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Operation

Feb. 25-May 2, 1945

Submitted to Maj. General Wm. J. Donovan

by Allen W. Dulles  
Gero von Gaevernitz

BERN, May 22, 1945

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## The First German Surrender

### The End of the Italian Campaign

Report by: Allen W. Dulles, and  
Gero von Gaevernitz.

Bern, May 22, 1945.

#### I. The Background

In the messages which passed back and forth between Bern, AFHQ at Caserta, Washington and London, the project which was eventually to bring about the end of the Italian Campaign and the surrender of almost a million men of the German Army was given the code designation: "Crossword". To ensure quick and limited distribution, the messages were introduced by the special word "Sunrise". These labels proved to be prophetic. For weeks the negotiations were like a crossword puzzle. Could we be sure that the Germans with whom we were dealing were sincere in their offers to bring about the unconditional surrender of their forces in North Italy? Or were they merely playing for time and trying to divide the Western Powers from their Russian Ally? When at last this crossword puzzle was solved on May 2, 1945, it meant "sunrise" for Allied troops and Italian patriots in Italy. Its solution brought the rapid and relatively bloodless occupation of large areas of North Italy without that reckless and wanton destruction of life and property which generally characterized the German abandonment of any occupied territory. It opened the southern flank of the German redoubt in the Alps and facilitated the quick occupation of Trieste, a port vital for the supply lines of our troops moving into Austria. Finally, it set the pattern for other German surrenders which followed in quick succession.

For the background of the story it is necessary to go back several months prior to the beginning of the conversations which led to the Italian surrender.

When in the early autumn of 1944, France was liberated and the American, British and French Armies under General Eisenhower paused for breath and supplies on a line running from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier, it became obvious

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even to the majority of German military men that the war was lost for them. It was equally obvious, however, that Hitler, Goebbels, Bormann and the Nazi fanatics proposed to fight to the last man, and that nothing in the nature of an <sup>general</sup> unconditional surrender was likely to occur. The name of Himmler is deliberately left out of this list, because Himmler, during the last months preceding Germany's collapse, quite openly flirted with the wholly unacceptable idea of sounding out the Western Allies with the idea of trying to negotiate a surrender to them, with the reservation for himself, however, of some personal immunity. As this was largely a selfish personal move, he watched with a particularly vigilant eye and ruthlessly suppressed any effort on the part of others to "queer his pitch" by effecting local surrenders.

As the chances for any general unconditional surrender seemed slight, it was decided that it would be desirable to explore the possibility of bringing about the surrender of particular Army Groups by persuading high Generals of the Wehrmacht that the continuance of the struggle would only lead to the total destruction of Germany. It was obvious that the mad men in power in Berlin, in a type of suicidal frenzy, were determined to destroy as much as possible, if they themselves were to be destroyed, and that the Wehrmacht, and the S.S. <sup>were</sup> ~~had~~ now becoming the tool of fanatical Nazi party leaders. The problem was how this point of view could be presented to the German Generals, and what German Generals would be most likely to respond to such arguments. The Russians, through the use of the Paulus-Seydlitz Committee, had already done effective work on their front in undermining German military resistance and had found a vehicle, through this Committee, for appealing to the war-weary German officers and soldiers in the East. Nothing comparable had been done by the Western Allies, whose formula of unconditional surrender had been twisted and turned by Goebbels to stiffen the morale of the Wehrmacht.

Late in 1944, we had discussed these possibilities with high ranking Allied officers on the West front, and as a result G.G. had interviewed a considerable number of German Generals, held as prisoners of war in France and England. Here he found a group of Generals who recognized the futility of continuing the struggle, and who, in principle, were ready to see what they could do to establish contact with leaders of the Wehrmacht on the western front to help stop the futile German resistances.

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The course of events, particularly the Rundstedt offensive in December, 1944, followed by a constant shifting of command among the Generals on the West front, operated to prevent the carrying forward of this project in this theatre. Also, it proved almost impossible to find any effective channel of communication to any of the leading German Generals on the West front, or to get any clear evidence that any of them would have the courage to act. They were all surrounded by agents of Himmler's Gestapo. They were terrified and subdued by the brutal massacre of the Generals following the July 20th affair, and were disposed to hide behind their oath of allegiance to the Fuehrer. German or rather Prussian military abhorrence of "Eidbruch" (breaking the oath) played a sinister rôle during these days. It was an easy excuse for the timid to do nothing, but it also deterred many a German military man from taking the action which in his innermost conscience he felt was both right and necessary.

To return to the thread of our story: The hopelessness of effecting a military surrender on any part of the West front, led us to turn our attention to the Italian front which presented many advantages for the type of action which we had in mind. The very geographical situation of the German Army in Italy, which still represented an intact force of over twenty divisions, gave it a form of independence and a possibility of separate action. Its communications with Germany, due to our bombing of the Brenner and other passages, were becoming more and more precarious. It was now too late to think of withdrawing any substantial part of the Army to reinforce the cracking fronts in both the East and West. The most this Army could hope to accomplish was a partial withdrawal into the German redoubt and Venezia Giulia, where it might have defended the southern approaches of the Nazi's last fortress.

The personalities in command in Italy, both from the military and the S.S. side also offered possibilities. We had had reports, dating from early January, of meetings attended by Kesselring, S.S. General Wolff, the German Ambassador to Italy, Rahn, and others, in which these men had frankly discussed the growing hopelessness of the situation. We further had a report that Kesselring in February had arranged a meeting between a private envoy and his former Chief of Staff, General Westfal, who had

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become Rundstedt's Chief of Staff in the West, and General Blaskowitz, at which the German military situation had been the subject of realistic discussion. Himmler's representative in Italy, S.S. Gruppenfuehrer Harster, had already sounded out Allied circles through Italian industrialist friends in Switzerland, but had been rebuffed, because these attempts bore the stamp "made by Hitler". However, the evidence indicated that in North Italy the OKW and the S.S. saw more or less eye to eye, and, therefore, there seemed to be some possibility of obtaining the essential mutual action. If the OKW and the S.S. should work at cross purposes, they would defeat each other; any surrender plot would be discovered and a few more Generals would lose their lives, be "promoted to other commands", or consigned to fortresses.

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II. The First "Feelers".

This was the situation, when late in February, an important Italian industrialist, Baron Luigi Parrilli, met with G.G. in Lucerne, introduced by a trusted Swiss friend. Parrilli stated that certain important German officials in North Italy, including S.S. General Wolff, desired to establish contact with the Allies, with a view to terminating German resistance in North Italy. Wolff was reported to be ready to arrange the turning over of North Italy to the Allies, under conditions which would avoid unnecessary bloodshed, and protect against wanton destruction the art treasures, the industrial establishments, and the power plants of that rich area. We were satisfied as to the good faith of our Swiss friend, who under no conditions would have knowingly allowed himself to be used by the Germans. We investigated the standing of Baron Parrilli and while we had little information on his recent past under the Fascists, we learned that before the war he had been for years the representative in North Italy of a well-known American corporation. A radio inquiry in Washington confirmed that he had been for 15 years the European representative of that corporation, that his American employers had considered him a man of ability. The radio added the reassuring comment, based on information from the American company, "you can count on him if he gives his word". However, he admittedly came to us with the full knowledge of certain Germans and the S.S. and we were on our guard.

Parrilli returned to Italy from the Lucerne meeting and on March 2, the news reached us that one of General Wolff's chief assistants, Standartenfuehrer Dollmann, and Wolff's aide, Max Zimmer, together with Parrilli, were coming to Lugano to ascertain whether contact could be established. We decided cautiously to take a chance on finding out what these men wanted. Dollmann's record was well known to us. He had played a considerable rôle in Rome and claimed, possibly with some basis, that he had had a part in saving Rome from destruction, when it was evacuated by the Germans. He had helped to rescue certain Italian personalities, possibly sometimes for a price, but in any event his record showed that he was one of the more realistic and less fanatical of the S.S.

One of A.W.D.'s associates was going to Lugano on other business; he was briefly brought up to date and given the background of the matter. His instructions were to listen

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to what Dollmann had to say, to make no comments, and report. As he left for Lugano, A.W.D. handed him on a sheet of paper two names; one was the name of Ferruccio Parri, an outstanding leader of the Italian resistance movement, who after months of clandestine activity in Milan with the C.L.N.A.I. (Committee of National Liberation for North Italy) had finally been tracked down by the Germans and was in the dungeon of Verona. The other name was that of Major Usmiani, who had developed an important intelligence network into North Italy, had been caught and imprisoned in the famous Italian jail San Vittori at Milan. A.W.D. told his associate to advise Dollmann that if they were really serious in their intentions, they should as evidence immediately and unconditionally release these two men to him in Switzerland.

The meeting took place quietly at Lugano on March 3. On this occasion there was also present Professor Max Husmann, a prominent Swiss citizen, and director of a school for boys near Zürich. Husmann was a friend of Baron Parrilli and had had close relations with many leading Italian personalities. He played a prominent rôle throughout the conversations which followed and acted as one of our Swiss intermediaries. He told the Germans some plain truths about their situation and what they should do. Professor Husmann was both eloquent and to the point. He disabused the Germans of the idea that they could either bargain over the terms of unconditional surrender, or base any hopes on a breach between the Anglo-Saxons and the Russians.

The meeting with A.W.D.'s representative was brief. Dollmann indicated that he wished merely to ascertain whether a sure channel of communications was established. Subject to confirmation, he would return on March 8, after consultation at General Wolff's headquarters at Fasano, and he would then bring credentials and definite proposals. He said he would do what he could to release the two Italian patriots we had asked for. To Professor Husmann, Dollmann indicated that Kesselring, then Commander in Chief in North Italy, Wolff, Ambassador Rahn and Harster, were all included in the group for which he was speaking, and that the proposals which would be brought to the next meeting related to the surrender of the German forces in North Italy.

These developments were fully reported to Washington, London and to AFHQ at Caserta, with the added remark that, unless instructed to the contrary, we would listen to what the emissaries had to say on March, 8. In this message,

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we referred to a comment which we had previously received from AFHQ to the general effect that if Kesselring wished to treat for surrender, he could find ways of dispatching an emissary through the lines. We pointed out that if the Kesselring group wished to work out a surrender they would have to act with the greatest secrecy, lest their movements be betrayed by fanatical Nazis in Kesselring's entourage, that the normal procedure of despatching an aeroplane or of sending a messenger through the lines in Italy might prove difficult, but that it was relatively easy for high German officials to come to Switzerland without arousing suspicion, as they had been doing this over a considerable period.

From London, we received for our guidance the following general description of Dollmann. He had been sent to Italy as early as 1933 by Himmler, had become official adviser to von Mackensen, the German Ambassador, was liaison officer between General Wolff, Kesselring and Graziani. Military circles sought his advice on political matters and Kesselring often turned to him. He had influential contacts in Italy and was reported to be realistic enough to realize that Germany had lost the war; a vivid personality, temperamental and egotistical.



III. General Wolff Appears on the Scene.

On March 8, A.W.D. radioed Washington and AFHQ that General Wolff, together with Dollman and others had arrived in Switzerland claiming that he was prepared to talk definitely, and that we proposed to see what they had to say. On the evening of March 8, in Zürich, A.W.D. and G.G. received Wolff at A.W.D.'s apartment in that city. We declined to meet with Wolff's other companions, stating that if Wolff had anything to say he could come alone to us and tell us his story. Before the meeting took place, Wolff sent his identification papers,

(1) a full page picture of him in the "Südfront Illustrierte", an illustrated magazine of October 1944, with his high sounding titles, viz. "Höchster SS- und Polizeiführer in Italien, SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS, Bevollmächtigter General der Deutschen Wehrmacht in Italien" ("Supreme SS and Police Chief in Italy, Obergruppenführer of the SS and General of the Waffen-SS, plenipotentiary General of the Wehrmacht in Italy"), and

(2) a memorandum, giving not only his titles, but a list of 9 references. The first of these references was none other than Rudolph Hess, the second was the Pope!! The other references included two high Catholic prelates, Count Calvi di Bergolo, and the widow of the former Duke of Aosta. The paper also included certain data about Wolff's activities in Italy, including his claim to have rescued precious art objects from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, as well as the priceless coin collection of the King of Italy, and also referred to his help in protecting Rome from destruction.

From our own files we knew that Wolff had been in Italy for some two years as chief man of the Waffen-SS and that prior thereto he had been liaison officer at the Fuehrer HQ, also for the Waffen-SS. These references, plus a certain amount of background data from other sources, influenced us less than did the fact that Wolff released to us, even before we consented to see him, Parri and Usmiani, whom A.W.D. met a few hours afterwards in a Zurich clinic. At least he was a man of power, and at that stage we were more interested in his power than in his morals. We did not expect to find in this SS General a Sunday School teacher.

The meeting with Parri and Usmiani was dramatic; both were close personal friends of A.W.D. from long months of work with the Italian forces of liberation. They had been

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marched out from their respective dungeons under S.S. guard, believing that they were either going to the shooting squad, or, what was almost worse, deportation into Germany. To their utter bewilderment, they were delivered at the Swiss frontier without a word of explanation and taken to Zurich by our Swiss friends. They could hardly believe it when A.W.D. told them that they were unconditionally free to continue their work for the liberation of Italy.

The first meeting between A.W.D., G.G. and Wolff lasted about an hour. Wolff gave the impression of a man of energy. He wasted no words and did not attempt to bargain for himself. He said he had committed no crimes and was willing to stand on his record. He did not dispute either the hopelessness of the German military position, nor the fact that the German armies must surrender unconditionally. He said he was completely won over to the need for immediate action, that he believed he could win over Kesselring to his plan and he would proceed immediately to try to do this. The next day, March 9, in a longer talk which Wolff and Dollmann had with G.G., Wolff stated that in his opinion the time had come when some German with power to act should lead Germany out of the war to end useless material and human destruction, that he was willing to act and felt he could persuade Kesselring to join, that between them they controlled the entire situation in North Italy, and that, as far as the S.S. forces were concerned, he, Wolff, likewise had authority in the Vorarlberg and the Tyrol, including both the northern and southern approaches to the Brenner pass, that if he and Kesselring took joint action, Himmler would be powerless to take effective countermeasures, and that their joint action would have vital repercussions on the German armies elsewhere, as many German Generals were only waiting for someone to take the lead. Wolff then outlined the procedure which he contemplated:

(a) He would see Kesselring over the weekend in order to obtain from him a definite commitment to joint action. He said he had had the closest personal relations with Kesselring for several years. He indicated that Kesselring's problem was how to reconcile his action with his oath of allegiance to the Fuehrer. Kesselring throughout his long military career had always kept his oath and felt that he was now too old to change his habits. Wolff believed, however, that he could be won over to the senselessness of the struggle and to the realization that his duty to the German people was above that based on his oath to the Fuehrer.

