PART III

THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF

THE COMMITTEE IN TOTALITARIAN STATES
CHAPTER VI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTITUTION
BY HITLER IN FASCIST GERMANY

THE DEFENCE MECHANISM UNDER HITLER AND
THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION:

The history of the conduct of defence in
Germany after the rise to power of Hitler, is one
of increasing centralisation of all control
over the armed forces in the hands of Hitler him-
self, and of the Reich Cabinet, which rapidly
became an organisation drawn exclusively from
high party members or officials. In 1933 when
Hitler came to power by his successful coup d'état,
he took upon himself the authority hitherto wielded
by the Minister of War, Chief of Staff and Supreme
Commander. The Ministry of War was completely
reorganised and a new supreme coordinating agency
known as the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht was set up
along with the executive commands of the Army, Navy
and Air Force.

The Reich Cabinet was invested not only with
the full executive powers of government, but also
exercised unrestricted legislative functions. By
1937, the Cabinet consisted only of men who were
members of the party, often holding equivalent
positions in the party hierarchy, and they became
the means of translating the objectives of the
party into legislative and administrative acts
which were binding on the people as a whole.

As time went on, the ordinary Cabinet, which
was of unduly large size, numbering 48 in January 1933,
The first of these unique institutions combining executive and legislative functions was, in point of time and importance, the Reich Defence Council, set up by the Cabinet in April 1933 to co-ordinate and direct all matters of defence. This Council included the Ministers of War and of Air (the Minister of Air also being Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force), and the Commanders-in-Chief of the Army and Navy. These Commanders-in-Chief were the only members of this body who were not also members of the ordinary Cabinet but who took part in the Council's meetings, being given formal ministerial rank in 1938.

In 1938 the office of Minister of War was abolished and Hitler personally took over command of all the armed forces and assumed the responsibility which formally attached to the Minister of War. At the same time, the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (O.K.W.) was set up as the supreme directing staff, to plan and co-ordinate the three Services, and to act as a form of personal staff to Hitler as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Henceforward the Chief of the O.K.W. also entered the Cabinet and the Reich Defence Council with the rank of Reich Minister.

The Reich Defence Council, which included both party officials and some half a dozen Ministers, was superseded in August 1939 by the Ministerial Council for the Defence of the Reich, a smaller body designed to conduct the war. The affairs of the Reich Defence Council had been largely carried on by a Working Committee, known as the Reich Defence Committee. To streamline this ...
this Committee, all Ministries, except those of Air and Propaganda, had been placed into three groups, headed by the Plenipotentiaries of Economic Affairs and of Reich Administration and the Chief of the O.K.W. This "Three-Men-College", as it was known, was the basis of the new Ministerial Council for the Defence of the Reich. The chart giving details of (1) the Reich Defence Council; (2) the Defence Committee; as well as (3) the Ministerial Council for the Defence of the Reich, appended below, illustrates the organisation of a Government machine dominated by one party which in power had destroyed all opposition.
The Ministerial Council was put under the chairmanship of Goering, the Minister of Air, and included, in addition to the "Three-Man-College", the Fuhrer's Deputy and the Chief of the Reich Chancellory. This body remained the highest legislative and executive organ of the State, next to the Fuhrer, till the end of the war, though its powers decreased as Hitler's personal intervention in the conduct of war grew more insistent.

THE GROWTH OF THE GENERAL STAFF:

Until 1918, the Great General Staff, as it was known, was only indirectly connected with the War Ministry. The General Staff had its representatives on all staffs down to a division level, and these representatives could, and did, appeal to the Chief of Staff in case of any disagreement between them and the commanders in the field, even over tactical matters. The Chief of Staff would often overrule the generals and back the General Staff Officer. Under Hitler, however, the General Staff was made directly subordinate to the War Ministry. Hitler's contribution to the German Defence machine was the organisation of the O.K.W. which was not only the expansion of the Chiefs of Staff idea in respect of integration and coordination of the three Services but also its culmination in so far as a permanent body of planners, divorced from execution of plans, was created.

THE GERMAN ...
THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND:

In actual effect the German High Command was divided into four parts -

(1) The integrated Armed Forces High Command under the OKW, at its head, by virtue of his office as Supreme Armed Forces Cinc of the Armed Forces under the OKW, was the Führer and Reichskanzler. Its professional head was Keitel, Chief of Combined Operations.

(2) The Army High Command under Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH)

(3) The Naval High Command under Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine (OKM)

(4) The Air Force Command under Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (OKL)

Though we are concerned here with the OKW only which had the concept of Chief of Staff Committee contained in it, the OKH, OKM, and OKL are briefly mentioned below in so far as their relationship with OKW brought their General Staff organisations into prominence.

