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THE SATURDAY
EVENING
POST
FOUNDED IN
1728 BY
Benjamin Franklin



Signing the document which, almost unnoticed by the world, delivered a million men to the Allies and spared Northern Italy a bath of blood. The man seated is a representative of Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff, an incredible figure in the cloak-and-dagger drama

ACME

The Secret History of a Surrender

By FORREST DAVIS

THE precise details of how the war in Italy guttered out at noonday on May second, last, with the orderly surrender of what Mr. Churchill exuberantly computed at "a million men"—although only twenty-six combat divisions were left afoot—may well have escaped you. History was piling up too fast around the beginning of May. The fall of Northern Italy was overshadowed by other events: the putative suicide of Hitler, the degradation of the mortal remains of Il Duce in a Milanese square, and the crumbling of the utterly beaten *Reichswehr* in Germany itself.

After D day in Normandy the war in Italy had seemed, in any case, a sort of side show—the "forgotten front," Mark Clark's men termed it with some bitterness—and no American back home deserves censure for being hazy about the signing of the Northern Italy capitulation on April twenty-ninth at Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander's AFHQ at Caserta. AFHQ was domiciled, in case you've forgotten, in the summer palace of the ancient kings of Naples, a minor Versailles with some of the finest gardens in Europe.

The mass surrender of the German armies in Northern Italy didn't just happen. Behind that event is an amazing story with all the trimmings of an Oppenheim novel.

Present for the enemy, at the signing, were Lt. Col. Viktor von Schweinitz—a towheaded, wispy-mustached Junker who happens to be descended through an American grandmother from John Jay, our first chief justice—and Maj. Max Wenner, short, dark and definitely non-Nordic. You will come across Schweinitz and Wenner again in this narrative when certain of their superiors will vainly attempt to dishonor their signatures at the eleventh hour and fight on back into the Alps.

The Caserta ceremony, signaling the first of the historic Nazi surrenders of 1945, took only twenty minutes. For so brief a function it accomplished

much, putting an end, for one thing, to American casualties in that theater and sending home many a G. I. who otherwise would have been buried in Italian soil. Forestalling fanatical Nazi hopes of a last stand in an Alpine redoubt, the surrender likewise checkmated a plot for organizing remnants of the defeated armies into a corps of Werewolves. Contributing to the subsequent surrenders in Germany—in Bavaria, Von Kesselring finally sued for peace through Caserta—the April twenty-ninth event definitely shortened the war in Europe. Certain authorities believe that, by breaking the spine of German resistance, the surrender of Northern Italy provided an early, clean-cut termination to a war which might otherwise have dragged on for days, or even a week or two, longer.

So much is known. What could not be made public until now was the background of the capitulation, which, by no means an impromptu act, had been preceded by eight weeks of conversation between American intelligence authorities and defeatist Germans; negotiations—although the Americans, bent on unconditional surrender, disliked the word—that were conducted principally in neutral, spy-infested Switzerland by Maj. Gen. William Donovan's Office of Strategic Services. The O. S.

same time. Others Zimmer mentioned as disheartened were even more exalted. Kesselring, for example, and Dr. Rudolf Rahn, Hitler's ambassador to Mussolini's sawdust republic. Even Heinrich Himmler's personal lackey in Northern Italy, a *Gruppenführer* named Harster, was reliably reported to be casting about for a way to leave the sinking ship with advantage to himself. Although Kesselring—who later was transferred to succeed Von Rundstedt in the West—was at this stage highly sympathetic with Wolff's sentiments, he became, as we shall see, a principal thorn in the side of Sunrise.

The Zimmer disclosures convinced Parrilli of two things: first, that behind its harsh façade, Nazi morale in Northern Italy was cracking wide open; and, secondly, that the weakest sector was the outright Nazis. Parrilli, quickly discovering that he had no direct access to Allied authorities, bethought himself of his old schoolmaster in Switzerland. Dr. Max Husmann, the master of a famous boys' school on the Zugerberg, near Zurich, was, as Parrilli knew, a dedicated busybody and a noble soul who circulated everywhere in Switzerland. No unlikely actor ever took part in a drama of international intrigue than the unworldly, intense Husmann.

Through his friend Max Waibel, both a doctor of philosophy and an intelligence major on the Swiss army's general staff, Doctor Husmann was able to complete the ring. Waibel took Husmann and his information to the one man in Switzerland able to deal with it effectively, Allen W. Dulles, the chief representative of the O. S. S. in Switzerland. As such, Mr. Dulles—who is the grandson of one Secretary of State, Gen. John W. Foster, the nephew of another, Robert Lansing, and the brother and peacetime law partner of John Foster Dulles—managed

varied and important activities for the United States in the common meeting ground of every hostile interest in Europe. With the war ended, it can be no secret that his jurisdiction included the enemy countries as well as those occupied, together with the underground forces therein.