(b) He would draft with Kesselring an appeal to be signed by them, Rahn and others, setting forth the uselessness of the struggle, their responsibility toward the German

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people to terminate it, and calling upon the military commanders and others generally to disassociate themselves from the Hitler Himmler control. The statement would also announce that hostilities in North Italy would be terminated by the Germans.

(c) Radio and leaflet action would be prepared to get the message over to the German people, the army and its commanders.

(d) Provided Kesselring could be won over, Wolff believed that he, Kesselring, would come clandestinely into Switzerland within a week to meet our military men to coordinate the technical military surrender measures with the above appeal. Apparently, no one on Kesselring's immediate staff was particularly suited to do this for him. His Chief of Staff Panzer-General Roettiger, who later proved to be one of the stoutest supporters of Wolff, was not yet acquainted with the project.

As evidence of his ability to act, in addition to the steps he had already taken in releasing Parri and Usmiani - and here it should be noted that in delivering Parri, Wolff had given up to us his most important Italian hostage - he stated he was prepared to take the following steps immediately:

(a) Discontinue active warfare against the partisans merely keeping up necessary pretense pending the execution of the plan.

(b) Release to Switzerland several hundred Jews interned at Bozen.

(c) Assume full responsibility for the safety and treatment of 350 British and American prisoners at Mantua, of whom 150 were in a hospital and 200 in a camp on the southern outskirts of the city. He claimed these were all of the American or British prisoners then held in northern Italy, as all others had been currently transferred to Germany.

(d) Release to Switzerland, if he could be found, Sogno Franci, the well known patriot working with the C.L.N.A.I.

(e) Facilitate as far as possible the return to North Italy of Italian officers, held in Germany, who might be useful in the post-hostilities period.

Wolff claimed, and we pressed him hard on the point, that he was acting entirely independently of Himmler, who

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had no information regarding Wolff's activities in Switzerland. This was a crucial point. Was Wolff telling us the truth?

Wolff made it clear in his talks with us that his ability to carry out his program depended largely on securing the cooperation of Kesselring. A combined coordinated action by both Wehrmacht and S.S. would be necessary to effect a complete surrender in North Italy.

IV. The Allied High Command  
in Italy shows an Interest.

These developments were immediately flashed to AFHQ at Caserta, to Washington and to London, with the recommendation that if we received word that Kesselring or any other high military authority in North Italy was prepared to come to Switzerland to act on military matters, it would be desirable for AFHQ to be ready to send appropriate military men to meet with them. We emphasized that we had engaged in no negotiations, had merely listened to Wolff's story, and had advised him that we were only interested in unconditional surrender. We still considered the whole matter as subject to test. We had no evidence as yet how much weight could be placed on Wolff's assurances.

AFHQ decided to act immediately without awaiting definite news as to Kesselring's position, and on March 9, we were advised that two senior staff officers from AFHQ were preparing to proceed to Switzerland, together with certain selected OSS personnel.

Meanwhile, however, things were not going smoothly on the German side, and we encountered the first of a series of misfortunes which dogged our footsteps until the final surrender on May 2. On March 12, Baron Parrilli, who at considerable personal risk acted throughout as emissary between Wolff's headquarters at Fasano and the Swiss frontier, arrived in Switzerland, and we had a midnight meeting with him in Lucerne. He reported that when General Wolff reached Fasano, early on March 10, on his return trip from Switzerland, he telephoned Kesselring and found to his dismay that Kesselring had been summoned by Hitler and had gone to the Fuehrer HQ. While he might be back, there was a chance - and we in Switzerland felt it was more a probability than a chance - that he would never come back. Wolff reported it might, therefore, be necessary to postpone the plans for the next meeting, though he was prepared to return to Switzerland at any time upon our call.

On receipt of this report, we sent Parrilli back to Wolff at Fasano with these questions:

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- (a) What did he propose to do if Kesselring did not return?
- (b) What would he do if he likewise were ordered to report to the Fuehrer?
- (c) If he refused to report, what was his plan, and what forces did he dispose of to carry it out?
- (d) What areas could he temporarily control for possible contact with our forces, even if the principal army commanders did not cooperate?

It should be added that Parrilli also reported to us that Wolff had received peremptory instructions from Kaltenbrunner to break off any contacts he, Wolff, had in Switzerland, as Kaltenbrunner had his own plans and that what Wolff was doing might spell catastrophe for these plans. This was sufficient clue to lead us to feel that Kaltenbrunner, and if so Himmler, now knew a good deal more than we could have wished about what Wolff was doing, and that they were both undoubtedly starting to do what they could to block Wolff's program. The leak, apparently, occurred because Harster, Himmler's top Sicherheitsdienst man in Italy, who had been to some extent in Wolff's councils, had taken fright and had advised Kaltenbrunner and Himmler of Wolff's activities.

This disturbing information about Kesselring's departure and Kaltenbrunner's intervention reached Caserta before the departure from Caserta of the high Allied staff officers, but their plans had been so far laid that it seemed wise to the High Command not to change them. We were, therefore, advised that the American Major General L. L. Lemnitzer, deputy Chief of Staff to Marshal Alexander, and the British Major General Terence Airey, G-2 of AFHQ, would arrive at Lyon on March 13. With them were Colonel Glavin, Lieutenant Colonel Weil, Captain Crockett, and others of the OSS staff in Italy. Meanwhile, the Russians were fully advised of the developments to date and consideration was given to the feasibility of adding a Russian officer to those who were coming to Switzerland.

While Generals Lemnitzer and Airey were on their way from Lyon to the Swiss frontier at Annemasse, Baron

Parrilli returned from a conference with Wolff. He reported that Wolff had made his decision to proceed and that his decision was not affected by the change in the situation due to Kesselring's departure. Wolff also gave the following answers to the specific questions which had been sent him:

- (a) If asked by the Fuehrer to return to Germany during Kesselring's absence, he would refuse, stating that it was impossible to leave the situation in North Italy without a chief. If summoned to do so after Kesselring's return, he would delay and if necessary allege illness.
- (b) If Kesselring did not return, Wolff was ready to prepare a plan of his own and come to a meeting if we desired. If a substitute for Kesselring was appointed, Wolff had two possible choices: either he could try to win over the substitute, or he could act alone. Wolff had apparently not decided which of these alternatives it would be best to follow as this depended on the personality of the successor.
- (c) As to what he could do, if required to act alone, Wolff indicated that he would draw up a plan of the forces which he felt he could dispose of and what he would need. This would include the possibility of facilitating a coastal landing or the seizure of airfields.

Wolff further stated that he was prepared to accept at his HQ any radio man we might wish to send and would arrange safe conduct for him. Wolff then expressed through Baron Parrilli his apprehension over the activities of Kaltenbrunner, Himmler's second in command, who was endeavoring also to make contact with us through an agent named Hoettel. Wolff thought that both Himmler and Kaltenbrunner were trying to throw up a smoke screen by starting a fake peace offensive of their own. He also was apprehensive that Kaltenbrunner might be planning a visit to North Italy in the effort to tie Wolff down there and prevent his leaving. In this connection, he begged us to be particularly careful with our ciphers, because he knew that at one time in 1943 certain messages sent from Bern had been read and gave

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some details of his knowledge on this point. (The fact that certain ciphers used by certain services in Bern, not OSS, had been read in 1943, had been disclosed to us at the time by certain Germans who were reporting to us, and the ciphers had been discarded.)

Wolff also sent us word that he had narrowly escaped being shot up by our fighter bombers on his return trip from Switzerland, a week before. His chauffeur and one officer had been shot and he sent us a memento a burned piece of cloth from his coat. He suggested that the work might be helped, if our bombers could go a little more lightly on the Milan-Fasano road.

After this conference with Parrilli, A.W.D. went to Annemasse, the French border town opposite Geneva, and there met with Generals Lemnitzer and Airey and the OSS officers accompanying them, and described the unfortunate turn events had taken due to Kesselring's removal from North Italy. The Sunrise plan had been largely built upon team play between Kesselring and Wolff. Our information indicated, they trusted each other and could work together. It was now necessary to build anew, which might take time. A. W. D. reported on the latest message from Wolff which he had received from Baron Parrilli earlier in the day. The two Generals felt that having come so far, they did not wish to turn back and would proceed to Bern if the trip could be arranged. They suggested, therefore, that Parrilli return to Fasano and advise Wolff that it was desirable for him to come to Switzerland for another conversation with A. W.D. in the light of the new situation. No mention was to be made of the arrival of officers from Caserta.

For two high ranking Allied officers to enter Switzerland, without their presence becoming known to the enemy, was no easy task. It seemed unwise to trump up some innocuous mission such as prisoner of war work, or army purchases, as such subterfuges would hardly stand up under fire. It was, therefore, decided to arrange their entry under assumed names, as the guests of A.W.D. and for consultation with him. In this capacity, they would come in openly and legally, but once in Switzerland they would be required to restrict their contacts to the selected circle of a handful of people who were in the know. The question



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of some identification papers was a problem, but finally we hit upon the solution of taking the identification tags, which fortunately omit date of birth, of two of the radio operators at the Annemasse base, two Army sergeants, named respectively Nicholson and McNeely; the American General became Nicholson, and the Englishman, McNeely. We then discussed the problem of arranging for a Russian to join the American and British Generals, in case the negotiations should take a favorable turn. This presented certain additional difficulties, due to the fact that Russia had no diplomatic relations with Switzerland, and the introduction of a high Russian officer was, therefore, not easy. A program was worked out to effect this, in case it should be desired by the Russian Government, and appropriate information on this subject was sent to Caserta.

A.W.D. then returned to Bern and arranged through a Swiss friend, who controlled the question of entry into Switzerland, for his two friends, Nicholson and McNeely, to come to Bern on March 15 for a few days consultation. He installed them in his apartment and assumed responsibility for them while in Switzerland -- an easy task, as two more accomplished and reasonable gentlemen could hardly have been found in the Armies of the United States and Great Britain. They accepted without question each and every precaution which was thrown about them during their three weeks stay in Switzerland, to prevent any inkling of their presence there coming to the attention of the enemy. In fact, hardly a dozen persons knew they were in Switzerland until weeks later and most of them did not know their true identity. Before General Airey purchased the dachshund "Fritzel", which the British press has made famous, the security angles of this abnormal "operation" were carefully considered and it was decided that no one would suspect that an eminent British General on an important secret mission would go shopping for a dachshund and that this was in fact an excellent security measure. Thereafter, Fritzel accompanied us wherever we, or rather General Airey, went.

Upon his arrival in Bern, General Lemnitzer cabled again with regard to the adding of a Russian officer to the group stating: "I have now had an opportunity to observe the security measures required

in getting Airey and me to Bern. Our position is considerably underground since we are in civilian clothes and are using assumed names. The introduction of a Russian officer must obviously be even more underground. He should arrive at Lyon or Dijon, in civilian clothes, where OSS will meet him and bring him to the frontier and arrange for his crossing. If it is decided to add a Russian officer to our group, the earliest information would be helpful in completing our plans for getting him to Bern."

V. The Second Meeting with  
General Wolff.

Upon returning to Bern from Annemasse on the evening of March 14, A.W.D. sent Parrilli back to Fasano to tell Wolff that if he was prepared to return to Switzerland and had a concrete plan, he would be received and that we would be in a position to consult quickly on any technical points. We suggested that he should be accompanied by such military advisers, as security permitted, and as he might consider advisable. No mention was made to him, however, of the arrival of any officers from AFHQ. We further sent word to Wolff that we would defer the question of sending a radio operator to his HQ until we had our next conversation with him. To be on the safe side, however, a suitable radio operator had been brought up from Caserta and was waiting at the Swiss frontier in case we should need him.

On March 17, we received information through our established lines of communication that Wolff would come to Switzerland on March 19, for a meeting, and most careful plans were laid to hold this meeting in complete secrecy. The place had to be in the vicinity of the Swiss-Italian frontier, South of the Gotthard Pass, as the pass was still covered with snow and could only be travelled by train through the tunnel. Wolff was too well known to too many people who might be travelling that route to risk another train trip. It was only great good luck that he had escaped recognition during his previous trip to Zurich. It was decided to hold the meeting in Ascona, as G.G. had two houses there at his disposal which were separated by about a mile, a charming villa on the lake, and a more extensive estate on the hill, both admirably located for security purposes. Ascona is a quiet town with just enough holiday guests at this season to permit the influx of a dozen or more people to remain unobserved, granted they did not publicly foregather. The train journey for Generals Lemnitzer, Airey, Colonel Glavin and the other OSS personnel was carefully arranged. By a separate train the communications personnel reached Ascona to set up a clandestine radio which was to link Ascona directly with Caserta. Automobiles, under carefully selected escort, were to pick up the Germans near Chiasso and bring them directly to Ascona. Fortunately, the plans carried through without a mishap, and Wolff arrived accompanied by his aides, Major Wenner and Zimmer, at the point of rendezvous on the morning of March 19.

In making these arrangements, as well as for substantive advice and guiding throughout the entire period of the conversations, we were deeply indebted to Major Max Waibel of the Swiss General Staff. Without his help we could never have effectively maintained the contact between Switzerland and Wolff's HQ. We could not have sent our radio operator to Milan or Bolzano, we could not have maintained that secrecy which was essential to success, but in addition to all this we had at each stage of this kaleidoscopic adventure the benefit of his sound advice, based on intimate knowledge of the technique and tactics of the Germans. In all his actions, Major Waibel conducted himself solely as a good Swiss, working in the interests of his own country to prevent the destruction of North Italy and the flooding over onto Swiss soil of the remnants of a beaten but still combatant German Army. Swiss interest in the orderly surrender of the German Army in North Italy and the peaceful turning over of the country to Allied occupation was only second to that of the Allies themselves.

The conversations with General Wolff started with a two hour conference in the morning during which he was alone with A.W.D. and G.G. The following is taken from notes of this conversation which were made at the time:

Wolff remarked that he, like so many other Germans, had been for some time impressed with the classical argument of the propagandists and of Headquarters that a change for the better might still be brought about in the German situation; that there were new secret weapons at the disposal of the High Command and that the Dusenjaeger were far superior to any other aeroplane and would soon change the military situation. His trips to Switzerland had sufficed to clear his mind of this fog, and that he was now convinced as to what he must do for his homeland and that he was prepared to stand or fall by the enterprise in which he was engaged.