(1) THE OBERKOMMANDO DER WEHRMACHT (O.K.W.)

In 1938 the Wehrmacht office of the Reich War Ministry was made the chief authority for the Wehrmacht, with the title of Supreme Armed Forces Command (O.K.W.). Hitler personally assumed supreme power over all forces and the OKW came under his direct supervision and influence. There was thus formed a body to control all political and administrative matters common to the three Services, and to deal with all issues on the borderline of politics and strategy.

The basic principle which governed the German military system was unity of command. This principle was exemplified in the highest as well as the lowest echelons. Under this system, the Army ...
Army, Navy and Air Force were regarded as branches of a single Service 'der Wehrmacht' headed by the Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht or OKW). The OKW was made responsible for national defence which was conceived as a single subject and, therefore, not only all matters of inter-Service policy in both peace and war but also the economic aspect of war was controlled by it. This special coordinating organ was designed to eradicate the weaknesses in the pre-Hitler Higher Command organisation which had contributed to the German defeat in 1918. In addition to the coordination of overall strategy, the OKW was also charged with the responsibility for military supply and total mobilisation. It acted as a supreme administrative agency and in this respect performed the function of the Ministry of War dealing with the bulk of administrative tasks including subjects like psychological warfare and military research. The chart given below indicates in broad headlines the main functions performed by OKW:

FUNCTIONAL ...
FUNCTIONAL CHART OF OKW

As Super-

Ministry of

General

Defence functions

Staff

(integrating

the three

Services

(Wehrmachtstab)

Transport

Agri-

port

culture

Industrial

production.

Military

Supplies

General

Mobilis-

ation.

OKH OKH OKL

(As for OKH)

Regional

Regional

Officers

Officers

General

Command

Training

Staff

directing production.

Factory Officers

and Research

It was, therefore, with the assistance of the supreme organisation of OKW that Hitler was able to coordinate the political, diplomatic and military direction of the war effort and his Chief of Staff, Keitel, controlled the entire military machinery administratively, strategically and economically. It is essential to mention that the three Services and their staff organisations came under the OKW.

As the OKW was responsible for the direction and coordination of the entire German war effort, it had under it (i) Joint Planning; (ii) Joint Intelligence; and (iii) Coordination of Production, Supply and Manpower. All matters of detail apart from over-all inter-Service policy...
policy were left to the staffs of the three Services. Thus in theory strategic planning was removed from the sphere of the Oberkommando des Heeres (OKH) (the old Army General Staff) and handed over to OKW. The Army General Staff thus became responsible for working out exclusively the Army's part in an operation assigned to it. The important Sections and Branches of the organisation of the OKW under Hitler and Keitel are best illustrated by the organisational chart which is given as Appendix "A" to this chapter.

The most important of the offices of the OKW was THE ARMED FORCES OPERATIONS STAFF which constituted the main advisory body of Hitler on strategy and planning. It was located at the Field HQ of the OKW which was known as the Führerhauptquartier. It was a Joint General Staff consisting of officers from all the three Services. It was responsible for planning and execution of military operations. It included a Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff under whom there were several Sections concerning Operations, Organisation, Intelligence and Supply. These Sections included officers representing the three Services which indicates the realisation of the inter-Service aspect of modern warfare. The Intelligence Section under the OKW embodied elements of the former Intelligence Branch and other operational portions of the old Foreign and Counter-Intelligence Office which was a great legacy of the past.

/(2) OBERKOMMANDO DES HEERES..
(2) OBERVERKOMmando DES HERRENS (O.K.H.)
AND GENERAL STAFF - THE ARMY:

The OKH was the War Office and at its head, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, was the Führer and Reichskanzler. A vast organisation came under it and to indicate what comprised it, the chart given at Appendix 13 to this chapter will be found interesting and instructive. As the army was by far the largest and most important of the three branches of the German Armed Forces, it was, from the outset of the war, the branch which Hitler was most anxious to control directly. In December 1941, after the failure of the Moscow offensive, Hitler removed Brauchitsch as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and took over personal command himself. As he continued to exercise command over the army ever since, it resulted in a partial merging or overlapping of the functions of the OKW and the OKH. The OKW was the Super General Staff whereas the OKH provided the Army General Staff.

Thus, while Keitel was the Chief of OKW, he also acted as Hitler's executive officer in matters pertaining to the army. Similarly, on account of the dominating personality of Hitler which craved for centralisation, it was found difficult to draw a line between the de facto authority and functions of the Army General Staff and those of the Armed Forces Operational Staff located in OKW. Any move to increase the importance of the OKW was resented by the OKH.

