

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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1. Early in 1951, the organization then known as the Bund versorgungsberechtigter ehemaliger Wehrmacht Angehöriger und deren Hinterbliebener (BvW) (Association of former professional soldiers and their dependents, entitled to receive state maintenance) under chairmanship of ex-Admiral Gottfried Hansen commenced negotiations with the Bavarian organization Schutzbund deutscher Soldaten (Association of German Soldiers) now referred to as Schutzbund Bayern, led by ex-General August Krakau, in order to form a single organization which could represent the interests of all soldiers and frame a uniform policy on German remilitarization. The negotiations bogged down over technicalities. When on 26 July 1951 the BvW arbitrarily changed its name to Soldatenbund in an attempt more or less to prejudice the issue, Krakau quickly broke off all negotiations, stating that the over-aged leaders of the BvW (Hansen was retired in 1933) had no right to set any policy for the former German soldiers and that the BvW had broken previous agreements by its arbitrary action.
2. It is known that the Schutzbund Bayern has been antagonistic toward the BvW since its formation. Krakau, who is little known in ex-officer circles, had surrounded himself with a number of ambitious young ex-officers, including some SS men, and through their energetic activities, the Schutzbund Bayern was soon able to outmaneuver the BvW in Bavaria. Furthermore, the Schutzbund Bayern had its own periodical, the Soldaten-Zeitung, which served it well as a publicity organ.

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3. The Soldaten-Zeitung is printed in southern Germany and has a circulation of about 40,000, principally in Bavaria, Bremen, and Hamburg. It is published by Regierungsrat Helmuth Damerau and edited by Cornelius Pfeiffer. Its editorial policy has been strongly nationalistic. After negotiations between the two organizations failed, the managers of the Soldaten-Zeitung, in search of additional readers, approached the BvW directly. These negotiations were more fruitful. The paper agreed to tone down its editorial policy, rejecting both political extremes, and the BvW (membership 80,000) agreed to acknowledge the periodical as its official publication. The BvW was also able to have one of the most objectionable members of the paper's staff dismissed.
4. The BvW, which continued its attempt to find a common policy with other veterans' organizations, finally empowered its federal executive committee to begin negotiations with other veterans' organizations in order to form what was to be known as the Ring deutscher Soldatenbuende (Confederation of German soldiers' associations). These negotiations were no longer conducted by Admiral Hansen but principally by ex-Colonel General Hans Juergen Stumpff, head of the BvW in Schleswig-Holstein, ex-Air Force General Karl Koller, head of the BvW in Bavaria, and ex-Col. General Traugott Herr of Lower Saxony. All three were known as strong supporters of Hitler during the war. Stumpff, now 63, and Koller (54) are said still to have military ambitions.
5. It may be assumed that during the negotiations the ex-generals made contact with a somewhat mysterious organization which, for want of an exact designation, is carried under the name of Wehrbewegung by the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Little is actually known about this organization, its size, membership, aims, financial backing, etc., beyond the fact that it appears to be mainly interested in restoring the military clique of the Hitler régime to power and to do so by utilizing the ambitions of youth and the war veterans for its own purposes. It is also known that most of the former generals now members of the new Executive Board(1) of the newly formed veterans' organization belong to the Wehrbewegung. This includes former General Heinz Guderian. One of the most active members of the group is the young (49) ex-Major General Erich Dethleffsen (2) who has surrounded himself with a number of ambitious young general-staff officers whose successful careers had been based on political rather than military achievements. Dethleffsen was very active in the formation of the executive board of the new veterans' organization, and it was there that he made his first public appearance. He is known to be very ambitious, and an antagonist of the so-called 20th of July group.
6. Early in June, Hansen invited all the regional heads of the BvW to a conference. The group appointed a small subcommittee to carry on the negotiations for consolidation. Thus, a large number of influential men in the BvW did not participate directly in the negotiations of 8 September. It appears that some of the older members of the BvW who were not present at the formation of the executive board will oppose the decision of the subcommittee. They may fight it on the grounds that the subcommittee has overstepped its authority. It has been stated that ex-General Guderian was chiefly responsible for the fact that Hansen (3) and some of his principal lieutenants were simply brushed aside by the new executive board. Some of Hansen's men could not even find out exactly what transpired at the meeting, since they were no longer permitted to attend committee meetings even though some of those who were allowed to attend had been invited over Hansen's signature.
7. [] General Koller (4), chairman of the BvW in Bavaria, complained after the meeting that he was given no time to consult with the membership of his organization and with the various fighter pilot circles before voting whether to affiliate them with the new organization.

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When he raised the point of concurrence of the membership, he was told to do anything he liked, get them on the 'phone if he cared to, but to make up his mind in the next fifteen minutes. Another pressure point used was implied U. S. approval of key personalities. Guderian referred repeatedly to various visits with U. S. High Commissioner McCloy. A special effort was made to spread a whispering campaign to the effect that Mr. McCloy, during his repeated visits with Guderian, had requested the latter to unify the German veterans into one organization, and stated that Guderian was the man who enjoyed full confidence in Washington.

