

*Part I*  
Firsthand Accounts

1. Statement of Gerhard Wessel on Development of the German Organization [undated]

Statement of Gerhard WESSEL on Development of the German Organization

May 1942-1942.

Gen. GEHLEN, at that time Lt.Col., became Chief of the Fremde Heere Ost. (FHO) in May 1942, at which time Lt.Col. WESSEL, at that time Capt. and "Lagebearbeiter" in the section FHO, first came into contact with him. In the summer of this year in the course of a discussion of the military situation, WESSEL asked GEHLEN whether he believed that Germany would win the war. GEHLEN at this time stated without qualification that he did but WESSEL had the impression that this answer did not correspond with the real opinion GEHLEN had in this moment. In May 1943 WESSEL, succeeding Lt.Col. HERRE, had become GEHLEN's deputy and closest co-worker and the question of German military victory again was discussed in the same summer. At this time GEHLEN asked WESSEL whether he believed Germany would win the war and both agreed that there was no hope. Further discussion took place at length during daily noon-time walks but no one else was apprised of their mutual feeling about this question.

Spring 1944

In the spring of 1944 GEHLEN decided that it was essential to take some action toward salvaging the basic files and records of the FHO, for the West. It had become quite clear to both GEHLEN and WESSEL that after the war there would be two hemispheres, the East and the West, and that it would be essential to ally with one side or the other; no neutral position would be possible. GEHLEN's decision had already been reached- to side with the West.

20 July 1944

On 1 July General GEHLEN fell seriously ill, that means three weeks prior to the 20th of July attempt on HITLER's life. During the time of GEHLEN's absence WESSEL became acting chief of the FHO. At the time of the bomb attempt WESSEL was unable to get in touch with GEHLEN, but as it turned out no members of the department were directly implicated and no crises arose. GEHLEN returned as chief in fall but never discussed the question of the 20th of July with WESSEL. Later, when the latter asked him about it, GEHLEN stated that he had known something about the endeavors directed against the leadership of HITLER but had considered the matter to be too dangerous to discuss with WESSEL or other staff members.

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Late Fall, 1944      Toward the end of 1944 a third man, Hermann BAUN, was informed of the intention of GEHLEN to salvage files and personnel of the FHO for eventual transfer to the West. BAUN was at this time head of the collection work (Abwehr Amt I under PIECKENBROCK, later CANARIS). All relations between BAUN and the FHO were personally conducted by GEHLEN, who made every effort to place a "ring of secrecy" around BAUN and the relationship between BAUN and the FHO.

Early 1945            Early in 1945 GEHLEN informed still further FHO personnel of his plans with regard to his organization. RIEMENZ and SCHOELLER were advised at this time. In February HERRE who after having been Chief of Staff of the "General of Volunteers" was just building up the Wlassov-Division, was informed.

January 1945          On 21 January 1945 WESSEL, on GEHLEN's orders, became G-2 of HIMMLER's Heeresgruppe and from this time until 22 March (the date Gen.Ob. HEINRICI took over the Heeresgruppe) had close connections with the SS for the express purpose of attempting to prevent HIMMLER from getting control of the G-2 and Amt I work. HIMMLER had been trying to do so since May 1943 but was in the main unsuccessful inasmuch as he was able to get control over parts of the I work only but never all of it. In connection with GEHLEN's efforts, high ranking SS officers were treated as honored guests by the FHO, were shown the work, made to feel that nothing was being concealed from them, that the basis for all work was a fervent belief in victory, etc.

February or March 1945      GEHLEN was presented to HITLER in February or March of 1945 for the first time. HITLER asked him for estimates of the military situation in the East and when he did not like those that were presented to him, relieved GEHLEN of his post (9 April). After this date WESSEL served as GEHLEN's successor as chief of the FHO.

