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# Terror Unrealized: German Blunders, American Occupation Strategy, and the Failure of the Nazi Werewolf Movement

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Terror Unrealized: German Blunders, American Occupation Strategy,  
and the Failure of the Nazi *Werwolf* Movement

Nicholas Hurley

Just before midnight in December of 1945, Private First Class Leon Standifer, a member of the 243<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion on occupation duty in Germany, was hurrying to catch the late-night bus from Munich back to his barracks in nearby Bad Aibling, after visiting with a female “companion” for most of the day. To save time, he cut through a section of town largely destroyed by Allied air-raids, and recalls the following:

Those bombed-out areas were dangerous. There were no lights, and rumor said ex-SS lived back in there. They called themselves *Werwölfe*-werewolves-and used women to lure GIs into dark places...pretty soon I saw two men standing on the sidewalk. I was already walking in the middle of the street but worked myself over toward the far side. Then a man stepped out of the shadows and said, ‘Eh Ami.’ I thought, ‘Now I’ve done it. These men are the *Werwölfe*. This is what everybody tried to warn me about.’<sup>1</sup>

Luckily for Standifer, nothing came of the encounter. The men asked for cigarettes, and then continued on down the street. His commentary on the *Werwölfe*, however, is a good representation of the extent to which most American servicemen in Germany came in contact with the SS-devised guerrilla movement; for most, the *Werwolf* was little more than a myth, or a cautionary fairy tale. Those American troops who never came in contact with the organization postwar knew very little beyond rumors and stories. The minor incident described above represents the only contact Standifer, in his two years of occupation duty, had with the so-called “Werewolves”.<sup>2</sup>

*Werwolf*, in its original sense, was an SS-led and organized commando unit formed by *Reichsführer-SS* and Chief of German Police Heinrich Himmler in September of 1944, to be used for partisan-style operations in areas of the Reich occupied by Allied forces.<sup>3</sup> The aim was to harass the Allies behind their lines, to the point where they would be forced to divert troops and material away from the front in order to counter the threat, not unlike the resistance

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Standifer. *Binding Up the Wounds: An American Soldier in Occupied Germany, 1945-1946* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1997), 188-89.

<sup>2</sup> Standifer, *Binding*, 189.

<sup>3</sup> “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

movements of occupied Europe that the Germans were all too familiar with. This constant nagging, coupled with a stalwart defense of what remained of the Third Reich by the German military, would buy Germany enough time to achieve an “acceptable” peace settlement. What exactly such a settlement would have entailed is debatable, but Hitler above all else sought to avoid an unconditional surrender and the harsh occupation of Germany. An additional hope was that a prolonged war would allow more time for what Nazis viewed as the “inevitable” breakup between the Western powers and the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

Such a reversal of fortunes obviously never occurred; *Werwolf* never reached the grand scale envisioned by Himmler, and very few *Werwolf* operations were actually carried out before the rapid Allied advance into Germany brought the war to an end in May 1945.<sup>5</sup>

### Thesis

The dissolution and failure of the Nazi *Werwolf* movement was influenced by both German and American actions. The inability of the organization to fully mobilize and establish itself before war's end was due to extreme issues in the recruiting, training, supplying, and commanding of *Werwolf* cells. These issues were the product of animosity and differences of opinion between top Nazi leaders regarding control of *Werwolf* and allocation of resources for the organization. The *Werwolf* also suffered from the bureaucratization so typical of the Nazi regime; the appointing of “*Werwolf* Officers” from the Gestapo, Wehrmacht, *Gauleitung*, SS, and other organizations, and the fact that the group itself fell under police and not SS control, meant each individual associated with it brought a multitude of differing attitudes and priorities to the table, resulting in constant squabbling that stalled much of the progress that could have

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Perry Biddiscombe. *Werwolf! The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 1944-46*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

been made in preparing the organization prior to the May 8<sup>th</sup> surrender.<sup>6</sup> Following the end of the war in Europe, what *Werwolf* cells did survive into the postwar era-and there were many that did, as scattered and uncoordinated they might have been- were quickly eliminated due to a swift and aggressive American occupation, coupled with an equally determined counterinsurgency campaign undertaken by US Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) units and occupation troops that began in May of 1945 and lasted well into 1946. These two major factors-one German, one American, sealed the fate of the *Werwolf* movement in the American Zone of Occupation and ensured it would never amount to anything more than scattered incidents of sabotage during the first two years of occupation that, while noteworthy, did not represent a general trend of guerrilla resistance in the American Zone.