The latter ...
The latter regarded itself as the heir to the Great General Staff and was consequently unwilling to surrender pre-eminence in military matters to a political chief and his staff. For a while, the outcome was in doubt and OKH remained in control of strategy under the broad direction of Hitler, who nevertheless often exercised his power as Commander-in-Chief to dismiss Generals who displeased him.

The campaigns in Poland, in Western Europe, in the Balkans and the first part of the Russian campaign were conducted in the main by OKW with no more than political and very broad strategic directions from Hitler. In 1941, however, Hitler himself assumed the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and in 1942 he appointed as Chief of OKH General Zeitzler, who was a devout follower of the Führer. From this time onward there was an increasing domination of OKH. Hitler decided that the OKH should be responsible only for the Russian front, and OKW for all other theatres exclusively. This division of responsibility proved a grave defect, since there was no independent body to co-ordinate the requirements of the various fronts, with the exception of the erratic personal direction of Hitler. The Führer's interference grew steadily until, towards the end of the war, even local commanders were often paralysed by his sudden incursions into the field of tactics which stultified the normal chains of command. Thus Hitler had evolved a system which was not only dominated by him but was also ...
was also completely dependent on him and his ability to harmonise the conflicting claims of the three Services. It acted well as long as he held the even balance but in the later stages when he erred, and to err is human, the machinery began to crack.

We are interested here in the evolution of the concept of Chiefs of Staff and need only broadly describe here the organisation of the Army General Staff under the O.K.H.

The Army General Staff basically consisted of 12 branches which covered all the staff and planning functions grouped under five senior officers known as 'oberquartiermeister'. In wartime a number of additional high ranking officers were appointed as Chief Advisers in the various branches of the Service in the field. By far the most important of them was the Chief Supply and Administration Officer who was known as "General Quartermaster", responsible for the entire supply and administrative structure of the field army. Again, there were five Senior General Staff officers and each one of them had about six branches to deal with. For example, the first senior General Staff officer dealt with topography, manoeuvres and operational planning whereas the second senior General Staff Officer was responsible for training within the theatre of operations. The third senior General Staff officer dealt with technical services and the fourth with the Intelligence Branch.
The Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Chief of the Army General Staff had at their disposal a group of general officers representing the various combat arms. These officers served as principal advisers on the organisation, training, equipment and tactical employment of their respective arms in the field. They did not, however, have actual command authority but gave instructions and suggestions to troops based on experience gained in the field. In regard to the publication of technical manuals and the like, they collaborated with the Inspectorates of their Branches in the General Army Office. These officers in this category enjoyed the title of "Chief" or "Chef" instead of "General" as they were regarded as organically absorbed into the General Staff for the duration of the war instead of being attached to it like the others. The chiefs of those Branches of the Army which were classified as Service troops were likewise attached to the General Staff but were shown under the Chief Supply and Administration Officer.

The absence of a representative of the Panzer troops from this group of senior officers was explained by the creation in 1943 of the Inspector General of Panzer Troops to supersede the Chief of Mobile Troops. The Inspector General of Panzer Troops was represented in the General Staff by his Chief Antitank Officer for all Arms.
The other Chief Officers have been enumerated in the chart at Appendix 'B' and the important ones may be stated below:

(a) CHIEF INFANTRY OFFICER, who was responsible for regular infantry, light infantry, mountain infantry, cavalry and reconnaissance matters.

(b) CHIEF ARTILLERY OFFICER, who controlled the Chief Coast and Fortress Artillery Officer and the Chief Army Anti-aircraft Artillery Officer.

(c) CHIEF OF MAPPING AND SURVEY who was a part of the rear echelon of the General Staff and was represented at field headquarters by the Commander of Mapping and Survey Troops.

(d) CHIEF ENGINEER AND FORTIFICATIONS OFFICER who controlled the Inspector of Fortifications as well as the Chief of Amphibious Engineers.

ARMY PERSONNEL OFFICE: This office was independent of both the General Staff and the Home Command and came under the direct control of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. It was responsible for all appointments, transfers, promotions and similar matters concerning all categories of officers in the German Army. It was, therefore, a powerful instrument in exercising control over the officer corps. It is of interest to note here that the promotion of an officer to the rank of Colonel or above was made by Hitler himself on the recommendation of the Personnel Office.

In lower ...
In lower ranks, the Personnel Office made promotions on its own responsibility. Again, the authority to transfer various types of specialist officers (medical, veterinary, ordnance, etc.) was delegated by the Personnel Office to the technical branches which dealt with those services. However, in regard to the higher ranks, the Personnel Office retained its powers of ordering transfers on the recommendation of the technical branches.