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- Early April 1945 Following his dismissal, General GEHLEN was given the choice of becoming a division commander or being transferred to the "Führerreserve des OKH". He chose the latter, primarily in order to be able to start the process of removing FHO files, which had already been photostated and microfilmed, to southern Germany for burial. The transfer took place by merely loading the files on army trucks, and they were dispersed in three places in Bavaria: in the Wilde Kaiser, near Marquartstein and near Schliersee. GEHLEN's intention upon arrival in the south was to remain as long as possible in his mountain retreat and thus to avoid becoming involved in the anticipated postwar confusion or even loosing the just salvaged files of FHO.
- 10 April 1945 In beginning of April 1945 GEHLEN arrived in Bad Elster, where BAUN was located, for a meeting with BAUN prior to going further south. WESSEL was with GEHLEN at this meeting, the purpose of which was to inform BAUN of what to do once the war was over. Agreement was reached regarding the disposition of both files and personnel. WESSEL learned for the first time at these meetings of GEHLEN's plans for rebuilding the German intelligence organization; prior to this time all discussions had been within a larger frame of reference, in terms of salvaging files and personnel for the benefit of the West without a definition of the future or outcome of this step.
- 24-25 April 1945 On 21 April 1945 WESSEL, who had been in Zossen near Berlin with the task of dissolving the FHO, left for the south. Parts of the files had already been sent on and WESSEL was still in contact with GEHLEN and informed of his movements.
- 6 May 1945 On 6 May with the approval of General WINTER, to whom he was assigned, WESSEL went to the Bavarian retreat area, to Ruhpolding. GEHLEN, SCHOELLER, and HINRICHS at this time were at the hut near Schliersee, while reserve officer personnel were at the Wilde Kaiser hut. When attempts to establish radio contact between the three areas were unsuccessful, each area was forced to act on its own.

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20 May 1945

In the middle of May 1945 rumors reached the retreat areas that all German soldiers who were hiding in the mountains would be shot by the Americans if caught, since the war was over and there was no further cause for hiding. Accordingly, and because there were indications that the Americans knew about the location of their hideouts, on the 21 ~~March~~ May the decision was made by WESSEL and the group with him (NAUCK, HIEMENZ, RITTER, SCHOENBECK GOELLNITZ, HOEISEL, HINDERSIN, von WANGENHEIM and three typists) to report to the Ruhpolding PW Camp. On the same day, GEHLEN independently reported to the Schliersee PW Camp. According to prior arrangement, members of the groups did not indicate any connection with members of the other groups. No contact was established between WESSEL and GEHLEN.

In the next few weeks almost all of the personnel were released from these camps. Nine general staff officers had to remain, however, including WESSEL and HIEMENZ.

End of July

While still in a PW camp, WESSEL and HIEMENZ on the 5 July were contacted by John BOKER, who asked them to cooperate in work for the Americans. Since WESSEL had had no contact with GEHLEN and thus did not know what decisions GEHLEN might have reached it was difficult for him to reach a decision on cooperation with BOKER. However, BOKER was in possession of a letter signed by GEHLEN which proved the BOKER/GEHLEN relationship so that further indecision was unnecessary.

Mid August 1945

Weeks later, in the end of July 1945, WESSEL, HIRIHS and HIEMENZ met GEHLEN in Wiesbaden, at the Pagenstecher House, where GEHLEN was housed with FUENER, SCHOELLER, STEPHANUS and LUETGENDORF. General GEHLEN told WESSEL that he had met the G-2 of 12th Army Group and had started the work of rebuilding the German intelligence apparatus.

Late August 1945

On the 2 August the GEHLEN group was sent to the United States. WESSEL was left in Wiesbaden for the express purpose of finding out where BAUN was, and from this time until the end of December 1945 had no contact with GEHLEN, largely because of the treatment received by the GEHLEN group after they arrived in the US.

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Following the departure of General GEHLEN was transferred to the Blue House at Oberursel, and discovered that BAUN also had been lodged in the neighborhood i.e. in the Camp King, Oberursel. In the course of discussions between WESSEL and BAUN which ensued, it was agreed that BAUN would try to get in touch with his former co-workers, with or without the consent of GEHLEN since contact had been cut off. A clear statement was made to BAUN by WESSEL at this time, and BAUN agreed that any establishment of German intelligence work for the Americans would be on the basis of a unified service, i.e., that there would be no separation of the positive intelligence collection work from the military intelligence work as previously. GEHLEN, it was also clearly understood, would be the chief of all the work. BAUN would head the collection staff and another man, unnamed, would head evaluation work. (Although it later appeared that BAUN may have had mental reservations, at the time of this decision he gave his unqualified approval of the organization as outlined to him by WESSEL).

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