A man of resource, Mr. Dulles had slipped into Switzerland in the fall of 1942 a few hours after the Nazis had closed the French border upon taking over unoccupied France. He crossed the frontier with the friendly connivance of the French guards, who outwitted the newly arrived Nazi agents out of admiration for Mr. Dulles' eloquent invocation of the memories of Lafayette and Pershing. A judicious man of genuine charm, Mr. Dulles conducted the secret affairs of the United States, including Sunrise, with discretion, skill and perseverance. For Sunrise alone he deserves a medal.

Cracks in the Axis Wall

THE intelligence brought by Doctor Husmann left Dulles fairly cold. At the moment, Himmler, inspired by Hitler, was waging a peace offensive, primarily through Vienna, aimed at splitting the anti-Axis front. Himmler had sent word that the Nazis were willing to quit to the Western Allies alone, excluding the Soviet Union. This was naturally unacceptable. Suspecting that the word from Milan was another salient of Himmler's offensive, Dulles was also skeptical of inducing the surrender of the German military on other grounds.

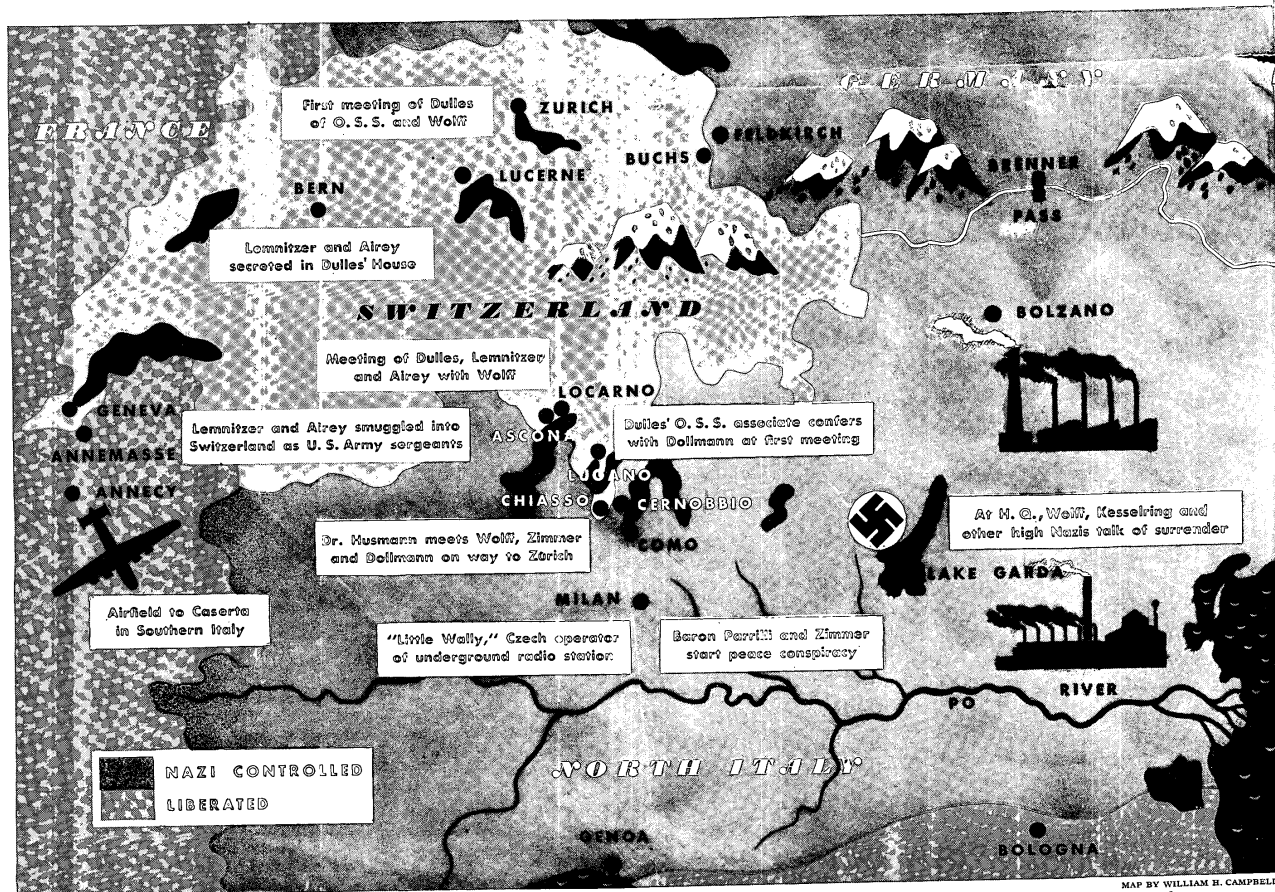
Although the Western Allies never attempted to duplicate the Russian experiment with captured German officers, the O. S. S. had interviewed a number of imprisoned general officers late in 1944 with a view to using them as a lever on their colleagues still in the field. To this job was assigned Gero von S.