In effect he had three possible alternatives and which alternatives should be chosen depended upon how long he had in which to act. If there was practically no time available, he would have to do what he could alone and this might not be very effective with his own unaided forces. If he had three or four days to prepare, he would go directly to Vietinghoff, who had replaced Kesselring in command of the German Armies

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in Italy, and see whether he could enlist his aid. If he had from five days to a week, he would strongly recommend the desirability of his going immediately to Kesselring HQ on the West Front for the reasons which he would explain.

In reply to A.W.D.'s request that Wolff briefly review the developments since the meeting ten days ago, Wolff stated that Kesselring had taken over Rundstedt's command. Wolff had hoped, on hearing this news, that Kesselring would return to Italy to make his adieus to Mussolini and to pack his effects, but the situation on the west front was so serious that he had not been allowed to do this and had apparently gone directly from his conference at the Fuehrer HQ to his new command. Vietinghoff was expected in North Italy on that very day, March 19, to take over Kesselring's former command. In reply to A.W.D.'s inquiry about Vietinghoff's movements, Wolff stated that Vietinghoff had gone on leave when Kesselring had returned to North Italy in the middle of January after recovering from the serious injury he had received some months before. Sometime towards the end of January, Vietinghoff had taken over the command in North Italy as Oberbefehlshaber Sudwest.

In reply to A.W.D.'s inquiry, Wolff said that he had had no direct contact with Kesselring since his departure from North Italy some ten days ago and that he did not wish to communicate with him by telephone. He could only assume, knowing his general attitude, that he had taken over his new duties as a soldier under the Fuehrer's orders, but probably with a heavy heart.

A.W.D. inquired regarding a report in the Swiss press to the effect that Wolff had had a recent important conference with Mussolini. Wolff replied that this was not quite exact. When he returned from his last visit here he found an invitation from Mussolini asking him to join an inspection of some black shirt brigades, that he had to accept this invitation and he was with Mussolini on a brief inspection trip which was interrupted by a serious air raid. Three of the cars in the procession were shot up, his chauffeur was shot in the arm, and a lieutenant of his was killed. Hence, he had no long conversation with Mussolini on this occasion and had not seen him since.

In reply to A.W.D.'s inquiry about Mussolini, Wolff said that he was pulled this way and that by the women around him, i.e. the Pettaci sisters, who really controlled his movements and decisions. Wolff thought that if

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he were left to himself he would put himself at the head of a black shirt brigade and let himself be killed in action, but that under the influence of the women, he might try to take refuge in Switzerland or do something of that nature. Wolff did not consider him as of any substantive importance in connection with his, Wolff's, problem.

Returning to an analysis of the three alternatives before him and the changed situation since the previous conference of March 8/9, due to Kesselring's departure, Wolff outlined the forces which he had at his own due disposal. He stated that they were of a very heterogeneous nature and did not have any great supply of heavy arms. They had a few rather ancient tanks and light weapons. Wolff remarked that he had two functions and would outline the forces he had under each separately. He was both Höchster SS- und Polizeiführer and Bevollmächtigter General der Deutschen Wehrmacht in Italy. He had taken over his first-named functions in September, 1943, having previously been in the Fuehrer HQ as liaison officer for the Waffen-SS. As Höchster SS- und Polizeiführer he had the following forces at his disposal, the figures being approximate: 15,000 Germans, 20,000 Russians (Cossacks, Don Kubans and Turcomans), 10,000 Serbs, 10,000 Slovenes, 5,000 Czechs and an Indian Legion, and 100,000 Italians, militia, black shirts and the X MAS.

As Bevollmaechtigter General der Deutschen Wehrmacht in Italy, which function he had taken over only at the end of July, he had directly under his command 10,000 Germans and he also had under his tactical command for use in case of attack an additional 55,000 Germans, mostly supply troops, etc. for the region north of the Po. Except for the Germans this heterogeneous command was not particularly dependable and was widely scattered, the Serbs and Slovenes being mostly in the extreme eastern section around the Goetz area. Any action which he took based solely on his own forces and if he had no Wehrmacht support, would probably find him caught between the OKW to the south and to the north.

As regards the prospect of accomplishing something directly with Vietinghoff, Wolff stated that his relations with Vietinghoff had been close and friendly and he felt he had been of considerable help to Vietinghoff during the protracted period when Kesselring was absent during his injury. However, Vietinghoff was a non-political soldier and he would not be an easy man to gain over to a political action unless he had the support of others in the Wehrmacht. Further, Wolff had never

discussed the proposed type of action with Vietinghoff who might therefore be unprepared for it since obviously, while Kesselring was in command, he, Wolff, had discussed the matter solely with the latter.

Here again Wolff remarked that it was all a question of the time at his disposal. The German command had indications which led them to believe that there would be a big Allied offensive in Italy by the end of this month.

If he had a minimum of five or possibly seven days he would strongly favor an immediate visit to Kesselring. He would have to take this trip by auto as the arrangements for an aeroplane trip would render the security difficult and there were other problems involved in going by air. As he controlled the Police forces on the Brenner and beyond he could, subject to the interruptions which Brenner traffic had, proceed by car to Germany and take up the whole matter with Kesselring. With Kesselring the ground work had already been laid in previous conversations which Wolff had had with him. Wolff had a perfectly legitimate reason to visit Kesselring since there were many unfinished matters relating to the Italian situation which he should go over with him.

A.W.D. stated to Wolff that he had available for consultation competent military advisers and he would like to discuss with them the various matters that Wolff had brought up. G.G. and A.W.D. stated, however, that their first impression was that Wolff should probably follow his own judgment regarding a visit to Kesselring. They could not, of course, state, - as they did not know, - how much time was available for action; all they did know was that the time was exceedingly short.

A. W. D. remarked that his military friends had never understood why the Germans had continued to maintain a large force in North Italy, given the present German military situation. Wolff then repeated and expanded what he had previously said, viz. that the orders had been all prepared and approved by Hitler for an evacuation of a large part of North Italy in September 1944. Under this plan nine divisions would have been available for other sectors. Both he and the military people in North Italy felt that the line could be held for some time to come and had opposed the move in September. The food supplies available in North Italy were considerable, Italian industry had some value, a great deal was then being taken out of North Italy and advanced air bases in the Italian plan would be a serious danger to Germany. These in effect were the arguments they used at that time and

Hitler swung over and subsequently had been opposed to evacuation for the same reasons that impelled him to hold on in Norway and other such areas. Hitler was afraid of what they call a "Raeumungspsychose" (withdrawal complex), fearing that this would become epidemic after the complete defeat in France and lead to a general breakdown.

A.W.D. asked Wolff how he explained the telegram he had received from Kaltenbrunner, advising Wolff to have no contacts in Switzerland as "this would have a catastrophic effect." Wolff answered that he thought that Kaltenbrunner believed that he himself was developing a line and did not want this disturbed. Kaltenbrunner had tried to get him to come to Innsbruck for a meeting but Wolff said that he had refused on the ground that he could not absent himself during Kesselring's absence. In reply to an inquiry as to what Wolff thought about the idea of a German redout in the Alps, Wolff remarked that this was madness, that it would only bring untold and unnecessary suffering on the German people and that everything must be done to prevent it.

Wolff stated, in reply to an inquiry, that he was quite ready to take in a radio man or two men if we preferred. It was desirable that they speak German and that while he would be responsible for their safety, they would have to accept rather strict regulations about circulating. He suggested that it would be of no use to have the men there during his absence in Germany, but suggested that they be ready to come in within three or four days.

A.W.D. pointed out to Wolff that to realize any program of surrender there were complicated and technical military matters to be settled. It was easy to start a war but difficult to stop one. It would, therefore, be necessary in connection with giving effect to the surrender to have conferences between technical military men and these could best take place at the HQ of the Allied forces. Wolff replied he recognized this and that he would be prepared as soon as the plan materialized to send competent persons to Allied HQ. In reply to A.W.D.'s inquiry whether this should be through the lines or via Switzerland, he said that secrecy could be better preserved if we could then arrange for them to be met at the Swiss-Italian frontier and if we could then take them from there to southern Italy.



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The conversation then turned again on the relations between Kesselring and Vietinghoff and whether Vietinghoff would possibly act on his own. Wolff emphasized that Kesselring's prestige was far greater than that of Vietinghoff, that if Kesselring went along <sup>on</sup> any plan, Vietinghoff would be easy to gain, that Kesselring knew the situation in Italy and what could be done, and his support would, in Wolff's opinion, be vital in securing the collaboration of Vietinghoff.

G.G. asked Wolff what other commanders on the western front would be likely to cooperate with Kesselring and specifically inquired about Blaskowitz. Wolff replied that Blaskowitz was the type of man who would not take risks and would probably not be inclined to act unless he were 90 percent sure of success. As to others there, he mentioned SS General Hauser, who had fought in Normandy and who he believed had taken over command of the northern group of Armies on the West front. He would possibly be a man with whom Kesselring could work. This ended the morning conversation with Wolff.

During the lunch hour, A.W.D. and G.G. reported fully to Generals Lemnitzer and Airey, and the Generals decided, after full consideration that they would themselves meet Wolff briefly in the afternoon, that they would not give their names or identity, but that they would appear as the military advisers of A.W.D.

*afternoon*  
A.W.D. opened the meeting by explaining to Wolff that he had reported on the results of the morning meeting and that his military advisers now thought that it was an appropriate time to meet to discuss certain matters with Wolff. General Lemnitzer then conducted the balance of the meeting.

He explained that the report he had received of the morning meeting had furnished a good picture of the current problems facing Wolff as the result of the changed situation which had arisen. It was his view that the defeat of Germany was inevitable, and that it was imperative that this should be realized by all concerned as quickly as possible. He regretted that there must be some delay due to the changes in command which had occurred. He had hoped for quicker action but he understood the difficulty in securing quicker action due to circumstances described by Wolff.

General Lemnitzer stressed the importance of the time factor in this matter. He felt that Wolff as a soldier also understood that time, as in any operation,

was a vital factor. General Lemnitzer stated that he realized that Wolff would now need more time to put his own plans into operation. He stated that Wolff alone was in a position to assess the German situation existing in Northern Italy and that it was up to him, in collaboration with the appropriate military Commanders, to produce specific plans and proposals to achieve the desired end. General Lemnitzer also pointed out the need and urgency for extremely careful consideration of the military problems involved. He suggested that it was necessary for authorized and qualified military persons to be produced by Wolff to meet with Allied military representatives for the purpose of working out the detailed plan. The quicker that action was taken, the better. It was decided to leave to Wolff the responsibility for arranging to secure appropriate military representatives and bring them out via Switzerland.

Wolff then pointed out that there would be two representatives, both in civilian clothes, and that he proposed to deliver them to Chiasso, a town on the Swiss-Italian border. General Lemnitzer then emphasized that there should be no worry on Wolff's part about security and secrecy of the two representatives, as they would be wholly protected.

A.W.E. then asked Wolff to explain his reasons for wanting to see Kesselring before visiting Vietinghoff. Wolff explained that first he was confident of more success by following that plan. He had been very close to Kesselring for a long time and in certain ways had already made approaches to Kesselring on this problem. Thus, he pointed out that he would not be presenting a new or startling problem to Kesselring, but one with which he was already familiar. On the other hand, he had never talked about this problem to Vietinghoff and, therefore, it would be difficult to broach the subject to him with any expectation of success until he could guarantee Kesselring's and Westfal's complete support. General Lemnitzer then asked specifically for Wolff's view as to what he thought Kesselring would do when approached by Wolff. Wolff replied that this would depend entirely on whether his mission to Kesselring was successful or not. He, himself, expected to go directly from Kesselring's headquarters to meet Vietinghoff, or would be prepared to come directly to the border, depending on what Kesselring recommended. General Lemnitzer then asked approximately how long it would take for all this to take place. Wolff replied that he was no prophet, but with

good luck and freedom from Allied aircraft attack, he believed five days would be the minimum. He explained that he could not fly for certain technical reasons (lack of fuel and attack by Allied aircraft). Thus he must go by car and this might be quite slow as the roads are frequently under air attack. However, he fully realized the urgency and would do his utmost to accomplish the task as quickly as possible. He believed he would take a maximum of seven days, and would do his best to do it in less.

General Lemnitzer then asked how Wolff proposed to get Vietinghoff into this picture. He pointed out that this was the important factor. Wolff replied that he was going to see Kesselring, and then he would visit Vietinghoff. As far as Vietinghoff was concerned he had been very close to him during the time Vietinghoff was in command for three months in Northern Italy during Kesselring's absence due to wounds. Once Kesselring had been won over, he did not anticipate difficulty with Vietinghoff, in view of the close relationship existing between Wolff and Vietinghoff. General Lemnitzer then asked Wolff whether he had any questions to ask. Wolff had none. G.G. then raised the question as to what would be the solution in the event that Kesselring sent out military representatives with Wolff in addition to those produced by Vietinghoff. General Lemnitzer stated that such a situation, if it did arise, would be referred to senior Allied military headquarters for decision. He again strongly emphasized the importance of time and, to that end, recommended that the close working arrangements now existing between Wolff and A.W.D. be maintained.

Wolff then asked where the German military representatives were wanted. General Lemnitzer said they should be prepared to come to an Allied headquarters, as detailed military discussions could best be held there. He repeated that the officers authorized to act for the Army Group Commander must come to a military headquarters. His view was that they would be delivered to the OSS representative in Switzerland who would arrange for their transportation to Allied headquarters. Wolff indicated that he now understood the complete framework of the problem and fully realized that it was up to him to fill in this framework as quickly as he possibly could.

After the Generals withdrew, A.W.D. and G.G. had a further brief talk with Wolff and then with Husmann and Parrilli. It was agreed that if any question ever arose with regard to the meetings with Wolff, he would state

that the purpose of his trip had been in connection with prisoner exchange matters. To build up his story, he asked us whether we could not give them some German officer in exchange for Parri and Usmiani, whom he had already delivered. As he left, he assured us that he would come again as soon as possible and he hoped also with plenipotentiaries from Kesselring's new headquarters.

VI. Kesselring and Himmler  
Make Their Influence Felt.

The Allied members of the party then returned from Ascona and reassembled in Bern, and there were several days of delay before the next item of information was received. On March 26, Zimmer established contact with Wolff by telephone from Milan via Fasano. Wolff stated that he was at Kesselring's headquarters on the West Front and that he could not return for several days. He hoped that the delay would not result in breaking the contact which had been established but the technical difficulties of his trip had been greater than he anticipated, and that Kesselring had been so much on the move and so busy (in view of the break through on the western front, this statement seems more than plausible) that he had had a hard time in getting much of his time, that he hoped to return with a complete program, and that this might require two or three days longer.