(3) OBERKOMMANDO DER KRIEGS MARINE (O.K.M.):

THE NAVY:

The second High Command was the O.K.M., which can best be equated to the Admiralty in the U.K. It had at its head, a Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Raeder, though Hitler, as Supreme Commander, approved proposals, guided and directed naval operations. The naval aspect of defence was to some extent neglected in Hitler's strategy and the OKM organisation is not such as to call for a detailed examination. The main emphasis was on submarine warfare to the neglect of other important types of naval craft essential for success in a war in which great maritime powers, like England and America, were allies in the enemy camp. It has often been remarked that if the Germans had been properly sea-minded they might have achieved their goal after Dunkirk. However, the organisation of Naval Staff was on the same lines as the army though on a much smaller pattern. It functioned under the general direction of the OKM and at times came into conflict with Hitler himself.

(4) ...
The second world war emphasised more than anything else the need to develop and maintain an efficient Air Force as one of the fundamental aids for the protection of a country's frontiers. The greatest achievement of Hitler in the national defence of Germany was the phenomenal expansion of the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force. One of the vital lessons of the last war has been the importance of air power in any operational strategy. It seems that none was better convinced than Hitler about air power as a weapon of war and terror. The most potent weapon which Hitler resorted to for the achievement of his goal of world domination was the Luftwaffe and it was this very organisation which accounted for his early victories in the World War II, and it was again Luftwaffe's weakening in later years which decided the fate of the war in favour of the Allies.

In so far as the Air Force was concerned, the Air Ministry in Berlin functioned as an administrative body. The German Air Staff was fundamentally organised, on much the same lines as any other Air Staff, with Goering at the top. Milch was his Deputy and Jeschonnek was the Chief of Staff while Udet was the Chief of Aircraft Design and Supply. The Air Chief had a directing Operational Staff called a Fuehrungstab which dealt with all the major questions of policy on Luftwaffe organisation and in its purview came all the essential items involved in planning an Air Force policy.
Control over Luftwaffe units in the field was exercised by the Air Ministry through a series of Inspectorates each under the charge of a General. These Inspectorates formed the link between units in operational theatres and the German Air Staff in Berlin. The role of the Inspectorates was to see that Air Force units in the field implemented the policy laid down by the Air Staff. Outside the precincts of the Air Ministry these Inspectorates exercised a great influence, being responsible for technical and tactical development as also for the re-equipment and re-training of Luftwaffe flying units.

As a unit of Operation Command, the Air Staff was never satisfied with the Air Corps or Air Division and experimented with a number of smaller tactical air commands with aircraft strength varying from about 100 to about 250. These again, were a balanced force of bombers, fighters, and reconnaissance aircraft under Commanders known as Air Fuhrers, who came under the orders of the local Air Fleet Commander. The Air Staff came at the top of all the subordinate commands but worked under the general direction and control of the O.K.W. organisation. The idea behind these smaller commands was to give undivided support to army formations with which they were associated.
The German military mechanism was not basically unsound. The most important institution, that of the Chiefs of Staff, was in possession of the correct estimate of strategic and military possibilities and it was unfortunately Hitler who having set before him a political task impossible of achievement was determined to strain the nation beyond its capacity which ultimately led to its ruin.

On account of the peculiar importance which the personality of Hitler wielded over the entire organisation a true appreciation of the intrinsic value of the machinery he set up is extremely difficult. There may have been some patent defects in the OKW since it conceived of planning as an independent Department which led to theorisation devoid of all practical considerations, since the planners never visited the field of operations. But the above difficulty was considerably exaggerated owing to the peculiar traits in the character and personality of Hitler whose suspicions and frequent interference in the later stages marred the military mechanism, more than the inherent defects of the system itself. In the circumstances the grave danger in a totalitarian State, where Defence is allowed to play ...
play a preponderating part is the complete dependency of the State and its machine on the whims and caprices of the individual dictator who is permitted to sit at the helm of affairs. There being no method of removing that dictator, the danger becomes more grave than ever. In a democracy the electorate not only gets a periodical chance of overthrowing the powerful head of the executive, be he the President or the Prime Minister, but there are also ample opportunities for demonstrating the disapproval of governmental policy by virtue of freedom of speech and the press which the electorate has often wielded effectively to over-rule decisions of government if not to overthrow the government itself. In a dictatorship of the type which Hitler had established, there was no means of removing the Dictator except through destruction or ruin. The electorate lost control over him by delegating him all powers, and this created a situation in which a single man wielded the powerful defence machine only to destroy himself and his country.
APPENDIX A

CHAPTER VI