Gaevernitz, a German-born American who became Dulles' chief coadjutor with Sunrise. A year younger than Karl Wolff, Gaevernitz belonged to the same disillusioned German generation, but where the SS dignitary had taken the easy path of Nazi affiliation, Gaevernitz had migrated to the United States. He did so at the prompting of his liberal father, Dr. Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz. In New York, young Gaevernitz had learned the banking business. Pearl Harbor day found him in Germany. A friend in the Foreign Office warned him that Hitler planned an early declaration of war. Gaevernitz reached Switzerland only six hours before Hitler acted.

The attempt to use the captured German generals had come to nothing, although it had the wholehearted support of Gen. Omar Bradley and the able collaboration of his G-2, Maj. Gen. Edward L. Sibert.

While the captured German generals agreed with Gaevernitz that further resistance was useless, their overtures to their comrades across the lines broke against the Gestapo agents who surrounded each *Reichswehr* field commander. Still shaken by the purge following the July twentieth attempt on Hitler's life, fearful of the reproaches of history, the West-front commanders fell back on the personal oaths they had sworn to Hitler. The O. S. S. had not yet learned that Hitler's elite corps, the SS, had less compunction about deserting him.

While Professor Husmann's seed fell at first on barren soil, other reports reaching Dulles from Northern Italy soon inclined him to listen more attentively. A *Reichswehr* staff officer, in Zurich exchanging free marks for Swiss francs, indiscreetly gossiped about the defeatism prevalent at headquarters. Dulles learned that the German consul at Lugano, a son of the, (Continued on Page 107)



The scene of the action. The battle-weary Nazis wanted to surrender an army and shorten the war and save thousands of lives. But they mistrusted one another, mistrusted the area's top commander and, above all, they mistrusted Adolf Hitler.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF A SURRENDER

(Continued from Page 11)

one-time Reich foreign secretary, Constantin von Neurath, had been sent by Kesselring to Von Rundstedt's headquarters to talk about peace. It seemed apparent to Dulles—and he so advised his superiors at AFHQ, London and Washington—that the situation in Northern Italy might be ripening toward capitulation.

A month intervened between Husmann's first soundings of Dulles and Dulles' first talk with Baron Parrilli. That delay was due to Swiss skepticism as well as the American's reluctance. Not until late in February did the Swiss authorities accept the thesis that they had a stake in the orderly surrender of Northern Italy, preserving the economy of that region. The Swiss, moreover, did not want hordes of refugees and the wash of a defeated army pounding on their frontiers. Earlier they had withheld a visa from Parrilli, finally requiring a 10,000-franc bond from the professor, which he supplied. Seeing Parrilli late in February, Dulles agreed to receive a duly authenticated Nazi emissary, stipulating, however, that the terms must be unconditional surrender to all the Allies.

The Nazi conspirators selected *Standartenführer* Dollmann to make the first cast. By then Professor Husmann, committed heart and soul to the cause of peace, thought it his duty to travel into Italy to indoctrinate Dollmann, warning him that the Americans would not negotiate terms, would spurn him if he came from Himmler, and under no circumstances would discuss accept-

ing a surrender without Russia. Although Dollmann, described as "a vivid personality, temperamental and egotistical," came with the prestige of a liaison officer among Kesselring, Wolff and Mussolini's generalissimo, Rodolfo Graziani, Dulles did not receive him personally. Instead he sent an associate to confer with him in a private room in the Restaurant Bianchi in Lugano.

The associate confined himself to exacting, as a test of good faith, the delivery to the Swiss frontier of two important Italian partisan leaders held by the Nazis—Prof. Ferruccio Parri, chief of the military resistance in Northern Italy, and a Major Usmiani, an officer who had been collaborating with the Americans. Parri was in the dungeon at Verona, Usmiani in Milan's notorious San Vittori prison. The door to negotiations being left open, Dollmann departed, promising to send back someone of higher rank.

Wolff arrived, with Dollmann and Zimmer, on March eighth. Still in this thing to the hilt, Husmann met the Germans at Chiasso, on the frontier, riding with them to Zurich. Recurrently, he asked Wolff if the most tragic chapter in Germany's history was to end without one German performing a great and humane act. Once Wolff, traveling in a sealed compartment, asked the schoolmaster to leave him, but he did succeed in persuading Doctor Husmann that he had a better side to him and that he, with Kesselring, had prevented the destruction of Rome, contrary to Hitler's orders. On the same train were Parri and Usmiani, still mystified by their deliverance.