Wolff asked Zimmer to find out from A.W.D. whether this delay would be fatal and if "the gentlemen would go away in anger." (verärgert abreisen.) Wolff urged Zimmer to get the whole story over to A.W.D. and to try to keep the door open. This message was received by General Airey and A.W.D., who had made another trip to Ascona. Further days went by with no news of Wolff, until, finally, on March 30, a report was received that he had returned to Fasano and arrangements were accordingly made for a further meeting to be held at Ascona as soon as Wolff could get to the Swiss frontier.

On March 31, Zimmer again crossed the frontier and gave us the following report:

Wolff had arrived at Fasano Friday morning and immediately summoned Parrilli and Zimmer to Fasano where they spent Friday afternoon together. Zimmer was then sent here by Wolff, Parrilli remaining in Fasano.

Wolff endeavored to contact Vietinghoff before he went to see Kesselring, but was unable to reach him.

The trip to Kesselring had been most difficult and when he reached Kesselring's headquarters, hell had already broken loose. The first conversation took place only 15 km from our advancing forces. Wolff presented his plan for the Italian surrender and Kesselring advised him to go through with it. He, Kesselring, regretted that he was not also in Italy.

In a second conversation with Kesselring, the latter again expressed his agreement with Wolff's plan and said that he should so advise Vietinghoff, but added that on his front he could not "go along" (mitmachen). Kesselring found himself largely surrounded by strangers whom he did not trust. Zimmer gained the impression from Wolff that Kesselring was half a prisoner.

Immediately on his return Wolff had tried to reach Vietinghoff but he was on an inspection trip at the front and was returning to his HQ only on the night of the 31st. Wolff proposed to see him immediately and would spend Sunday with him. Wolff sent this message through Zimmer for A.W.D.: "I am ready to come to a final conversation in order to arrange matters. I hope to come with Rahn, Dollmann and either Vietinghoff or a staff officer."

Rahn had been called back to Germany but avoided the trip by alleging serious strike conditions<sup>N</sup>North Italy which he had to handle. Harster did return to Germany but apparently on account of a row with Gauleiter Hofer of the Tyrol. Neither summons was believed to be connected with Sunrise.

While in Germany, and this was one of the reasons for his delay in returning, Wolff was summoned by Himmler who asked him to explain his action in giving up prisoners. Wolff replied that he was arranging an exchange and he wanted to give the Fuehrer a German General and close friend of Hitler's as a birthday present. Himmler also accused him of having been in Switzerland and asked the reasons. Wolff answered that he had a contact in Milan who promised to bring him in touch with the Allies and that he was acting pursuant to the Fuehrer's recent secret order to seek any possible contact with the Allies. Wolff had heard that many efforts had failed and wanted to see what he could do. Himmler ordered Wolff to wait around for a couple of days as he wanted to think the matter over. Himmler told him that he should not leave Italy, and particularly that he should not go to Switzerland. Fortunately, however, Himmler was suddenly called urgently to Hungary and referred Wolff to Kaltenbrunner. Wolff did not see Kaltenbrunner but left for Italy.

In his conversation with Kesselring, the latter said to Wolff, "Our situation is desperate, nobody dares tell the truth to the Fuehrer, who is surrounded by a small group of advisers, who still believe in a last specific secret weapon which they call the 'Verzweiflungs' weapon." Kesselring believed that although this weapon could prolong the war it could not decide it, it might cause a terrible blood bath on both sides. Kesselring said if the Fuehrer gave him the order to use the weapon he would surrender his command.

VII. General Wolff Fails to Put in  
an Appearance but Sends a Message

On April 2, the day fixed for the meeting with Wolff, Parrilli alone appeared and gave us at Ascona the following message:

He had spent from Friday, March 30, to Monday at 0500 hours at Wolff's HQ at Fasano in constant contact with him.

Meanwhile, Wolff was endeavoring to establish contact with Vietinghoff, whom he had arranged to see Sunday April 1, and Monday morning April 2, at his HQ, some 150 km from Fasano.

On Sunday, April 1, Himmler who had now returned to his HQ in Germany, called Wolff on the telephone at 1130 and said peremptorily that he expected him to stay in Italy and that he, Himmler, would telephone him periodically. Then he added somewhat sarcastically that he understood that Wolff had sent his family to a point near the Brenner, but that he, Himmler, had taken better care of them and thought they were safer elsewhere, so they were going back immediately to St. Wolfgang near Salzburg.

Wolff said to Parrilli that if he had only his family to think of, he would not alter his program, but that if Himmler also arrested him now, which he would do, if Wolff made a false move, then the whole project would fall to the ground, that as a corpse he could be helpful neither to the German people nor to the Allies. Wolff believed that Himmler had given special instructions that he, Wolff, should be watched. Therefore, he must be very careful and could not move at the moment. Major Wenner, Wolff's aide, gave Parrilli the impression that Wolff was in danger of assassination.

Wolff had talked with Ambassador Rahn and Rahn was in agreement with his program.

Sunday evening, April 1, at 2000 hours, Wolff left Fasano to visit Vietinghoff at this HQ and arrived back at 0430 hours. Wolff reported that he had seen Vietinghoff and his chief of staff, Roettiger, and affirmed that both of them were in agreement with him. Vietinghoff was reported to have remarked that it was nonsense to go on with the fighting.

Wolff, in conversation with Parrilli, said that Kesselring had told Wolff when he saw him that it might last 10 to 15 days longer in Germany, but that Germany was facing a catastrophe. Wolff had passed on to Vietinghoff this report and his impressions of his visit to Kesselring.

Wolff asked Parrilli to pass on the message to A.W.D. that if they could be given a little more time, say ten days, he could hand over North Italy on a silver platter.

Parrilli reported that from April 2, a new degree of alarm (Alarmstufe) for North Italy had been prescribed from

Germany, and that everyone was held in readiness.

Parrilli understood that instructions for the rapid carrying out of destruction in North Italy had been given from Germany and that Wolff no longer had control in the ports of Genoa or Trieste. Wolff and Vietinghoff had discussed this question and Parrilli had gained the impression that both of them were opposed and would do what they could to prevent destruction. According to Wolff, Vietinghoff had received instructions in case of a general Allied attack, to withdraw to the Alps fighting (kämpfend abzusetzen), destroying as they went.

With regard to the new V weapon, Wolff had been able to get no information about it and he understood that even Kesselring did not know what it was, that it was in the hands of specialists for employment. Wolff confirmed that Kesselring would oppose the use of this new weapon.



VIII. General Wolff's Message is Answered

After getting the various sidelights of the situation, Parrilli was given two messages for Wolff which he was to memorize as we refused to send along anything in writing. The first was a general message and the second a personal message from A.W.D. These two messages are quoted below:

First message: "We have received your messages and are glad to learn that you have achieved your object in winning over Vietinghoff and Roettiger to your plan. Therefore, we trust that the necessary machinery can now be set in motion.

"If military surrender can be effected, it must be done very quickly in view of the collapse of organized German resistance in the west and the threat to their lines of communication in the north. This should be effected by sending military parliamentarians through the lines at a point and at a time and date which may be communicated via Parrilli and A.W.D. to the south. Parliamentarians, crossing the lines, should use the password Nürnberg. If it is preferred to send parliamentarians south via Switzerland, this can also be arranged, but it has the disadvantage of taking longer. If there is not time to send word via Switzerland that Parliamentarians are coming, then the usual parliamentarians can be sent on any grounds that they consider suitable for this purpose, using the above password upon reaching the Allied lines. If Wolff desires to come personally with Vietinghoff, or a high staff officer of Vietinghoff, every effort will be made to have him met by the two gentlemen he saw in Ascona among others".

Second message: "Wolff should also be reminded of what A.W.D. and G.G. previously emphasized to him, viz. that pending surrender it is vital to prevent the carrying out of any Hitler Himmler instructions regarding destruction in North Italy. Wolff and Vietinghoff must see to this.

"Wolff should also be reminded of his previous promise to limit action against the partisans.

"The destruction of North Italy will merely add another burden of responsibility on the German people, who, in one form or another, will have to make good such destruction.

"Wolff had also assured A.W.D. that he would do all in his power to protect Allied and partisan prisoners and hostages in his hands. A.W.D. emphasized that Wolff and Vietinghoff now had a final opportunity to act. Now it is only action which counts. The alternative may be:

1) the assumption of co-responsibility for chaos and destruction in North Italy, and

2) the eventual cutting off of a remnant of German forces by the advancing Allies, bringing only further futile sacrifice of German lives."

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This ended the first phase of Sunrise, which we feared was heading for the rocks. Wolff appeared to have fallen under the control of Himmler and it seemed dubious whether he would have the power to save the project, if he lacked the power to disobey Himmler's orders against absenting himself from his headquarters. We returned to Bern rather discouraged.

In view of these developments Generals Lemnitzer and Airey deemed it best to return to Caserta. They left instructions with A.W.D. and G.G. to follow-up the matter closely and to keep them advised of all developments, and they expressed their readiness to return in the event that their presence was needed.

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IX. April 9-10. More Messages -  
Vietinghoff Shows Signs of  
Joining.

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The next important entry in the diary of events was on April 9. Baron Parrilli had taken our messages to Fasano and delivered them to Wolff on April 3. Wolff had in turn had a further meeting with Vietinghoff on the night of April 5, and again on the afternoon of April 7. The events of these days were described to us by Parrilli as follows:

Between 1000 hours and 1300 hours, April 6, Wolff had held a meeting with his commanders and informed them that he would hold each personally responsible in his own territory for preventing destruction in North Italy.

Mussolini had been alarmed by a press item, reading as follows:

"German troops at Milan received on Wednesday the order not to leave their caserns. According to Neo-Fascist and Nazi circles, this measure is connected with negotiations which have commenced to determine the fate of the German Army Italy. Two members of the Resistance have been liberated and taken to the frontier. Allegedly, they carried definite propositions. One of these personalities is Ferruccio Parri, head of military section of the C.L.N.A.I. Parri had been arrested in Milan and imprisoned by the SS at Verona."

He summoned Ambassador Rahn and asked for explanations. This forced Wolff to redouble his precautions against premature disclosures.

On April 7, between 1400 and 1700 hours, Vietinghoff and Roettiger conferred with Wolff at Fasano. Following this conference, Parrilli had a three-quarter hour conference with Vietinghoff and Roettiger. (During this conference Vietinghoff was called to the telephone and ordered five thousand additional troops to be sent to the Comacchio area, as the Allied offensive was already under way.) Following this conference, Parrilli conferred until 0200 hours on April 8 with Wolff and Dollmann, and then proceeded immediately to the frontier with Wolff's adjutant to protect him against search as he brought two memoranda summarizing the results of Wolff's conferences with Vietinghoff and Roettiger and answering the two oral messages which Parrilli had taken.

The first memorandum read, in translation:

"I agree with your judgment of the military situation. I also consider that it would be an irresponsible act to countenance further bloodshed and senseless destruction. This cannot decisively influence the clearly apparent and early outcome of the war.

"I am, therefore, prepared - however, only after grave conflicts of conscience and out of a feeling of deep responsibility towards the entire people - to draw the consequences which the situation requires, on the understanding that in any official negotiations the following points be guaranteed:

- "1) Withdrawal (Abzug) with military honor after  
• the cessation of hostilities.
- "2) Maintenance of a modest contingent of the Army Group as future instrument of order inside Germany."

Parrilli explained that this message while dictated by Wolff, expressed Vietinghoff's views. "Abzug", he said, meant only eventual return to their homes when the prisoners would be released. Point 2, he said, represented a wish. (Here we felt that the over-enthusiastic intermediary was attempting to explain away clearly untenable propositions.)

The second memorandum related largely to \* preventing destruction, limiting action against the partisans, protecting prisoners, etc. With regard to preventing destruction in North Italy, General Wolff confirmed his previous understanding that he would do everything within his power to prevent destruction, but that in the area where the German Marine was in control, he could not give guarantees. This was under the competence of Admiral Doenitz and Doenitz had already issued his orders. Wolff, Vietinghoff and Rahn had all intervened with the Fascist Marine authorities to prevent marine destruction, but did not wish to be held as

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\* After the conclusion of the capitulation, General Wolff summarized, at the end of the report quoted in Chapter XXII, what he felt he had been able to do to prevent destruction and limit warfare against the partisans. Here he states:

"Finally, I wish to emphasize that upon my return from my visit to Switzerland, in the early part of March, I issued orders to all SS, Police and Wehrmacht units, whose commanders I called in to various conferences, and whom I placed

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guaranteeing success. With regard to limiting activities against the partisans, the memorandum stated that an order had been given to all German military authorities in North Italy to remain on the defensive, except in cases of partisan attacks or serious sabotage acts by them. In this connection, Wolff mentioned certain acts of sabotage by the partisans and also repeated raids of the partisan bands under Moscatelli, northwest of Novara, and attacks by Tito on the Adriatic coast. Finally, in the second memorandum, General Wolff confirmed that he recognized that this was their last chance and that quick action was required.

After handing us the two memoranda and giving these oral explanations, Parrilli added that Vietinghoff had taken the position that the successful accomplishment of the surrender might be prejudiced if it was necessary to send parliamentarians back and forth through the lines several times and that the matter should be settled if possible with one trip. Therefore, Vietinghoff, Roettiger and Wolff joined in an urgent request that they be given the draft of capitulation which they were expected to sign.

Wolff had also stated to Parrilli that Vietinghoff while recognizing the uselessness of the struggle, and while he was willing to work with us to prevent destruction and to spare lives, and would not follow senseless Hitler Himmler orders, nevertheless he did not want to be a traitor. Vietinghoff, he said, was ready to sign an unconditional surrender if it could be put in a form which was consonant with his honor as a soldier and such that those surrendering

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under strictest mandate, to avoid any destructions and to prevent them if necessary by the use of force. I, myself, for a year and a half always opposed destructions which did not have a military character. Since March, I gained over Army Commanders friendly to me such as Vietinghoff and Roettiger and the Marine Commander Vice Admiral Loewitsch so that the docks and port installations of Genoa and Trieste were in general not destroyed, insofar as I now know. Major-General von Leyers, in charge of the armament and production ministry and who was under my command, I made personally responsible to see to it that industrial destruction should be avoided during the evacuation of Italy. In the conduct of war against the partisans, I have endeavored to spare lives. I succeeded in many cases in making local armistice agreements with the partisans and three times I succeeded in terminating general strikes in Turin, Milan and Genoa by negotiations without bloodshed, despite contrary instructions from above. Further, I obtained from the Duce, in October 1944, an amnesty for 80,000 partisans who were cut off in the high snow mountains, and I protected them from counter-measures by the Neo-Fascists."