8. Under such pressure, the majority of the sixty representatives of the eight(5) most prominent veterans' organizations voted approval but, as some of them reported later, with considerable reservations. It was not the amalgamation that they objected to, but the "highhanded" methods used to railroad the problem through in one session (6).
9. Friessner was finally selected as chairman pro-tem of the 27-man Board. Many ex-officers consider him a strict adherent of Hitler's military policies, an extrovert who knows well how to present himself, but generally a shallow personality and probably only a front man for Guderian and his clique (7). At the time of the first Nuremberg verdict when most German Generals were still interned at Garmisch, it was Friessner who, in collaboration with ex-Colonel General Herman Hoth, proposed the official protest against the sentencing of Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel and Colonel General Ferdinand Jodl. He had the whole camp in an uproar and General Field Marshal Coorg von Kuehler had to use all the weight of his personality and all his persuasive powers to calm the situation and prevent an action which might have committed all the generals irrevocably as supporters of the convicted war criminals.
10. Immediately after his election, Friessner paid courtesy calls on Germany's principal government leaders. The meeting with the president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Theodor Heuss, was apparently arranged by ex-General Eberhard Thunert, one-time commander of the German 1st Armored Division. Thunert had managed this through ex-Colonel Grantz who is employed in the office of the President. How the meeting with Adenauer was engineered is unknown. The Federal Chancellory has shrugged off the entire matter as unimportant (8). State Secretary for Internal Affairs Otto Lenz seems to be of the opinion that the best way to handle the radical elements among the former military is to offer them positions that occupy their time. Ministerialrat Hans Globke, Secretary Lenz's assistant, is a close friend of some ex-generals, and it cannot be expected that he will undertake anything that might interfere with their interests. However, it is reported that the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution is preparing to spend some effort scrutinizing veterans' organizations.
11. The new veterans' organization, led largely by personalities who gained prominence because of their allegiance to the Hitler regime, can hardly be expected to restrict itself to the economic interests of the veterans. One may expect, however, that they will maintain a democratic and moderate line as long as they consider it essential to gain their goal. It has been stated that the military leaders of the Hitler regime will play no important role in the rearmament of Germany and that their attempts to regain power are of no importance. Beyond a doubt, the ex-generals are not a necessity for remilitarization, but it is equally evident that the ex-soldiers are needed. The latter are very indifferent so far. If, however, they should gain the impression that even the known anti-democratic ex-military leaders have the endorsement of the German government and are tolerated by the Allies, then the ex-soldiers will conclude that the opinions uttered by their former commanders are correct and will undoubtedly follow them and again allow themselves to be misused for the personal ambitions of their commanders.

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- (1) [] Comment: Known members of the Board are: Chairman, Johannes Friessner (b)(1) (Army Group South); Hasso von Manteuffel (Gross-Deutschland); Bernhard Ramcke (b)(3) Kurt Student (parachute troops); Ludwig Cruwell and (fnu) Wessel (Africa Corps); Paul Hausser and Herbert Gille (Waffen SS); Heinz Guderian, Stumpff, Herr, Haentschke and Krakau. Also the following, some of whom are identified only by last names: Walter Assmann (Major General), Blum, Karl Guembel, Mohr (Max?) (Air Force General), Mosbach, Potthoff, Ringeling, Dr. Rochlke, Reinhardt, Seideman, Steinhoff, Velten, and Vollbracht.
- (2) [] Comment: The information that Dethleffsen, a former General Staff Officer, belongs to the Executive Board has not been confirmed by other sources. It appears more likely that he has an administrative or staff function for the board without actually being a member thereof. (b)(1) (b)(3)
- (3) [] Comment: Though Hansen himself was elected to the board, he took a very minor role in the proceedings. Only two of his principal aides were also elected to the board, Stumpff and Herr. (b)(1) (b)(3)
- (4) [] Comment: Koller is not a member of the board; as chief of the BvW in Bavaria, he is a prime antagonist of Krakau. (b)(1) (b)(3)
- (5) [] Comment: The important organizations are as follows: (b)(1) (b)(3)
- Schutzbund Deutscher Soldaten (BdS)
 - Deutscher Soldatenbund (BvW)
 - Traditionsverbaende der Kraftfahrer (Armed Forces Transport Drivers)
 - Africa Corps
 - Parachute troops
 - Division Grossdeutschland
 - Waffen SS
 - Stahlhelm
- (6) [] Comment: Though the membership at the constitutional session was 60% officers and 40% enlisted personnel, the board membership favors officers and especially general officers to a much greater degree. By 25 September, there were indications that the lower ranks resented this distribution and there was at least one attempt to form a separate organization for the non-commissioned personnel. (b)(1) (b)(3)
- (7) [] Comment: [] Guderian has the backing of the SRP. (b)(1) (b)(3)
- (8) [] Comment: After Friessner's remarks concerning the 20th of July men in late September, when he tactlessly contradicted the Chancellor's previous remarks on the same subject, a spokesman for the Federal Press Office, i.e., the Government, indicated that Friessner was no longer persona grata in Bonn. The spokesman made a point of emphasizing the temporary aspect of Friessner's chairmanship indicating that the government would not welcome a permanent election of Friessner as head of the German veterans. (b)(1) (b)(3)

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