Declining to receive Wolff until he had assured himself of the condition of the two patriots, Dulles visited Parri

and Usmiani at the Hirslander clinic in Zurich, where they were under examination. Neither had been tortured. Dulles and Parri were warm friends. At that moment—with the Italian recalling his fear when brought from his cell that he was about to be shot—neither could have foreseen that within four months Parri, a member of the non-monarchist, non-Marxist Action party, would be prime minister of Italy.

Dulles met the SS general in his Zurich apartment. Also present were the German-American Gaevernitz and Schoolmaster Husmann. The Americans knew that Wolff had a long record as a dyed-in-the-wool Nazi, that he had served with the notorious Von Epp at Munich as well as with Himmler. Before the meeting, Wolff had submitted numerous credentials, including a full-page photograph of himself in a German weekly publication and a list of references headed by Rudolf Hess.

While Dulles listened impassively, Wolff, a rapid-fire talker, explained that both he and Kesselring knew the war to be lost and wished to quit, without reference to Hitler or Himmler, in order to avoid further bloodshed and the razing of Northern Italy. Professing himself a friend of England and America, he expressed the hope that something he might do might palliate the aversion in which he knew Germany to be held in those countries. Unlike Dollmann, he did not speak of his personal fate beyond saying that, not being a war criminal, he had no fears of Allied justice. Promising to hand Northern Italy to Dulles on a silver platter, he agreed in further token of good faith, to deliver into Switzerland several hundred interned Jews, to stand personally responsible for the welfare of 350 American and British prisoners of war at Mantua, and to free another important resistance leader, Sogno Franci.

Accustomed to the blatant tirades of the party comrades, Wolff confessed himself enormously taken with Dulles' correctly firm suavity. "How different these Americans are from what we have been told," he exclaimed to Husmann. To the Swiss he confided a curiously mystical belief that he was being spared for some great purpose. A year before, he had walked away from an airplane that had crashed a tree, killing the other passengers. Twice during the Sunrise conversations, that faith was confirmed. When he was returning from the March-eighth interview with Dulles, Allied fighter bombers raked his motor car as it proceeded from Milan to his headquarters at Fasano on Lake Garda, wounding his chauffeur and a staff officer. A machine-gun bullet punctured the tail of his blouse, and on Parrilli's next trip Wolff sent the scorched shred of the garment to Dulles, asking that the Allied air forces work over the Milan-Fasano road lightly in future. Again, while he was riding to an inspection with Mussolini, the road was attacked, killing a lieutenant and wounding the chauffeur of Wolff's car, but leaving him skin-whole.

So confident had been Wolff, so closely did his assurances jibe with other information, that Dulles felt justified in asking AFHQ for assistance in buttoning up the surrender. Alexander accordingly sent two senior officers: Maj. Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, U.S.A., assistant chief of staff at Caserta, and the British Maj. Gen. Terence S. Airey, AFHQ intelligence chief. The story of how O. S. S. smuggled the generals into Switzerland under the dog-tag



CRACKED WALLS

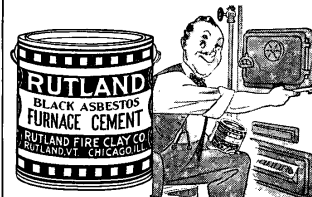
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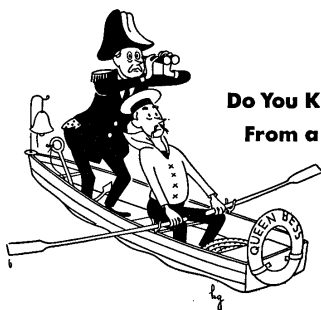


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Do You Know a Scow From a Wanigan?

THE Navy has been making us ship-minded as we never were before. We'll probably keep up that interest in peacetime, going down to the sea or some other body of water for commerce and for fun. Here are some peacetime

aquatic occupations and the ships or boats appropriate to their pursuit. Match up seven or more of them with the right craft in the opposite column and you've won your sea legs. You'll find the answers upside-down below.

Which craft would you use . . .

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. to go rowing on the Bosphorus? | a. felluca |
| 2. to transport coal? | b. caique |
| 3. to ride the canals of Venice? | c. junk |
| 4. for logging? | d. baggala |
| 5. to go sailing on the Mediterranean? | e. kayak |
| 6. to cruise in Chinese and neighboring waters? | f. collier |
| 7. to go hunting with the Eskimos? | g. smack |
| 8. for fishing? | h. wanigan |
| 9. for trading in the Indian Ocean? | i. scow |
| 10. to transport refuse? | j. gondola |

—ALAN A. BROWN.

Answers: 1-b; 2-f; 3-j; 4-h; 5-a; 6-c; 7-e; 8-g; 9-d; 10-l.