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would feel that they had behaved in a more honorable way than the soldiers on other fronts who had uselessly sacrificed life and property. Wolff said that it was a question of words and of appearances. Wolff then made to Parrilli the following rather curious suggestions to meet the point of honor, suggestions which presumably originated with Vietinghoff:

- (a) The surrendering Germans would like to stand at attention when the Allies arrive to accept their surrender.
- (b) The prisoners would like to do some useful work such as repairing roads and railways in Italy.
- (c) The soldiers would like to keep their belts and bayonets when eventually allowed to return home as evidence that they surrendered from conviction and not as a beaten rabble.

Wolff further stated to his messenger, Parrilli, that events were moving fast and that the Italian theater was rapidly becoming independent; that it was only a matter of days before they would be cut off and on their own, and, therefore, Vietinghoff, was beginning to feel that he must act on his own initiative.

Parrilli concluded the resume of Wolff's attitude by stating that Wolff felt he could hold to his promise to deliver North Italy on a silver platter by April 16, and that it was up to us to give the orders, that it was a matter of timing and doing something to meet the point of military honor.

Parrilli indicated to us that he was impressed by Vietinghoff but he was obviously a soldier of the old school who would fight on in a recognized hopeless situation rather than act contrary to what he conceived to be military honor.

Parrilli's statement and the substance of the above memoranda promptly reached Caserta. The Wolff-Vietinghoff request that we furnish them with an outline of the surrender terms looked tricky. Quite naturally AFHQ, as well as we in Bern, felt that this was an effort to draw us into something looking like negotiations. We had steadily refused to give Wolff or Vietinghoff anything whatever in writing. We were not negotiating, we were merely opening them a way to surrender, if they desired to do so. We were, therefore, instructed to advise Wolff that the draft copy of the capitulation would only be handed to the German parliamentarians on their arrival at the appropriate Allied headquarters, in accordance with

the usages of war, that we fully agreed as to the advisability of speed, and that there should be only one such visit by parliamentarians, and that, therefore, any officers who were sent should come with absolute authority to act. Parrilli left immediately for Fasano with this message which was given him on April 10.

### X. Establishment of Vital Communication Links

The Allied offensive in Italy which was to drive the Germans to the Alps was gaining momentum. We controlled the air in North Italy and travel by our messenger from the Swiss frontier to Fasano was becoming doubly perilous. The time it took to get messages back and forth was increasing with each trip. Meanwhile, the time for great decisions was narrowing and something had to be done to improve our line of communication from Bern to Wolff's headquarters. For security reasons it was difficult to put a radio operator at Fasano, the small town on the lake of Garda, where Wolff had his headquarters. We decided, however, to put an operator at Milan, in the house of Wolff's aid, Zimmer. Across the border in Alsace, with one of our units, we found a young Czech operator who spoke good German and who could easily pass as a German. He had been trained by us at Bari and had a signal plan and crystals for working directly with Bari and hence with Caserta. It was a ticklish undertaking as we did not wish to give a hostage to the Germans and did not wish to send in anyone who, if captured by some SS units unfriendly to Wolff, would possibly give away the Sunrise story under torture. We decided to take a chance on our Czech and he proved to be one of the really star performers of the entire enterprise. We passed him through Switzerland with his radio transmitter ciphers and signal plan and gave him cryptic instructions. He was told nothing whatever about Sunrise. He was instructed to go to Milan with the person to whom he was delivered and to encode and radio any message he received from this person. He was, of course, trained in the usual precautionary secret signals to give in the event he was taken over by anyone else and forced to send fake messages. We ourselves in conjunction with Caserta naturally assumed responsibility for determining the credence to be put on any messages which he might receive from Zimmer, Wolff's aide, to whom we consigned him. Little Wally\* as we dubbed Walter, proceeded to Chiasso and from there to Milan with Zimmer, installed himself in Milan and within 48 hours we had word from Caserta that his radio was functioning and had been picked up by them. Some of little Wally's messages were classic and some of them which he sent from Bolzano, as reported in a later chapter of our story, made history. One of his messages from Milan gave us the location of General Vietinghoff's headquarters with an obvious invitation to bomb it. This was promptly done, much to General Vietinghoff's discomfort as he nearly lost his life and did lose several of his officers. Why we were given this location through the SS is somewhat of a puzzle, but we rather assumed that at that stage of the proceedings, Wolff thought it would do no harm to make things a little warmer for the slow-moving Vietinghoff. A few days later Wally radioed that Mussolini was in Milan and was lodging a few blocks away. Again Wally suggested a few bombs but asked that care be taken so that one should not fall on his own head, not many blocks away from the given objective. Our Air Force decided not to waste bombs on Mussolini at this stage because of the danger to the civilian population, and by now Mussolini was no longer "big game".

\* See following page.



Footnote

Wally's real name is Vacalr Hradecky. He was born on April 4, 1919 in Prague where he went to school and high school and then entered the University of Prague to study medicine. In December 1938 he joined the Czech Army being dismissed in March 1939 after the German occupation. The Germans arrested him in November 1939 and imprisoned him at Dachau. He escaped in April 1940 with some English and Czech parachute saboteurs with whom he operated in Holland, Belgium and Germany getting information on fortifications and munitions dumps until once more arrested by the Germans in 1942. Escaping again in the summer of 1943 he crossed into Switzerland where he was interned until October 1944 at which time a third escape got him into France. He was taken over by OSS in November 1944 and was sent to Bari for training from December 1944 till February 1945. His mission in April 1945 to Milan was his first as an OSS radio operator.

XI. April 13-16. New Adherents, Agents  
Provocateurs, Himmler again Interferes

Our next news came on April 13. Wolff was still hopeful and was in direct telephone communication with Kesselring, who by that time had been driven by our Armies to a point between Nuremberg and the Czech frontier. However, the most encouraging feature of this message was that Luftwaffe General von Pohl, who had about 50,000 air men and air ground forces under his command, had joined Wolff's group in working for an unconditional surrender.

Now to make matters all the more complicated, two apparent agents provocateurs appeared on the scene. A Dr. Georg Gyssling arrived in Bern, stated that he was German Consul at Merano and had been sent to A.W.D. with an important message from Wolff. To add to the plausibility of his story, he gave several names of persons who were on the inner circle of Sunrise negotiations and seemed to know more about the matter than was good for us or for him. Gyssling talked with an associate of A.W.D. who fortunately had not been working on Sunrise and who quite truthfully told him that he knew nothing whatever about the matter, that A.W.D. was in Paris. On his return, A.W.D. advised Gyssling through his associate that he was uninterested in his story, that he was expecting no message from Wolff or anyone like him, that he would not see him, and that as far as he, A.W.D., was concerned Gyssling might return from where he had come. This matter was never wholly solved, but we seriously suspect that Gyssling was sent by Hofer, the Gauleiter of the Tyrol, who had been in on some of the earlier Sunrise conversations at Wolff's headquarters. In the later phases of Sunrise Hofer played a disturbing and traitorous part, and we believe that he sent Gyssling on a fishing expedition to try to gain some ammunition which would permit him to checkmate Wolff's plans.

The second appearance of an agent provocateur was in quite a different quarter and took place almost simultaneously. A man who claimed, falsely no doubt, to be a British officer turned up in the Genoa area and asked that a message be sent to Vietinghoff, stating that he had been advised that Vietinghoff was in touch with A.W.D. and that he, the officer, wanted to get in touch with Vietinghoff, in order to carry on the conversations. Vietinghoff naturally jumped to the conclusion that his name was being spread about as being engaged in a traitorous affair. Wolff, when he next met him, found him a frightened and doubly cautious man. Vietinghoff refused to see the alleged agent and even prepared a letter to General Jodl of Hitler's headquarters discussing Wolff's contacts with the Allies and stating that he, Vietinghoff, did not propose to have anything to do with them until he had received Jodl's clearance. According to the reports we received, Wolff, Roettiger and Rahn finally persuaded Vietinghoff not to send the letter.

On April 16 Zimmer appeared on the Swiss scene again. He had just come from Wolff and brought a long-

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hand letter addressed by Wolff to A.W.D., dated April 15. In this letter Wolff expressed his condolences on the death of President Roosevelt, stated he could not foresee what the consequences of this might be for the matters which we had in hand, but that A.W.D. could count on him to carry through his program. The letter added that the victorious Allies, through the honorable proposals already made by Wolff, could shorten the war and end the destruction of life and culture, that he, Wolff, would do everything in his own power to realize this aim, and in spite of certain difficulties which made results slower than he had originally hoped, he was convinced of the final success of the mutual effort.

Zimmer also reported that on April 13, Himmler had telephoned Wolff from Berlin and told him to leave immediately for the German capitol by the fastest possible means. We were told that Wolff, instead of complying, sent a letter by a special courier in which, according to Zimmer, he advised Himmler that he, Wolff, had told him at their last meeting that it was useless to continue the slaughter in view of the complete Allied success in the invasion of Germany, that Himmler's idea that the West Wall would hold was wrong, and that Wolff had been clearly right in his view of events, that it was useless for Wolff to go to see Himmler but that he, Himmler, should come to Wolff and make use of the existing Allied contacts to surrender all of Germany to the Allies, and that if Himmler did not see fit to do this, Wolff would consider himself as entirely disassociated from any Himmler control.

On April 14, both morning and afternoon, Himmler, according to Zimmer, twice telephoned to Wolff to inquire why he had not arrived. The only answer he received was that Wolff was absent.

Wolff also reported via Zimmer that he was determined to effect the surrender of North Italy, with or without the consent of Vietinghoff, that on April 12 and 13 he had seen the chief Army commanders and felt sure that they were with him, regardless of Vietinghoff. Zimmer also gave the following message as being a direct quotation of Wolff's words:

"I beg A.W.D. to do everything possible that the Allies do not make useless sacrifices with their intensified offensive because I take full responsibility and guarantee that during the coming week all will be surrendered."

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At the time we were in a quandry as to whether this was merely an attempt, - but obviously a futile one - to slow down the victorious progress of our North Italian offensive, or whether it expressed a determination based on power of accomplishment. In any event, whatever may have been the motives, within a week Wolff's and Vietinghoff's plenipotentiaries were in Switzerland ready to sign the surrender. But this no one knew on April 16.

In this same message, Wolff also sent an interesting item of news which he had from Hofer, who had seen Hitler and Himmler on April 12. Hitler and Himmler, he stated, were planning to stay in Berlin and, instead of discussing plans for the German redoubt, were crazily, as Wolff thought, talking of new German offensives.

Zimmer also gave us an important item of news on the military command in North Italy which subsequently had a bearing on the surrender terms. According to Wolff, the German High Command, presumably the Fuehrer HQ, a few days before, namely about April 10th, had issued an order which removed all territory east of the Isonzo river, from the area of command of Vietinghoff and placed it under the command of General Löhr who commanded the heterogeneous German-Croatian-Cossack etc, Army Group in Croatia. Following this order, General von Pohl, who was working with Wolff, had placed all his Luftwaffe personnel west of the Isonzo and had taken steps to block the Brenner with flak to prevent any entry from the North and East. According to the news Wolff sent us, the chief danger to his surrender plan might be the entrance of General Löhr on Vietinghoff's flank in the Isonzo area. Wolff also reported that his second in command, Rauff, was now fully cooperating with him.

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XII. General Wolff visits Berlin and sees Himmler and Hitler. Contacts are broken. Wolff again comes to Switzerland, this time with Vietinghoff's envoy.

On April 17, news came through which we feared might spell the end of Sunrise. Parrilli followed Zimmer to Switzerland and brought us the disturbing report that Wolff, despite his bold letter to Himmler, had finally consented to talk with Himmler on the telephone and Himmler had persuaded him to go to Berlin for a conference. Before leaving, Wolff sent A.W.D. a message that he was going on this trip as he thought there might be a chance of accomplishing something for the entire German people, that he would return to Italy immediately. This message we took with some scepticism; not many people had returned from the Hitler-Himmler headquarters and those who did return generally came with their wings clipped. Would Wolff be the exception?

On April 21, we received two messages from quite different quarters. The first from Washington, confirmed a few hours later from AFHQ, instructed us in the most categorical terms and from the highest authority that all Sunrise contacts should be broken. This message was understandable in the light of the delay, Wolff's apparent failure or inability to line up the German military leaders in North Italy, his obedience to the Himmler-Hitler order to go to Berlin. We took immediate steps to comply with this order, but there was no way of breaking the contact without getting in touch with Wolff or his intermediaries and advising them of the decision taken. And, then, only a few hours after the receipt of Washington's order, we received a message from Fasano that Wolff had returned <sup>from</sup> Berlin, that final conclusions were being reached and that Parrilli was on his way to Switzerland to advise us of the results.

On April 23, Parrilli arrived at the frontier with news that Wolff, his aide Major Wenner and one of Vietinghoff's important staff officers were arriving at the frontier and were proceeding immediately to Lucerne and that Vietinghoff's envoy was equipped with full powers for the surrender. Our position at this juncture was not an easy one. We felt certain that the orders to break contact would not have been issued if it had been known that at that very moment Wolff was on his way to Switzerland, apparently ready to go to Caserta with Vietinghoff's envoy, to carry out the unconditional surrender of nearly a million Germans. But military orders do not admit of

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speculation and no orders could have been more precise and clear than those we had received.

We immediately laid the new facts before Washington and AFHQ, stated that we would transmit such intelligence information as the German envoys might communicate via our Swiss and Italian intermediaries, that we would refuse to receive them and would advise them that we were instructed to break off the contact. We then asked for further instructions for our guidance. We could hardly expect an answer without considerable delay because the decision to break off the contact had been reached in the highest quarters, confirmed by the combined Chiefs of Staff, and could not easily be reversed.

On April 24, through our Swiss friends and Parrilli, we were informed that Wolff and his adjutant Major Wenner and Lt. Colonel Viktor von Schweinitz were in Lucerne ready to proceed to southern Italy to conclude matters. Wolff, of course, required no full powers, as he could sign himself for all S.S. and Police troops in North Italy. Von Schweinitz bore full powers, dated April 22, on official stationery of "Der Oberbefehlshaber Suedwest und Oberbefehlshaber der Heeresgruppe C". The full powers stated that, von Schweinitz was empowered to conduct and to conclude binding engagements "within the framework of the instructions which I have given him" signed Vietinghoff.

