take the lead, either. The Gestapo chief prefers to wait and see what happens from a safe hiding place, provided he can find one. Everything we know indicates that the supreme guerrilla commander will be Elite Guard General Ernst Kaltenbrunner, successor to the late Heydrich the Hangman, of Lidice memory.

Kaltenbrunner's friends nicknamed him "the gorilla." He is about six feet two inches tall, heavily built, apelike, hairy, with over-long arms and clumsy hands. Only ten years ago, Kaltenbrunner, a native of Austria, then hardly thirty years of age, started out as a Nazi terrorist and did so well that he gained Himmler's favor and Hitler's attention.

Despite his exalted rank, General Kaltenbrunner never served in the army, never attended military school and had no basic military training even in the SS. The general never had any regular civilian trade, either, but he is said to have outstanding talents as an organizer. The first big coup which was to determine his career came in 1934 when, as leader of a small Nazi band, he supervised the blowing up of the Moll Bridge in Carinthia, southern Austria. This makeshift action was largely made possible by the complicity of some troopers. The rank-and-file bandits escaped on motorcycles to their unpeaceful homes, while their leader drove on to Germany in search of bigger opportunities, which he soon found.

As early as 1936, Kaltenbrunner urged a plan to have Nazi agents organize armed bands all over Europe to create a permanent state of civil war, thus undermining the future victims of German aggression.

The army objected that this was too dangerous before Germany was fully re-armed, and the plan was not carried out. Later, after Stalingrad, Kaltenbrunner pushed the idea of guerrilla war if Germany should be invaded. The army did not relish this scheme, either. The generals preferred to present the victors with some new version of a "good Germany" after defeat and put all the blame on Hitler and his followers. They hoped thereby to salvage the Reich as their predecessors did in 1919, thus paving the way for yet another comeback and another war.

A compromise was reached between the





## Hitler's Final V Weapon

army and the Nazi Party. The generals were then split into two camps. One advocated immediate negotiations with the Soviets through the Seydlitz committee in Moscow.

The other favored a prolonged war, hoping it would enable them eventually to tire or trick the Western Allies into some sort of deal. The anti-Moscow generals lined up with Himmler, who, it is believed, personally engineered the "attempted assassination" of Hitler and the subsequent purge, apparently wiping out most of those who wanted to dicker with Russia.

The Gestapo chief charged his price. It was all-out collaboration between the Nazis and the generals for better or for worse—a fight to the bitter end, including guerrilla warfare.

### Calling All Supermen

By the end of July, 1944, a German secondary General Headquarters was set up at Aussee, in the Austrian Alps, about sixty miles from Berchtesgaden. More than 1,000 junior officers from both the army and the Elite Guard went into a training camp near Aussee. Thousands of selected soldiers and Nazi youths joined the officers. Only men under twenty-eight in perfect physical condition were eligible.

The army personnel was selected by General Wilhelm von Vorstell, head of the "psychological laboratory" of the German war ministry. After elaborate checking of the candidates' records, those found acceptable had to undergo three tests: of expression, of morale, of action. This was called the "supreme leaders' test." Only officers and men were admitted who proved themselves to be completely loyal, very alert mentally and able to formulate commands or suggestions in a minimum of time and words. They were sworn in with a new addition to their soldier's oath. The old oath pledges loyalty and obedience to the Fuehrer; the new one adds allegiance to all superiors.

The Nazis picked their future guerrillas from reliable SS members, volunteers and worthy Party comrades, as well as a newly bred Nazi Elite, the students of the Adolf Hitler schools, leader schools and the notorious Ordensburgen.

These institutions used to graduate approximately 25,000 pupils a year. Three thousand of them came from the Ordensburgen, the alumni of which are uncompromising Nazi fanatics and are to become either the leaders of guerrilla groups or political commissars in formations led by army officers.

The volunteers are mostly drawn from elements who, after years of warfare, cannot think in terms of a peaceful existence. Their background fits them only for criminal careers. Others are desperate people who have already committed crimes for which they cannot hope to escape punishment. But, as the Schwarze Korps emphasized, no judge is supposed to be able to pronounce sentence against them.

Some Nazi sources, obviously hoping to intimidate the Allies, claim that the future guerrilla army comprises no less than 200,000 men. This is undoubtedly a wild exaggeration. Probably far less than half that number will be available after the collapse of the Wehrmacht.

The guerrilla officers attend lectures on *Weltanschauung*—world perception—given by a civilian official of the War Ministry, *Regierungsrat* Kayser. The enlisted men's moral training, less complicated and mostly confined to the praise of obedience and self-sacrifice, is supervised by SS Lieutenant General Johst, president of the German poets' academy.

Aussee has a great deal of rain and snow and is surrounded by mountains up to 10,-



## **Hitler's Final V Weapon**

000 feet. The trainees have abundant opportunities to get used to outdoor life under unfavorable climatic conditions. The physical-training program is influenced by what the Germans have learned from the methods used to train American Rangers and British Commandos.

The Germans are well prepared to study and to copy what others have done. As early as June, 1941, a commission was set up to investigate the tactics of European underground fighters. General Dankelmann, after suffering serious setbacks in the Balkans, insisted that the army should study guerrilla techniques in order to defeat them. The Gestapo studied them, too, for later imitation.