(Continued from Page 108)

The Allied generals and Wolff did agree on a surrender procedure. Wolff was to deliver two parliamentarians, armed with full powers, to the O. S. S. in Switzerland when the time came for a flight to headquarters at Caserta, where the deal finally would be buttoned up. Dulles engaged to get them across Switzerland to the French frontier and back to their own lines.

When Wolff reached Kesselring's headquarters he found the field marshal only fifteen kilometers ahead of the hard-driving Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army. Nevertheless, Kesselring, according to Wolff, took time out to authorize Wolff to recommend surrender to Vietinghoff in his name. He explained that he could not himself move because he mistrusted his associates. "Our situation," he told Wolff, "is desperate, but nobody dares tell the truth to the Führer, who is surrounded by advisers who still believe in a last, specific secret weapon, which they call the *Verzweiflungswaffe*." Translated, that means last-resort weapon. He professed not to know the weapon's exact nature.

Although encouraged, Wolff was subjected to further delay.

Himmler summoned him to Berlin, upbraided him for yielding the Italian partisans, Parri and Usmiani, and asked for a full report on his visits to Switzerland. Wolff dissembled. Ordered to remain in Berlin temporarily, he fled back to Italy when Himmler was unexpectedly called to Hungary. All this promptly was reported to Dulles by the German lieutenant, Zimmer, who crossed the border twice in four days.

Back in Italy, Wolff encountered two new obstacles. Although the new theater commander, Vietinghoff, and his chief of staff, Roettiger, were impressed by Kesselring's endorsement of Sunrise, Vietinghoff declined to move until the situation north of the Alps was clearly seen to be hopeless. He argued with some reason that he had no wish to inspire another stab-in-the-back legend for the postwar consolation of the German people. Hitler was at the moment assuring his people that victory would turn on the battle of Berlin. It seemed plain that Vietinghoff, believing a majority of his officers and men still under the Führer's spell, feared disorder if he acted prematurely and in defiance of Hitler's reiterated orders to hold Italy at all cost.

Vietinghoff's obstructionism was grave enough, but graver troubles were piling up for Wolff on the personal side. Back in Berlin, Himmler telephoned, ordering Wolff not to leave his post again under any circumstances. Employing a characteristic instrument of Nazi terrorism, Himmler broadly hinted that Wolff's family were now being held as hostages for his obedience. Wolff had removed his wife, formerly a Frau von Bernstorff, who once lived in New York, and the children to a refuge in his command near the Brenner Pass. Himmler had returned them to Wolff's estate at St. Wolfgang in the Tyrol for, as he put it, "their safety." Wolff could not know what orders the Gestapo had direct from Himmler, and this new turn gave him cause for fear. To Dulles, via Baron Parrilli, he explained

that he must be careful in as much as he would be of no further service "as a corpse," even though he were a corpse "at a state funeral."

Previously he had promised to be in Ascona on April second with authority to surrender. He sent Parrilli instead, insisting, however, that he was not yet licked. Because of the twin setbacks, Generals Lemnitzer and Airey returned to headquarters at Caserta. Sternly Dulles admonished Wolff, through Parrilli, that Allied successes were shortening the time for surrender. Warning him that he and Vietinghoff would be held personally responsible if Hitler's scorched-earth policy was executed, he reminded Wolff of his detailed promises to safeguard hostages, prisoners and partisans against the Führer's murderous intentions. Since Dulles never put himself in the position of bargaining with the Nazis, all his communications to Wolff had been oral. This time Parrilli had to memorize long passages.

The power drive launched by Alexander and Clark in the first week of

the operator in his own apartment. It had been thought easier to conceal him in Milan than at Wolff's headquarters. Besides providing direct communications from Wolff to Caserta and Bern, Wally engaged in extracurricular activity, pointing the Allied Air Forces to likely targets. In one case, where the target was Mussolini's current hide-out quite near the Zimmer apartment, Wally's directions were understandably precise.

When a tip came from Little Wally to touch up General Vietinghoff's headquarters, which were separate from Wolff's, the Americans marveled at this peculiarly Germanic method of applying pressure. Wolff had inspired the tip.

By mid-April, with the British Eighth and the American Fifth armies advancing steadily toward the Po, the prospects for a useful surrender appeared dim indeed. Meanwhile, two agents provocateurs showed up to add zest to the flagging Sunrise. One, a German consul in Italy known to be a Kaltenbrunner man, sought an interview with Dulles in Wolff's name, exhibiting too much knowledge of the conspiracy for comfort. A pseudo-British officer tried to gain audience with Vietinghoff on behalf of Dulles.

This so alarmed the *Oberkommandant* that he wrote a full explanation to Jodl at Führer headquarters, asking absolution and advice. Only after the strongest representations from Wolff, Ambassador Rahn and Roettiger, did Vietinghoff tear up the letter.