A prompt reply came from AFHQ stating that in view of the new developments they were requesting a reconsideration of the entire matter by the combined Chiefs of Staff, at least to permit us to ascertain the seriousness of the intentions of the German envoys and the scope of their powers. Meanwhile, we were authorized to parry for time and to endeavor to see to it that Wolff, von Schweinitz and Wenner remained available until the final decision could be obtained from the Combined Chiefs.

For 48 hours Wolff and his associates waited in Lucerne. During this period, through our Swiss intermediaries, we advised them that while they were on their way to Switzerland, we had received word to break off contact with them, that those instructions still stood and that therefore we would not see them. Indirectly, through our Swiss intermediaries, we permitted word to reach them that the fact of their arrival had been communicated to the appropriate quarters and that if they wished to wait we would let them know whether this fact altered the decisions reached. Meanwhile, through Parrilli and our Swiss friends, we obtained the follow-

ing report of Wolff's visit to Berlin and we pieced out the events of the days following his return from Berlin on April 19, at noon. Here is what Wolff had to say about Berlin a few days before its capture by the Russians and Hitler's disappearance or death:

Wolff on the first day of his visit to Berlin, April 18, saw first Himmler alone, thereafter, Himmler and Kaltenbrunner, both meetings lasting many hours. Kaltenbrunner appeared well informed on Wolff's two visits to Switzerland, for which Kaltenbrunner attacked Wolff furiously.

As to Hitler's and his own personal future, Himmler spoke of three possibilities:

- a) Fight it out in Berlin,
- b) Retreat to northern redoubt,
- c) Retreat by plane to Berchtesgaden.

As to the last possibility, Himmler added that Hitler now did not like to fly, but might do so in emergency.

On the second day of his visit, Wolff saw Hitler in an air raid shelter about two hours motor ride from the centre of Berlin. Hitler seemed in low spirits but not hopeless and stated substantially "we must fight to gain time. 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." Wolff tried to put in a word about the senselessness of further destruction in Italy to which Hitler did not react.

Through our Swiss friends we also learned that Wolff upon his return from Berlin had had long conferences with Vietinghoff and Gauleiter Hofer, and, according to his story, had finally induced Vietinghoff to send an envoy to sign the surrender.

By this time, the success of General Clark's offensive in North Italy left no doubts as to the fate of the German Army. The only question at issue was whether there could be some sort of an orderly surrender which would help spare Italy from destruction and save thousands of lives and prevent a strong remnant of the German Armies from making their way into the German redoubt or fighting it out in the isolated valleys leading to Switzerland or to the Austrian Alps. If no order for surrender came, these forces could still have been a very costly nuisance, and there is no telling what might happen to the treasures of art and to the industrial and hydroelectric installations in the area still held by the Germans.

XIII. General Wolff, a prisoner of the Italian Partisans. The Rescue.

While the German envoys were still waiting at Lucerne, the offensive in North Italy was bringing more and more dramatic results. The Germans suffered a crushing defeat south of the Po, and the Po was being crossed. The Germans were in retreat toward the mountain and Venezia Giulia. Finally, on April 26, Wolff felt he could wait no longer, as his return route to his HQ at Fasano was already threatened. He also feared some sort of a coup by Mussolini and the Neo-Fascists as Mussolini had been maneuvering around in Milan for several days. Accordingly, Wolff gave written full powers to his aide, Major Wenner, as to all SS, Police and other troops under his command, and instructed him and Lieutenant Colonel von Schweinitz to remain a couple of days longer, to proceed to Caserta if authorization was given, otherwise to return to the German headquarters.

Shortly before Wolff left Lucerne, he received a telephone call from his man on the Swiss-Italian frontier that a message had just been received for him from Himmler, dated April 23. In translation the message read:

"It is more than ever essential that the Italian front hold and remain intact. No negotiations of any kind should be undertaken. (Es kommt jetzt mehr denn je darauf an, dass die Italienische Front hält und intakt bleibt. Es dürfen nicht die geringsten Verhandlungen gepflogen werden.)"

According to Major Waibel's report to us, Wolff on receiving the message shrugged his shoulders and said that what Himmler had to say no longer made any difference. At last the serpent apparently had lost his fangs!

Arriving at the Swiss-Italian frontier, Wolff crossed over into Italy just as the storm broke. The Italian partisans, who had been waiting for the moment of liberation, came down from the mountains, occupied Como and the neighboring area, and without knowing who or what they had caught, surrounded the villa of Locatelli, of Bel Paese cheese fame, in which General Wolff had taken refuge. G.G., through his Swiss friends, learned these facts late on the evening of April 26, and proceeded to the Italian frontier. It was obvious that if Wolff was caught by the partisans, he would be shot out of hand. If he were shot, any possibility of continuing the surrender negotiations would disappear. It was a tricky matter to act, but G.G. decided that Wolff should be rescued if possible. In



taking this decision G.G. felt that it was more important for us to have Wolff inside of the German fortress supporting our plan for surrender rather than to have him as a prisoner or as a corpse in the hands of the partisans.

At Chiasso G.G. ran into Donald Jones (A.W.D.'s representative in Lugano) who had just returned from Como, where he had been negotiating with the partisans, most of whom knew him well as for almost two years he had been giving them precious aid. G.G. in a few words told Jones his problem and requested him to proceed to the villa where Wolff was surrounded, but from which, strange to say, he could still reach the Swiss frontier by telephone. A telephone message was sent through to the General that a car was coming to get him and to see to it that his German guard did not fire on it. Here is Jones' report of what then transpired:

"The situation in the Como area was critical but I felt that I could manage to get through by my personal knowledge of the partisans of the region to whom I was known as 'Scotti'. I crossed the frontier and met two German officers who had been sent by General Wolff through the partisan lines. I put the two German officers in the first car with white flags, and I followed immediately behind in my car with the headlamps of my car focused on the white flags. In a third car, we put some armed partisans. As we left Chiasso, the partisans opened fire on us. I got out of the car and stood in the headlights, as I felt sure that if the partisans saw me, someone would recognize me and stop the firing. And so it worked out. An old friend of mine, leading the firing squad, rushed out of the darkness, greeted me warmly 'Il amico Scotti' and immediately put an end to the firing. From there we went on to Como and secured from my friend the Prefect the necessary papers to pass the partisan lines. With more or less interference by partisans, we finally reached the Villa Locatelli near Cernobbio, where Wolff and his German guards were installed. The General was in full uniform and I told him to put on civilian clothes. While he was doing this I was offered some real Scotch and LuckyStrike cigarettes which they claimed to have brought back from North Africa. I put the General in my car, after having arranged that his officers would remain unarmed in the villa but under an agreement that they would not be molested by the partisans until the American Army arrived.

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"We then started back for the frontier and after a series of negotiations with partisan bands, most of whom knew me, and by assuming responsibility for the convoy, we avoided having any control made and we safely passed over into Switzerland and delivered General Wolff to G.G."

As Wolff believed, and probably rightly so, that his life had just been saved, G.G. felt that an extraordinary opportunity offered itself to impress on Wolff the necessity for prompt and determined action on his part upon his return to Bolzano which was his new H.Q. and also that of Vietinghoff. In a dimly lit room, in a small hotel in Lugano, G.G. conferred with Wolff through the early hours of the morning and received from him the following assurances:

(1) Should Himmler suddenly arrive in his area to take over supreme command, Wolff was determined to arrest him.

(2) Should any of the military commanders at the headquarters of the German Army Group attempt to block the surrender, Wolff was prepared to take forcible measures against them.

(3) Wolff reiterated his promise that he would bring all his influence to bear - which was obviously considerable - to prevent destruction in his area and to protect the lives of political prisoners. His anxiety to see the promises to this effect which he had given to A.W.D. and G.G. carried out, seemed one of the reasons why he wished to return to Bolzano as quickly as possible.

(4) Wolff confirmed that a few hours before, from his surrounded villa in Cernobbio, he had, by telephone, instructed Rauff, S.S. Commander in Milan, to avoid fighting and bloodshed under all circumstances, and if necessary to surrender even to the partisans. In G.G.'s presence he confirmed these instructions in writing, and they were passed on to Parrilli to be sent to Rauff in Milan as quickly as possible.

By this time, as above stated, the German headquarters for North Italy forces had been moved to Bolzano and Wolff started to retrace his steps through Switzerland to the Swiss-Austrian frontier at Feldkirch, from where he hoped to reach his new headquarters via the Vorarlberg. Before Wolff left Switzerland the ban had been lifted by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and we received instructions to send Wolff, von Schweinitz and Wenner, or the latter two if Wolff was not available, to Caserta to receive and sign the surrender terms. This information we were able to

communicate to Wolff before he reached the Swiss-Austrian frontier. He decided, and we concurred in his decision, that it was preferable for him to return to Bolzano. His presence there would be essential to keep the situation in hand and to give backing to the envoys, who would now go to Caserta. Travel was then getting so precarious that no one knew whether the envoys sent to Caserta would ever get back to the German lines. It thus seemed essential to have someone working at both ends of the line. Wolff, therefore, continued on his journey and reached Meran, not far from Bolzano, in the early hours of the morning on April 28.

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XIV. The German Plenipotentiaries go to Caserta. A new communications problem.

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Meanwhile, AFHQ had sent a plane to Annecy, and we passed von Schweinitz and Wenner through Switzerland to the Swiss-French frontier and they, together with G.G., left Annecy for Caserta on the morning of April 28, in foul weather, as spring had given way to a last fling of winter and snow was falling.

Now we had another crucial problem to face, viz. that of communications. As soon as we had been instructed to break off contact with Wolff and company, we took steps to extract little Wally from his hot spot with the S.S. in Milan. We sent him a cryptic message to come to the Swiss-Italian frontier at Chiasso for consultation, and Zimmer was despatched to get him out. We did not tell Zimmer why, as we were always afraid they would hold Wally as a hostage. Fortunately, everything went through on schedule and when we received the authorization to resume contact and to endeavor to carry through the original program, Wally was safe in Switzerland with his radio transmitter, ready for more work and danger.

We then established on the Swiss-Austrian frontier the same courier system which we had previously had on the Swiss-Italian frontier. Zimmer took up his post at Buchs in Switzerland, from where he could easily move over to Feldkirch in Austria. We turned Wally over to Zimmer with instructions to move him as rapidly as possible to Bolzano, to set up his radio there. He arrived safely at his dangerous destination at about the time of Wolff's return. We did not know, however, how his machine would function from this rather badly enclosed mountain retreat.

It can not be overstressed that for the successful carrying through of our plans, quick, sure and secret communication was absolutely vital. Without Wally and his radio, the Italian surrender would never have gone through as it did. AFHQ fully appreciated this and while we were doing everything we could, they kept hammering at us. On April 28, they radioed us "urgent you get radio facilities established Wolff's HQ earliest", and on April 29, General Lemnitzer radioed "I expect that communication with Wolff-Vietinghoff HQ will soon be of supreme importance. Walter should contact Caserta earliest. Is there alternative means of communicating with Wolff if Walter fails to reach Bolzano."

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The next 24 hours was an anxious time, but on the evening of April 29, we received a welcome signal from Caserta that Walter had come through on the air, and from then on he was one of the busiest and most important cogs in the negotiations.

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XV. The capitulation is signed, with a reservation. The envoys start the perilous home trip.

Upon the arrival of von Schweinitz and Wenner at Caserta, developments there proceeded rapidly, but this part of the story is for AFHQ to write. Suffice it to say that three meetings took place, presided over by General Morgan; Chief of Staff of Field Marshal Alexander. The meetings were attended by most of the high-ranking officers of General Alexander's Staff, and in addition two Russian observers were present.

The first meeting took place on April 28, at 18.00 at which the terms of surrender were presented and turned over to the German emissaries.

The second meeting took place later on in the evening of the same day. At this meeting the German emissaries asked for certain explanations of some of the terms of the surrender instrument, and raised certain objections as to the practicability of carrying through some of the provisions. At the first and second meetings the German emissaries tried their best, but in vain, to obtain an assurance that the German armies in Italy would remain interned on Italian soil after they had surrendered, and would not be transferred to Great Britain or the United States.

After the second meeting broke up, G.G. spent most of the night with the German emissaries going carefully over the surrender instrument. In the early morning a cable message was composed to be transmitted to Wolff and Vietinghoff by the two German emissaries. This was submitted to General Lemnitzer for transmission about four a.m.

The situation now was such that Major Wenner, representing Wolff and under instructions from Wolff, was willing to sign the surrender document, while Schweinitz was still holding out for some assurance as to the internment of German troops, and insisted that the powers conferred on him by Vietinghoff did not permit him to return with empty hands in this respect.

On the morning of April 29, after lengthy discussions with G.G. and a final talk with Generals Lemnitzer and Airey, Schweinitz finally agreed to sign the document, stating however that in doing so he was exceeding his powers.

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The rest of the morning was spent with the Chief Signal Officer of AFHQ trying to make the necessary arrangements for direct wireless communication between German HQ at Bolzano, and AFHQ.

The final meeting at which the instrument of surrender was signed took place shortly after 14 hours on April 29. The German emissaries were obviously disturbed by the floodlights, the clicking and grinding of cameras, which they had not expected. The instrument of surrender was signed by Lt. General Morgan for the Allies, and on the German side by Oberst Lt. von Schweinitz, signing for Vietinghoff, and Major Wenner signing for Wolff.

The time was getting short, as the party had to leave Caserta early in the afternoon to reach Annemasse before nightfall. After a stay at Caserta of less than 24 hours the plane took off at 15 hours with the emissaries and G.G. on board. The weather was bad and flying conditions doubtful. However a perfect landing was made <sup>near</sup> Annemasse at 19.15, and the party reached the Swiss border prior to the wireless message which had been sent to Bern announcing their return. Consequently no arrangements had been made for the border crossing. On arriving at the frontier, G.G. left the emissaries on French soil, crossed into Switzerland and telephoned for help from his Swiss friends, but found that they were out of the office busily working on other matters connected with the surrender. Faced with this dilemma he explained to the frontier guards that as the record would show the two persons accompanying him had left Switzerland the day before for a short trip into France and were now returning. He did not of course mention that during this "short" trip they had signed the surrender of the German Armies in Italy. The guards looked through the records and asked for the names. Since, for security reasons, the emissaries had used false identities, G.G. was completely ignorant of the names given. He suggested to the guards that they should cross into France and speak directly to the two persons. With the introduction of this personal touch the ice was finally broken and the surrender documents and their custodians leaped over one more hurdle - not by any means the last.