Huge German files tell the story of the Yugoslav Chetniks and Partisans, the Russian Partisans, the Greek EAM-ELAS, the French Maquis and the indomitable Norwegian underground. Himmler insisted that the task of breaking their resistance should be entrusted to his men. There is some evidence that the Gestapo deliberately delayed action against hostile underground movements in order to learn more about their ways. The head of the Gestapo anti-underground department was Kaltenbrunner, now commander in chief at Aussee.

The weakest aspect of enemy underground tactics, according to the Germans, was the slow, gradual deployment of their forces. The Nazi aim is to step up the pace by using the blitz technique. Guerrilla communication methods, as far as they know about them, were too slow. Carrier pigeons won't do in Germany. There must be a complete system of radio transmission.

Feuds between guerrilla bands, such as developed in the Balkans, are not to be permitted in Germany. There will be a central command, not in Aussee, but somewhere in the Bavarian mountains, or possibly—and the guess cannot be lightly dismissed—in neutral territory. German guerrillas will not intermittently return to normal life but will stay in their hiding places between actions. Kaltenbrunner is afraid that otherwise there would be many deserters.

### **How the Guerrillas Will Work**

The guerrillas will operate in small units, never more than a company's strength, mostly in platoons. The organization of the battle groups follows the lines of the German army's motorcycle rifle battalions, which are hit-and-run formations. German officers are familiar with the Norse underground procedure of getting the necessary fuel for their motorboats from the tanks of Nazi cars. Guerrilla riflemen are taught how to steal gas from jeeps. The motorcycle models were chosen from experience gathered in Russia.

Failure to pass any one of the tests at Aussee disqualifies the student for graduation, and he is returned to his old outfit. Successful graduates are shipped to future hiding places to help organize huge supply depots to be established in at least one hundred main centers, each of which in turn must supply minor depots. Every group is to have its own stores.

Northern Germany is not a rugged country. Since there are few natural hiding places available, landowners are to provide suitable shelter. Not only the Junkers east of the Elbe but also the landed gentry and ordinary peasants west of that river will offer the guerrillas their help.

It is not quite clear how the punishment of Germans who collaborate with the Allies is supposed to be meted out. Possibly special agents of Himmler's police will be as-



## **Hitler's Final V Weapon**

signed to this task, and their hiding places will be the guerrilla shelters. However, it is doubtful that these "avengers" will be as efficient as the SS magazine predicts.

Preparations are to be completed early this year. The guerrilla army will be at its battle stations. Then its D-Day will be fixed. The basis for the Nazi hopes can be outlined as follows:

People in the Allied countries, already disappointed by the long duration of the war, will press their governments to drop the "unconditional surrender" formula when confronted by savage guerrilla war.

Allied military commanders, faced with the difficulty of establishing any kind of civilian administration—because of the guerrilla threat—will join the appeasers.

Public sympathy in Allied countries might even side with the "suffering and heroic Germans," who themselves will know no peace while the guerrilla terror dominates their lives.

The generals, still according to the Nazi theory, after co-operating in organizing the underground, will be unable to make a separate deal with the Allies.

That is where the Nazis are making a big mistake. The German generals will have opportunity to desert the Nazis. They have eventually betrayed all of their partners: Kaiser Wilhelm, Noske, Ebert and even their own kin, Schleicher.

The generals are thinking of another deal. They are preparing to offer the Allies the support of "elements of order" in Germany to cope with the guerrilla war when the time comes. They can call upon army officers to disband the guerrilla groups they lead and give away the location of depots and hiding places controlled by Nazi-appointed commanders.

The generals figure that the Allies will be inclined to accept such gracious co-operation in ending the guerrilla nuisance and will grant the military clique a general pardon in exchange. That would fit perfectly with the long-range plans of the militarist chiefs to salvage their institutions and prepare for a future war of revenge.

### **Nazi Fanatics versus Realists**

Because of their mixed nature, the guerrillas are bound to be split among themselves. The Nazi fanatics, still building air castles of a Hitler-dominated world, will clash with the realists who want only to save their own skins and make an indecent living. Army elements will soon be fighting SS troopers, each blaming the other for everything that goes wrong.

Besides, the German population will hate the guerrillas. They realize that this war is lost for good. The average German expects peace to follow defeat. According to experience, defeated leaders have to go, and civilian Germans might be ready to assist Allied troops in locating and smoking out guerrilla strongholds.

No reinforcements will reach Kaltenbrunner's bands. Mutual distrust between civilians and guerrillas will prevent the latter from accepting recruits; it will also prevent volunteers from joining the fighters.

The disintegration of the German guerrilla army is inevitable. There is certainly no reason to bargain with the Germans for aid of any kind. Most new German weapons and tactics are frightening at the outset, but they become ineffective when they meet determined opposition.

Guerrilla war is to be another German V weapon. According to the German official



## **Hitler's Final V Weapon**

version, this means *Vergeltung* (retaliation), which is decidedly short of victory. There will probably be more V weapons when guerilla warfare fails—an attempt to fool the victors with a magnanimous offer of German co-operation—and a new and humble movement of “good Germans,” formed according to the advice of the psychological laboratory. There might be even more to come after that. The Germans realize fully, as the Allies must certainly learn to realize, that anything short of total victory in this war will be followed by total Allied defeat in the subsequent peace.

THE END

# **Collier's**

OldMagazineArticles.com