Arriving in Switzerland on April sixteenth, Lieutenant Zimmer brought a letter from Wolff containing condolences on the death of President Roosevelt together with assurances that the army commanders under Vietinghoff had been enlisted for Sunrise and that capitulation was imminent, with or without the *Oberkommandant*. Zimmer reported Gauleiter Franz Hofer, of the Tyrol, just back from Hitler's headquarters with word that the Führer was "crazily" planning vast new counteroffensives.

Despite Wolff's optimism, his letter contained a disquieting note, sharpened the next day when Parrilli appeared with fresh advices. Himmler had ordered Wolff to Berlin. At first he took evasive action, refusing to answer the telephone, but Parrilli reported that Wolff, after drawing up a new will, finally had taken off for Berlin via Prague. At the American end of Sunrise it seemed that little hope remained of ending the Italian war rationally, sparing the Allied forces and the Italian people the final draught of blood. Knowing Himmler, Dulles supposed that Wolff's persistent treachery to the Führer was about to meet its due reward.

This was on April seventeenth. The pay-off came four days later in a dispatch from Washington, quickly confirmed by AFHQ, ordering Dulles to terminate all surrender conversations with the Germans forthwith. The order, bearing the imprint of the High Command, carried no explanation. To Dulles it appeared that all hope had fled; that the war in Italy must now go on to its bitter and appointed end.

Editors' Note—This is the first of two articles by Forrest Davis. The second will appear next week.

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FINALE

By Frederick Ebricht

Weary of its season, the golden butterfly rests on gold leaf
And flexes once, twice, thrice its wings and then is still;
For both these frail and lovely things the hour is brief;
Both leaf and butterfly are mindful of encroaching chill.

And weary of its own hours, the bronze sundial
Stands passive and unmoved beneath a thinning sun;
A locust churrs once only in the bleaching yellowed grass,
And in the after silence is a summer thus undone.

And here the heart, like butterfly and leaf,
Or heavy with its time, cries not against the frost,
Full knowing though it does that on this night
The song, the hour and the leaf will all be lost.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

April hampered, threatening to disrupt, the line of communications between Dulles and Wolff. More than ever the highways of Northern Italy were unsafe to travel. To Dulles it seemed the time had come to avail himself of Wolff's offer to shelter an Allied radio station within the enemy lines. Chosen for the unprecedented and hazardous mission was a young Czech known as Little Wally, who had been trained as an operator by O. S. S. for a job where a knowledge of German was required. Wally had been studying medicine at the University of Prague when called into the army before the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. Going underground thereafter, he had been caught, imprisoned at Dachau, had escaped, becoming a parachute saboteur with the British, been caught again and had for the second time escaped, this time to Switzerland. Interned, he again got away and in France volunteered for duty with the O. S. S.

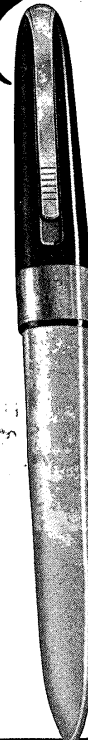
Lieutenant Zimmer took Little Wally with his transmitter, cipher books and secret instructions—which, however, divulged nothing of the Sunrise operations—with him to Milan, installing

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THE DEPENDABLE PEN

The Secret History of a Surrender

By FORREST DAVIS

In the second and last chapter of this story of an American triumph, the author gives you fascinating glimpses of Hitler, Himmler, Kesselring and other high Nazis in the dying days of the Reich.

II

IT seemed for a few hours on April 21, 1945, that the exasperatingly slow endeavor to wind up the war in Italy by surrender had fallen irretrievably flat. The negotiations, crammed with the standard ingredients of spy fiction—suspense, danger and the startling experience of meeting notorious enemy characters face to face while the fighting was still going on—had lasted seven weeks. But while Allen W. Dulles, the astute chief of Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan's Office of Strategic Services in Switzerland, was dejectedly preparing to break communications with the Nazi peace conspirators, in obedience to the day's orders from the High Command in Washington, a message came from the other side of the lines. Relayed by Little Wally, the clandestine radio operator in Milan, it announced that the SS General Karl Wolff and the *Reichswehr* Col. Gen. Heinrich von Vietinghoff were at last unreservedly ready to down arms. Even then, in fact, emissaries, armed with full powers, were preparing to cross the frontier and put themselves in the hands of the O. S. S., according to agreement, for the journey to the Caserta headquarters, where the surrender would be completed.

Two days later, Baron Luigi Parrilli, the faithful Italian go-between, arrived in Switzerland with word direct from Wolff. The prime mover in the peace junta was coming with the emissaries. Parrilli had been waiting at Fasano, Wolff's headquarters on Lake Garda, when the SS general returned from his unsought visit to Himmler and Hitler in Germany.