The party was now facing an all night drive through Switzerland from border to border; this after thirty-six momentous and almost sleepless hours.

Meanwhile, as Walter had not given any signs of life from Bolzano by the morning of April 29, when the signature

took place, an urgent message was radioed to us in Bern, which we were instructed to transmit immediately to Vietinghoff and Wolff in Bolzano. This message contained the basic terms of the unconditional surrender as submitted to the German emissaries at Caserta together with a comment by the emissaries to Wolff and Vietinghoff explaining some of the details.

Speed was vital in the delivery of the message. Tracy Barnes, of the Bern Legation Staff, recently decorated for an operational jump and daring action in Brittany following D-day, who had been associated with A.W.D. and G.G. in many phases of the Sunrise operation was called in. After consulting one of our Swiss friends he decided to try the quickest method possible, namely, a plane trip to Bolzano with a parachute jump. A password "Nuremberg" had already been agreed upon with Wolff some time before in case a WT operator should be parachuted. The prospect of a plane from Switzerland over German-held territory plus a parachutist snatching surrender terms from his bosom seems quite in character with the dramatic development of the enterprise. A pilot was found who was willing to make the flight but due to approaching darkness he could not lay on the operation till early the following morning. The flight never materialized because on arrival at Buchs a message was received stating that the envoys and G.G. had arrived safely in Annemasse from Caserta, had crossed the Swiss frontier and were on their way with the signed surrender terms.

Just before midnight, on April 29, they arrived in Bern and stopped at A.W.D.'s house. Refreshments were ready for the exhausted envoys, and A.W.D. gave them in a few words the developments in the military picture of the last twenty-four hours and a final vigorous "pep talk" to stress the importance of finishing out their mission. They were worn out and discouraged. They still had before them an all night ride to the Swiss-Austrian frontier and then ten hours by auto through dangerous country. Their arrival in Bolzano was absolutely essential if the surrender terms were to be carried out according to the program arranged. They left with the promise that they would do everything in their power to carry through.

When, early on the morning of April 30, they arrived at the Swiss-Austrian frontier, they were met with the word that the Swiss authorities had absolutely



closed the frontier and that neither they nor anyone else could pass. The Swiss friends, who had been so far assisting us, could do nothing to change this order which had come from the highest authority and permitted no exceptions. Now every hour of delay threatened to be disastrous in view of the close time schedule between their possible arrival in Bolzano and the date fixed for the end of hostilities.

A.W.D. then went to one of the highest officials of the Swiss Foreign Office, a man of prompt decisions who was not afraid of responsibility. He told the Swiss official briefly how much depended upon the passage of these two men. Switzerland itself was vitally interested in the peaceful surrender of the beaten German forces in North Italy. It was also vitally interested in seeing that North Italy was not destroyed by a fighting retreating German Army, a part of which might try to seek refuge on Swiss soil. The Swiss official understood in a minute what was at stake, promised that the men would pass and sent immediate orders to the frontier to this effect.

The trip through the Vorarlberg was a dangerous one. This area was rapidly becoming a military no-man's-land and, to make matters worse, was partially blocked by the late snows. It was successfully negotiated, however, despite the ramshackle German auto which was all they had at their disposal since for security reasons they felt they could not accept our offer of a good American car. Von Schweinitz and Wenner reached Bolzano late on the evening of April 30. Fearing that they would not get through over the Vorarlberg, we had kept back one copy of the signed instrument of surrender and made arrangements to send this copy to Bolzano by a messenger of our own, using a more southerly and less dangerous pass from Switzerland into Austria at Martinsbruck. We even sent to Caserta a message for Walter asking Wolff to come to Martinsbruck to pick up the papers. Fortunately, Caserta did not have to send this message, as the news of the safe arrival of the envoys crossed our radio to them.

XVI. Would Vietinghoff ratify his envoy's signature? May 1, a day of tension.

May 1, was an anxious day. No word had come through on April 30, from Bolzano to confirm the acceptance of the surrender terms, and the ratification of the signatures of the Vietinghoff-Wolff envoys. Marshal Alexander, late on May 1, sent through Walter a strong message to Vietinghoff, asking for a categorical reply as to whether or not the Germans would cease firing at the appointed time and accept the surrender. For hours this remained unanswered, and the reasons for this is a story told in our next chapter. Finally, shortly before the expiration of the time limit, the radio stations at Caserta began to pick up signals being sent by German commanders to their troops, indicating that hostilities would cease at the appointed time. This was taken as sufficient evidence of the acceptance of the surrender terms; the formal announcement of the surrender was made by Field Marshal Alexander and shortly thereafter a belated confirmatory message passed through Walter's hands.

The reason for the silence at Bolzano was told us in a written report prepared a few days later by General Wolff, and handed to G.G. who meanwhile had proceeded to Bolzano, which by that time was occupied by American troops of the Fifth Army. This report is an essential part of our story and a translation follows, eliminating only one or two items which are not pertinent to this phase of our story. General Wolff himself must assume responsibility for the statements in this memorandum. Some day Kesselring and others may give their own account of what took place.

XVII. General Wolff's Story of Events  
at Bolzano - April 27, - May 2, 1945.

After I had been freed from the partisans who had encircled me at Cernobbio near Como, for which I am indebted to G.G. and Jones, I was secretly taken through Switzerland and on April 27, 1945, at approximately 16.00 hours, I reached Feldkirch in the Vorarlberg.

On April 28, 1945, at 1.00 a.m., I picked up Ambassador Rahn at Meran and we rode on to a joint conference at the official quarters of Gauleiter Hofer at Bolzano. This conference lasted from 2.00 a.m., on April 28, 1945, until about 7.30 a.m. The following men participated:

Colonel-General von Vietinghoff,  
General Roettiger,  
Lieutenant-Colonel Moll, IA of the Army Group,  
Ambassador Rahn,  
General Wolff,  
Gauleiter Hofer,  
his military adjutant, Major von Reichel,  
his political staff-leader, Stengl.

At the outset of the conversation, I reported on the events of my trip and the situation which I faced due to the fact that upon my arrival in Switzerland, together with Lieutenant-Colonel von Schweinitz and Major Wenner, we were surprised by the news that the men representing the Allied High Command were forbidden to continue the seven weeks old negotiations regarding the surrender terms; that finally, however, the permission of the Allied High Command was given for von Schweinitz and Wenner to proceed to the HQ of Marshal Alexander and they had set out upon their journey on April 28, 1945. I made it clear to those present, that, due to the great loss of time and the outstanding success of the offensive in the Italian theatre, it was, for the moment, not possible to think of attaining the conditions originally viewed; that particularly it was impossible to realize the political desires of Gauleiter Hofer, who desired that southern Tyrol and northern Tyrol should not be occupied by the Allied troops and that his direction there should continue. Gauleiter Hofer, with whom I had discussed this possibility even before my trip, and who had expressly requested my views, was deeply disappointed. He insisted that all military organizations in this territory be subject to his political leadership and orders. This was violently opposed by all present. Further, there was a decided diversity of opinion between Gauleiter Hofer on the one side, and General Roettiger (Chief of the General Staff of the Army Group Southwest) and Lieutenant-Colonel Moll (Staff Officer of the Army Group Southwest) on the other, regarding the military situation and the really obtainable armistice terms, which were not good enough for Gauleiter Hofer. After a 5½ hour conversation without results, those present parted, to await the return of the two representatives, Lieutenant-Colonel von Schweinitz and Major Wenner, who had been given full powers.

During the night of April 28-29, at the suggestion of the leader of the National Liberation Committee for the region Alto-Adige/Hochetsch, a long discussion took place between him and SS- and Polizeifuehrer Brunner - with the zone "Alpenvorarl" - SS-Brigadefuehrer Brunner - with the object of permitting the participation of partisan groups in the administration and establishment of peace and order within the operational zone. On April 29, 1945, at approximately 2.30 hours, I took the position that I would, in principle, be agreeable to any reasonable and bearable arrangement, which had as its object the saving of bloodshed, and further that I would be prepared on one of the following days to receive an accredited representative of the American General, Clark, for such conferences. General von Vietinghoff, for the Army Group, then agreed with the demands of Dr. De Angelis, without asking the permission of the competent Gauleiter Hofer. Hofer felt hurt and believed that the Army Group was deliberately undermining him in his official functions. Though he had been the one to induce all the responsible men of the Italian theatre of war to pledge themselves jointly to carry through their mutual plans, by force if necessary, now he did not even attempt to clear up the independent action of the Army Group by telephoning either Vietinghoff or me, but made by telephone a direct complaint to Field Marshal Kesselring, and by exposing to him all our agreements and secrets, gave both the Army Group and myself a dangerous stab in the back. As a result of this clear act of treachery, Hofer induced Field Marshal Kesselring, who, on April 28, 1945, had been appointed by the OKW as Oberbefehlshaber of all the Army Groups fighting in the South, and who thus was the superior of the Army Group Southwest, to relieve of their posts the main pillars of my plan, General von Vietinghoff, as well as his Chief of Staff Roettiger. On the morning of April 30, he, Kesselring, appointed the former Oberbefehlshaber of the Army Group G, Infantry General Schultz as OB. Southwest and Major General Wentzel as Chief of the Staff OB. Southwest. These two Generals reached the HQ at Bolzano about noon on April 30, at the same time as Vietinghoff, coming from a conference held at Hofer's estate near Innsbruck, at which the removal of Vietinghoff had taken place. Due to Vietinghoff's and Roettiger's removal, the situation changed completely. Kesselring's measure was taken without previous agreement with me. The day before my departure to Switzerland on April 23, 1945, I had sent his and my old confidants, SS-Standartenfuehrer Dollmann and Staff Doctor Niesen, to inform him of the situation. At the time, Kesselring was not head of the Army Group, and, therefore, was not officially concerned with the matter. He expressed his thanks to Dollmann and Niesen, and seemed pleased to receive the information which gave the broad outlines of our project, without burdening the Marshal unnecessarily with details. Upon their return, Dollmann and Niesen said that they were both convinced that the Marshal fully understood everything, but that he could only take an active part himself after the impending death (bevorstehenden Tod) of the Fuehrer which would release him of his oath of allegiance. Both men were of the opinion that the Field Marshal, since he himself lacked current information regarding the actual development in the southern area, would

our view. However  
 accept the Marshal, on the basis of Hofer's presentation of the situation, took the position that the despatch of von Schweinitz and Wenner with powers to reach a final decision was too far-reaching, and apart from the immediate recall of Vietinghoff and Roettiger, he ordered an official investigation of the whole proceeding by a General. My own case he referred to the Chief of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Kaltenbrunner, who was then in North Tyrol. This last measure, based on all our previous experiences, involved a very serious threat for me, particularly as Kaltenbrunner had in my area his special Gestapo representatives (Gestapo-Sonderrollkommando) Skorzeny and Begus. On the afternoon of April 30, 1945, Vietinghoff went to the "retreat area" (Ausweichstelle) of the Army Group, called "Blaupunkt", without, as had originally been generally agreed, opposing his removal. Roettiger was to break in his successor, Major-General Wentzel, for a day, and then was also to withdraw to the "Fuehrer" reserve of the Army Group at "Blaupunkt".

On April 29, radio operator Walter turned up with his apparatus, and at 12.00 hours his apparatus was ready to send and to receive. A long radio Nr. 2, containing a resumé of the surrender conditions, together with an explanation of our delegates, was not received the first time, and various repetitions could not possibly be decoded. In these critical hours, I received the news that von Schweinitz and Wenner were on their way back. Their attempt to telephone me from Feldkirch on the afternoon of April 30, failed. In the night April 30/May 1, at about 00.30 hours, they both arrived pretty well exhausted, but bringing with them the drafts of the armistice agreement which they had signed. There then followed, beginning on May 1, about 06.30 hours, conversations with Roettiger, Moll, von Schweinitz, Wenner and Dollmann, regarding the measures to be taken in order to bring about the end of hostilities on May 2, at 12.00 hours Greenwich time, as provided in the signed agreements, despite the withdrawal of Vietinghoff. OB. General Schultz, as well as his Chief of Staff Wentzel, were not prepared, without the specific approval of Kesselring to give the order to lay down arms. As the approval of Kesselring had not been received and was not to be expected, the only thing we could do was to prevent Schultz and his Chief of Staff Wentzel from hindering the giving of the surrender orders, or as the case might be to prevent their giving contrary orders. Roettiger, in agreement with me, saw no other way out except to take into custody Schultz and Wentzel from May 1, at 7.00 o'clock in the morning until 16.00 hours in the afternoon. To prevent other officers of Schultz' Staff from telephoning to Kesselring or to the High Command of the Wehrmacht, the news of the arrest of Schultz, the head of the intelligence service, Major-General Kempf, under orders from Roettiger and Wolff, cut off the telephone communications between Bolzano and the Reich throughout May 1. As a result of these measures, Roettiger had the defacto leadership of the Army Group and was working in close collaboration with Wolff. However, the Commanders of the 10th and 14th Armies, Generals Herr and Lemmelsen were not willing to accept the authority seized by General Roettiger. They refused to collaborate to effect the surrender as long as their superiors, Schultz and Wentzel, were illegally robbed of their freedom. We, therefore, had no other course except to endeavor to win the voluntary

collaboration of Schultz and Wentzel, as without the cooperation of the Army group leaders nothing could be done. Air General von Pohl declared that he was still ready to work for the armistice, provided that Lemmelsen went along. He said that he was ready to work on Lemmelsen and did his best in this regard. After a two hour conversation, which I had with Schultz and Wentzel I succeeded, on May 1, at 16.00 hours, in reaching an understanding on the basis of which both of these men were prepared, despite their arrest, to resume their functions. There followed a general meeting of commanders at 18.00 hours in the headquarters of the Army Group in Bolzano. Those present at the meeting were:

OB. of the 10th Army, General Herr,  
 OB. of the 14th Army, General von Lemmelsen,  
 Air General von Pohl,  
 Admiral Loewitsch,  
 General Wolff,  
 General Roettiger,  
 General Wentzel,

under the chairmanship of General Schultz. The commanders of the 10th and 14th Armies, in describing the situation stated that their respective armies, were to all intents and purposes defeated, were without heavy arms and almost without munitions, and that continuation of the battle from the standpoint of the responsibility of the High Command did not make any sense. General von Pohl and I both agreed with this view from the political standpoint. Thereafter Schultz and Wentzel agreed that they would faithfully present this viewpoint to Field Marshal Kesselring. They refused, however, without the specific and personal agreement of Kesselring, to undertake any action, or in particular to give the order to stop fighting. On May 1, at about 21.30 hours, there arrived a radio from Marshal Alexander, in which he demanded a decision as to whether the agreed-upon surrender date would be honored. Without such a decision he would not be in a position to instruct his troops in adequate time to cease fire. On the basis of a telephone conversation which had meanwhile taken place, with General Westfal, Chief of Staff of Field Marshal Kesselring, Marshal Alexander was advised that a final decision would be reached within the next hour. After receipt of this radio, Schultz and I telephoned immediately to General Westfal to force an immediate decision. Kesselring could not be reached on the telephone, as he was on the road. As Westfal, Kesselring and Schultz refused to assume the responsibility for the surrender, I demanded of Westfal that one of us four, viz. Herr, Lemmelsen, Pohl or Wolff, as we were ready to carry through the surrender and assume all the consequences of it, should immediately be given the command of the Army Group South West. Westfal replied, he would lay our demands before Kesselring and give us an answer by 22.00 hours. At 22.00 hours, we still had no decision from Kesselring or Westfal, but Generals Herr, Lemmelsen, Pohl and I, in view of our responsibility to our troops and to our people, gave the necessary order to lay down arms at

the time agreed upon, without awaiting the approval of Kesselring. Our purpose in this was to avoid further unnecessary bloodshed and destruction and to create a political basis for a later Anglo-American-German understanding. Also we felt a responsibility to respect the signatures which had been given in the name of von Vietinghoff and in my name.