Himmler, Wolff reported, was badly frayed, indecisively pondering whether the top Nazis should fight it out in Berlin, retreat to a northern redoubt or fly to Berchtesgaden. Against the third option stood the Führer's recently acquired and somewhat hysterical aversion to flying. Both Himmler and Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, chief of the Gestapo, castigated Wolff for his part in Sunrise; Kaltenbrunner, reading from stacked documents, confronted him with details which he had thought deeply secret. Wolff quaked as Kaltenbrunner read. Expecting to be liquidated, Wolff thought he owed his escape solely to the fact that the nerves of the high Nazis already had cracked.

Once, testing Kaltenbrunner's mood, Wolff bristled, saying, "I will not accept being treated as if I were on trial; if I have done anything dishonorable take me out and shoot me." Kaltenbrunner thereupon subsided. Emboldened, Wolff charged Himmler with having miscalculated Germany's ca-

capacity to resist in the Rhineland as well as in the east against the Russians. When the SS *Reichsführer* offered no defense against these reproaches, Wolff declared that, Himmler having proved a false guide, he felt entitled now to shift for himself. At the moment, Himmler seemed acquiescent. Kaltenbrunner, however, insisted that all must go down together. Late that night the Gestapo chief ordered Wolff to accompany him to Hitler's headquarters. Arriving at 4:30 in the morning, they found the Führer, gray and despondent, in his bunker, preparing to sleep. He asked them to return at five P.M.

At that hour there took place one of the last conversations with Hitler as reported directly from high Nazi sources. The talk began with Wolff explaining that he undertook the parleys with the Americans only after the Führer, in February, had sent out secret instructions to establish contact wherever possible with the Allies. Making no comment, Hitler launched instead into a harangue, giving Wolff explicit orders concerning the last-stand defense of Northern Italy and the scorched-earth policy he expected to be pursued. When Wolff advised against leveling Italy, Hitler listened quietly, but again made no comment. Preoccupied with the defense of the Italian front, he remarked that Italy must be held for at least two months. He was convinced that the Russians could be stood off for two months.

"We must fight to gain time," Hitler told Wolff, as reported to Dulles. "In two more months the break between the Anglo-Saxons and the Russians will come about and then I shall join the party which approaches me first. It makes no difference which." As for himself, Hitler added that he would then fulfill the personal ambition he had nourished from the beginning of the war, retiring from active duty in order to "observe and influence the fate of the German people from a distance." This was on April eighteenth. Thirteen days later the German radio announced his death. To Wolff, intent on quitting the sinking ship, Hitler seemed as unconscious of the realities of his disintegrating situation as a sleepwalker.

Back in Fasano, convinced that there was little more to fear from Hitler and Himmler, Wolff finally persuaded General Vietinghoff that the sands had run out. On the twenty-fourth, Wolff



SS General Karl Wolff, who narrowly escaped death at the hands of Heinrich Himmler.

reached Lucerne with the emissaries, Lt. Col. Viktor von Schweinitz, of Vietinghoff's staff, and his own aide, Maj. Max Wenner. The parliamentarians were in borrowed civvies, Wenner wearing Wolff's shooting jacket, an aggressively checked tweed. The German party was secretly installed in the villa of Maj. Max Waibel, of the Swiss general staff, who had been a participant in Sunrise almost from the start.

The presence of Wolff and the plenipotentiaries in Lucerne confronted Dulles with a problem. Upon receipt of word that Wolff was at last delivering what he had promised early in March, the American had notified Caserta, London and Washington. Dulles and his principal aide, the German-born American Gero von S. Gaevernitz, reasoned, rightly as it turned out, that the High Command would not have halted the

(Continued on Page 105)



Maj. Max Waibel (left), of Swiss staff, an intermediary in the negotiations almost from start, talks at Ascona with Allied major generals in mufti: Lyman Lemnitzer (center) and Terence Airey.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF A SURRENDER

(Continued from Page 17)

conversations had they known the Germans to be on the point of capitulation. Caserta took that view also, and Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander urgently cabled the High Command to reconsider. From Caserta came word likewise to hold the Germans in Lucerne. Yet under terms of the order terminating the parleys, Dulles could not communicate directly with Wolff. Fortunately, Switzerland also having a vital interest in the outcome, Major Waibel was willing to bridge that hiatus.

The High Command was slower to resume than they had been to interdict the negotiations. Hence, for nearly four days, while Alexander and Mark Clark were driving toward the Po with rising fury, the emissaries idled in Lucerne. Wolff got out earlier. The sweeping advance of the Allies threatened, as he thought, his escape road back to his headquarters, which were in process of being moved, along with Vietinghoff's, to Bolzano, in the Dolomites, under the Austrian border. It seemed to Dulles, as well as Wolff, that the general was needed in Italy to redeem his promises regarding destruction of property and the safeguarding of prisoners and hostages, as well as to effectuate the surrender when signed at Caserta. Furthermore, Wolff was concerned, unnecessarily as it turned out, over reports from Milan of mysterious activities of Mussolini. As soon would become known, with peculiar force to Wolff, Il Duce was merely planning his ill-starred getaway.

A more compelling reason for Wolff's speedy return developed before he left Lucerne. The evil spirit of the Northern Italy undertaking, Heinrich Himmler, had again been moved to action. Obviously reflecting Hitler and Kaltenbrunner, he had telegraphed Wolff at Fasano, saying, "It is more than ever essential that the Italian front hold and remain intact. No negotiations of any kind should be undertaken." The order was read to Wolff by telephone while in Waibel's presence. To the Swiss he said, "That no longer counts; Himmler has played his last card." Yet Himmler, through the Gestapo, was still in a position to cause harm. Two of his most lethal hatchet men were, as Wolff knew, circulating in Italy.

Between the Lines

Crossing the border at Chiasso without incident, Wolff soon found his way south blocked by resistance groups. The patriots, thinking liberation at hand with the great drive of the Anglo-American armies, had poured out of the mountains, occupying Como and other northern towns and blocking the highways. This was on the afternoon of April twenty-sixth. That morning a squad of partisans had caught Mussolini, fleeing north along Lake Como with Clara Petacci, his mistress, and the infamous pair were slain. Partisan blood was up, and Wolff, the supreme SS police chief of Italy, would have been another rich catch.

Taking refuge in a villa near Cernobbio, Wolff soon found himself again thwarted. The patriots surrounded him, too weak as yet to attack, but rapidly gaining reinforcements. Happily for him, the telephone still worked.

A call to Major Waibel brought Gero Gaevornitz at once to Chiasso, where, luckily, he encountered Donald Jones, of the O. S. S., an old hand with the partisans who had just returned from a visit with their leaders in this district at Como. Jones agreed that prompt action was vital. There could be little doubt that once in partisan hands Wolff would be shot forthwith and, from our point of view, that would be bad. With Wolff gone, the whole long maneuver might easily fall to the ground.

Jones, therefore, volunteered to rescue Wolff. No better man could have been found. Known to the patriots as Scotti, Jones had for two years been going and coming among them, arranging communications, carrying in currency and playing the part of a Dutch uncle to them all. First telephoning Wolff that his men should hold their fire when his motorcars arrived, Jones set out with a strange cavalcade hastily assembled. In the leading car he placed two German officers who had managed to get away from the villa together with a large white flag. Jones followed in the second car, shining his headlights on the flag ahead. In the third car he put trustworthy partisans armed with automatic weapons.

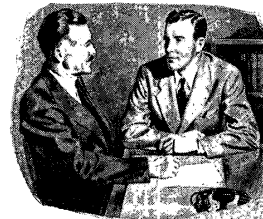
A Pawn in the Game

While rolling out of Chiasso the motorcade was fired on by a partisan band. Calling a halt, Jones courageously left his car and walked unarmed into his headlights with the hope that someone among the band would recognize him and put a stop to the firing. So it happened. An old friend ran from the cover, crying "il amico Scotti," the firing stopped and the expedition resumed its way. At Como a friendly prefect armed Jones with a pass through all partisan lines. Often halted, but not again made a target, the party finally reached Wolff's villa. Wolff was in full uniform. While he changed to mufti, members of his staff offered Jones some Scotch, and American cigarettes, which they assured him had accompanied them all the way from North Africa. Wolff was delivered by Jones to Gaevornitz at Chiasso, taken from there across Switzerland to Feldkirch on the Austrian border, from which he could reach the new headquarters at Bolzano by way of the Vorarlberg.

Before departing from Chiasso, Wolff uttered a new set of pledges to Gaevornitz. His life having been actually saved by Jones and the O. S. S., the SS leader put genuine fervency into his promise to arrest Himmler should he show up in Italy bent on destructive ends. While at the villa, Wolff reported, he had telephoned Rauch, his SS commander at Milan, renewed instructions to avoid fighting and pillage, ordering him to surrender even to the partisans if necessary. Gaevornitz had put these directives in writing, later entrusting them to Parrilli for delivery to Milan. Wolff further agreed to take forcible measures against any military leaders who should attempt to block surrender. As we shall see, this promise was fulfilled.

The High Command reversed its instructions on the twenty-seventh, and Schweinitz and Wenner got away the next day. These German emissaries crossed the French frontier at Geneva to Annemasse, proceeding at once to the air base at Annecy, where an American C-47 picked them up and flew them through the foulest weather of the late spring to Caserta. Although it

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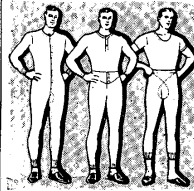


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