On May 1, at 23.00 o'clock, the death of the Fuehrer was announced. By this, both officers and soldiers were released from their oath and from their conflict of conscience. Nevertheless, Schultz still refused his approval to the orders which had already been given by Roettiger, Herr, Lemmelsen, Pohl and I, for the surrender. He was awaiting the order of Kesselring. Pohl, Lemmelsen, Herr and I returned at 23.30 hours to my headquarters for further conversations. Shortly thereafter on May 2, at 01.15 hours, Kesselring gave the order to arrest Vietinghoff, Roettiger, Kempf, von Schweini and Captain Altenpohl. Shortly before an order had gone out from the OB. of Luftflotte VI, Colonel General Dessloch, for the arrest of von Pohl. This went to von Pohl's Staff Officer, Major Neubert. The order was not carried out. Whether there was also an order of arrest for Herr, Lemmelsen and me, is still not known, but it seems likely. In this way, in any event, my friends and I were warned in time. As we were leaving the HQ of the Army Group, we had already run into Armed officers of the Army Group who had taken rather a hostile attitude. However, we succeeded in getting back to our quarters using secret back-door passages. In view of the threatening danger, I caused seven tanks to be drawn up in front of my HQ and I called in about 350 men from my special units to prepare for an eventual attack. Under the impression of the threatening development and in particular to meet the possibility of contrary orders being given by Kesselring by radio to the Army Corps and Divisions, Generals Herr, Lemmelsen and Pohl returned as rapidly as possible to their posts of command in order to ensure the carrying out of the orders they had given.

About 2.00 o'clock at night I had a call from Field Marshal Kesselring, who had learned about the initiative we had taken and attacked me in the most severe fashion. In a telephone conversation which lasted off and on for almost two hours, and which due to the bad communication was carried on from time to time by my adjutant Major Wenner with General Westfal, I once again besought Kesselring, as a reasonable man and in view of his responsibility as Supreme Commander of thousands of soldiers, to approve and to support our individual decisions which had already been taken. At 04.30 hours, on May 2, 1945, after even General Schultz had pleaded with Kesselring for the acceptance of my proposal, at last the approval of Kesselring was finally received for the surrender.

With the exception of the first and fourth parachute divisions the orders to cease fire were punctually obeyed. After repeated order from General von Vietinghoff, these troops also stopped fighting. Whenever, within the ranks of the troops there were temporary incidents of lack of discipline,

the commander of the parachute corps, General Heidrich, through personal appeal to the divisions and through drastic measures which included the degrading of a Colonel, discipline was again restored.

(End of Wolff Statement)



XVIII. General von Vietinghoff's Story.

While G.G. was in Bolzano, he also obtained from General Vietinghoff a memorandum which purported to be the notes excerpted from his diary covering the part he had played in connection with the capitulation. A translation of these notes is appended. The General, in his notes, passes over lightly certain dissensions among his military colleagues as well as certain possibly embarrassing incidents to them such as the temporary arrest of his temporary successor. On the whole, however, General Vietinghoff's story bears out the broad outlines of what General Wolff has given in the preceding chapter.

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Diary Notes on my Part in the  
Capitulation Negotiations.

19 March:

I assumed command as C-in-C, Southwest and Army Group C.

1 April:

General Wolff informed me and my C of S that he had been able to establish contact with responsible American personalities in Switzerland and through them with the HQ of Field Marshal Alexander.

The object of his negotiations was, first, to prevent a renewal of large-scale fighting in Northern Italy which would result in the destruction of as yet undamaged industrial installations and of the harbors, with consequent unemployment and disorder; second, in view of the impending collapse in Germany, to arrange an honorable armistice for Army Group C with Field Marshal Alexander.

I entirely approved of Wolff's intentions and recognized their value, since I too was convinced that German resistance inside the Reich would inevitably collapse within a calculable space of time.

Official and military considerations, however, made it impossible for me to participate in his negotiations at this time, since I could not expose my comrades who were still fighting stubbornly North of the Alps to attack from the rear, and since, moreover, my own troops would fail to understand such a proceeding and would, in part refuse to follow my orders. As for demolitions in North Italy, I had already prepared orders forbidding all destructions not immediately required by military necessity. I had no authority to issue orders concerning the harbors, since they were under

the exclusive control of Grand Admiral Doenitz, but I undertook to find means to prevent their destruction -- a decision which was later approved by the Grand Admiral in a personal telephone conversation.

7 April:

With my consent, an Italian industrialist, who had been serving General Wolff as an intermediary, came to tea at Wolff's so as to make my acquaintance and witness the understanding between General Wolff and myself.

11 and 13 April:

I was informed by General Wolff that the other side was pressing for a speedier conduct of negotiations and insisted upon military participation.

I was obliged to refuse once more, for the following reasons:

1) The question of guilt: We, like all other clear-thinking officers, perceived that the war was irretrievably lost for Germany and that an immediate cessation of hostilities would prevent much senseless loss of life. The mass of the people, however, and the majority of our soldiers were still under the influence of the Fuehrer's proclamation declaring that the Battle of Berlin would turn the course of the war in Germany's favor. If we should lay down our arms at this moment, it would be easy for government propaganda to clear the Reich's leadership of responsibility for the collapse and persuade the German people that only our treachery had prevented an ultimate German victory. A new "stab in the back" legend!

In such an event, the Army Group itself would have got out of hand. It was therefore impossible for me to enter into negotiations until the collapse of the Reich had become obvious to the people themselves so that no one could accuse us of having fallen on the rear of our fighting front.

2) The particular situation of the Army Group: For several weeks past I had been asking both the OKW and the Fuehrer personally to grant me freedom of movement in case of a major Anglo-American attack, since only thus would it be possible to withdraw the Army Group to positions in the Alps without excessive losses.

My request had so far been refused in the sharpest manner, with threats of a court-martial, etc., and I had been ordered to hold fast to our present positions.

I had, however, resolved that as soon as communications with the North, which were already precarious, should become impossible, I would assume full freedom of movement on my own responsibility so as to prevent a complete collapse.

22 April:

General Wolff returned from a visit to the Fuehrer during which he informed the latter of his dealings with our

opponents. Nothing was done to prevent the continuation of these negotiations.

Gauleiter Hoffer, likewise returning from the Fuehrer, now joined in insisting that negotiations should be pushed forward rapidly so as at least to save his province from senseless destruction and a struggle between the German majority and the Italian minority supported by Partisan bands.

Ambassador Rahn, as plenipotentiary of the German Reich, adhered unreservedly to our undertaking.

I now consented to dispatch a military emissary, Lt. Colonel on the General Staff, von Schweinitz, and empowered him 'to make binding commitments for me within the limits of my instructions.'

Essential points of these instructions:

- 1) No dishonorable conditions.
- 2) A settlement to be arrived at only as follows:
  - a) When fighting north of the Alps should have progressed so far that there could be no accusation of a 'stab in the back'.
  - b) When there should no longer be any German government capable of conducting negotiations.
- 3) Political stipulations, advanced by Gauletier Hofer, though we made it plain to him that it might not be possible to insist upon them unconditionally.

I saw to it, furthermore, that Field Marshal Kesselring was informed of our negotiations since he was our neighbor on the field of battle and we were soon to come under his command.

This was effected in the first instance by emissaries and then on 27 April, in a conversation between Field Marshal Kesselring, Ambassador Rahn and myself at the headquarters of Gauleiter Hofer.

Kesselring declared himself in accord with our proceedings, but insisted that he could consider a settlement only after the death of the Fuehrer.

28 April:

An urgent appeal from Field Marshal Kesselring compelled me to refuse my consent to a demand from the other side, transmitted to me by General Wolff on the evening of 28 April, that we should renounce allegiance to the Reich and send out W-T signals that very night ordering the Army Group to lay down its arms.

In any case, it seemed to me that I should await the outcome of negotiations still in progress with Field Marshal Alexander.

Night of 28-29 April:

During the following night I gave my consent to the conclusion of an agreement with the leaders of the Italian liberation movement so as to prevent a racial clash in the Bolzano area pending the arrival of Allied troops.

28 April:

Army Group C and C-in-C Southwest were placed under command of Field Marshal Kesselring <sup>who</sup> refused to sanction either the conclusion of an agreement with the Italian patriots or the mission of Lt. Colonel on the General Staff, von Schweinitz, and relieved me of my command.

I turned over my command to General of Infantry, Schultze but remained near headquarters and in effect continued to be responsible for the conduct of foreign affairs through my Chief of Staff, General of Armored Troops, Roettiger, who had conducted the preliminary negotiations most ably and who was to remain in charge for another day or two.

2 May:

Upon the return of our emissaries, after protracted discussions with the C-in-C of the Armies Field Marshal Kesselring, and with his consent, the order was given to lay down arms. On 2 May, I resumed my command, by order of Field Marshal Kesselring.

(End of Vietinghoff Statement)

### XIX. Conclusion

In his statement to the Commons, May 2, Prime Minister Churchill summed up the results of the surrender:

"The total forces of the enemy, the fighting troops of the enemy, include the remnants of 22 German divisions and six Italian Fascist divisions, but with the combat and echelon troops upon the lines of communication throughout this country they have held so long, the total numbers who have surrendered to the Allies are estimated to amount to nearly 1,000,000.

"Thus not only has a vast area of territory vital in its character fallen into the hands of the Supreme Commander, Sir Harold Alexander, but the actual surrender which has taken place so far, comprising the numbers it does, constitutes, I believe, a record for the whole of this war and cannot but be helpful to the further events for which we are looking."

The Prime Minister then pointed out that this surrender was made to forces under Marshall Alexander, which had been seriously depleted to strengthen other fronts, and added,

"Thus this army was an army stripped of its strength and facing an enemy force which, for all purposes of war, must have been considered far stronger because it had the duty of defending mountain ranges and afterwards plains flooded with autumn and winter rain, and which, certainly in the number of divisions, exceeded those who were left to attack him."

In reply to an inquiry addressed to the Prime Minister "May we know whether the German Generals surrendered on their own responsibility?", Mr. Churchill replied:

"The discussions have been of a highly private nature for some time. At times they have appeared more hopeful than at others, but for the last two days I have known what was coming, yet one was not certain that it might not be snatched away at the last minute. Therefore, great secrecy was necessary."

As the Prime Minister pointed out, the maintenance of complete secrecy was essential to the success of this undertaking. On our side this was successfully maintained. For over two months the work had gone on continuously with ups and downs, with peaks of optimism and depression, with dramatic excitement and even its touches of comedy and pathos. In addition to complete secrecy, sure and rapid communications were equally essential. If we lost contact, the game was lost. If our messengers failed to reach Fasano and the

Swiss frontier, or if our radio in Milan or Bolzano fail to function, if the surrender terms did not get to Bolzano in record time, the game might be up. It also required boldness to dare to even make a start, and temerity to push forward in the face of discouraging and doubtful omens. After all, we were dealing with a high SS General. Was he merely a tool of Himmler's, or was he really working for a surrender?

We met many doubting Thomases during the sixty-five days that the work went on. Sometimes we even doubted ourselves, but the stakes were big, the risks were worth the gamble. No concessions were ever made in our demand for unconditional surrender. No promises were given as a price for that surrender.

We do not undertake to pass on the record of General Wolff prior to March 1945, - we do not know what it may contain - but that from that time on, whatever his prior merits or demerits or motives, he vigorously worked to bring about the surrender and, certainly on the German side, was the primary influence in effecting it.

Surrender for a large part of the German forces in Italy was, of course, inevitable after General Clark's smashing victories and the forcing of the lines of the Apennines and the Po. The only question was the extent of the surrender, its timing, and its cost both in Allied lives and in damage to the industrial and cultural life of North Italy. The quick and general surrender on May 2, - the greatest German surrender theretofore secured - may have spared thousands of Allied lives. The solemn undertakings given us prior to the surrender, and the orders issued to the German Army, SS and police forces pursuant to those undertakings to avoid all measures of destruction, were among the principal causes for the delivery of North Italy relatively free of vandalism during those days of German defeat and withdrawal.

Marshal Alexander and his particular deputies in this matter, Generals Lemnitzer and Airey, saw the possibilities of Sunrise-Crossword from the very outset. While properly realistic and even properly skeptical at times, they courageously seized the initiative and never failed to give us complete support in any practical steps to carry the task forward. Among the messages received during these hectic days, the most gratifying of all was that from General Lemnitzer, sent from Caserta, May 2, immediately after the surrender went into effect. It read as follows:

"Heartiest congratulations results Crossword. Has been complete and tremendous success. You and your associates may well be proud of splendid part you have all played in epoch-making events which occurred today. My admiration for your loyalty and devotion to duty during these recent difficult

weeks equalled only by pride which is mine for  
having privilege and pleasure of participation  
with you in this operation which spells end of  
Nazi domination in Europe."

THE END.