### Historiography

Charles Whiting's *Hitler's Werewolves: The Story of the Nazi Resistance Movement, 1944-1945*, published in 1972, represents perhaps the first attempt at a published history of the *Werwolf* movement. The majority of the book, however, is a sensationalized narrative of an assassination carried out by the group, and it is only in the last few chapters that Whiting presents the "big picture" of *Werwolf*: its formation, leadership, and eventual downfall. Even then, his writing does not address the postwar history of the organization, and leads us to believe that the movement simply ended with the German surrender. Indeed, he seems to use the end of the war as a convenient explanation as to why *Werwolf* fell apart, saying next to nothing about the more relevant logistical, bureaucratic, and organizational issues that plagued it during the final months of the war. While the book provides an excellent account of the Oppenhoff assassination, it is at best a partial history of the movement as a whole. In addition, it is hard to

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<sup>6</sup> "Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement" in IRR File XE 049 888, "Werewolf Activities Vol. I", RG 319, NA.

determine how many of Whiting's factual errors can be attributed to lack of sources and existing scholarship on the subject and how much to simple lack of research.

The next extensive piece on *Werwolf* was not published until 1995. Klaus-Dietmar Henke, a German historian, dedicates a portion of *Die amerikanische Besetzung Deutschlands* to a discussion of the organization. His is a much more thoroughly researched piece than the Whiting account, and draws from both American and German sources. He is the first to point to the indifference many German soldiers afforded *Werwolf*, as well as the dependence of the movement on the SS and other military units for training sites and equipment. This latter point hints at logistical and bureaucratic difficulties, but it is not fully developed. Henke also provides a lengthy account of the CIC raids and other activities which combated postwar *Werwolf* activity. Overall, the piece avoids the trap of simply stating that the *Werwolf* ended with the German surrender, and marks the first attempt made by any author, German or otherwise, to provide a complete, well-researched look at the *Werwolf* organization.

By far the most complete history of the *Werwolf* movement has been prepared by historian Alexander Perry Biddiscombe, in his book *Werwolf!: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 1944-1946*. Attempting to address the entire complicated history of the organization, Biddiscombe uses each chapter in his book to discuss the *Werwolf*'s relationship with each of the groups it was associated with: the SS, the Hitler Youth, the military, and the Nazi party. In his introduction and conclusion he asserts that, contrary to popular belief, there was a series of guerrilla-style attacks against Allied forces from 1944-45, and that the *Werwolf* had a "profound impact...upon both Western Allied and Soviet occupation policy".<sup>7</sup> He maintains that *Werwolf*, though obviously not a deterrent to occupation, continued postwar to harass occupation troops, and provides a detailed account of the US counterinsurgency

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<sup>7</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 8.

campaigns of 1945-46. Several important CIC-led operations are afforded little attention in Biddiscombe's writing, however, most notably "Tallyho", the first major security sweep of the American Zone following the war's end.

Stephen G. Fritz's *Endkampf: Soldiers, Civilians, And The Death Of The Third Reich*, while not dealing directly with the subject of *Werwolf* resistance, addresses the topic nonetheless. His section on the *Werwolf* focuses on guerrilla activity in the Franconian region of Germany, the cradle of Nazism and thus an area conducive to *Werwolf* activity, and he notes that even here, in what was once the heart of Nazism, *Werwolf* postwar failed to materialize on the scale originally intended; though there were some minor acts of sabotage and violence, these were at the "level of petty harassment"-though he does not go into why.<sup>8</sup> While his writing is also well researched, his discussion on *Werwolf* is region-specific, and his description of postwar CIC operations focuses more on black marketeering and disturbances by Displaced Persons than subversive activities.

Were someone hard-pressed to select a piece offering the "final word" on *Werwolf*, most would no doubt choose Biddiscombe's book. His work, though exhaustively researched and extensive, however, is too indecisive to be considered definitive. He seems to offer contradictory statements with regards to the book's overall message, at one point stating its purpose is to "gauge the limits of the movement's success" and later explaining that "the goal is not an aggressive revisionism, but rather a neutral stocktaking of forgotten people and events."<sup>9</sup> Though Biddiscombe comes closest, no one has offered a complete look at all factors leading to *Werwolf's* demise. This paper deals exclusively with the subject of the *Werwolf's* failure and, unlike Biddiscombe's work, does not support the idea that the organization was in any way

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen G. Fritz, *Endkampf: Soldiers, Civilians, And The Death Of The Third Reich* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 204.

<sup>9</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf*, 9.

successful. Given its original purpose, *Werwolf* was a failure, and with the acceptance of that simple fact a thorough examination of the factors that led to this failure can be undertaken.

### Part I: German Blunders

#### In Theory

*Werwolf* was, from the outset, formed around an SS organizational core. As such, Himmler exercised ultimate authority over the organization. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1944, he appointed a *Generalinspekteur für Spezialabwehr* (General Inspector for Special Abwehr) to oversee all *Werwolf* activities.<sup>10</sup> This man was *SS-Obergruppenführer* Hans-Adolf Prützmann, a longtime member of the SS whose anti-partisan responsibilities as HSSPF (*Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer*, or Higher SS and Police Leader) of Russia-North and then Latvia from June 1941-June 1944 made him an ideal candidate for the task of coordinating Nazi guerrilla resistance.<sup>11</sup> Once appointed, Prützmann organized a large staff, the “Bureau Prützmann”, through which the *Werwolf*’s training, logistics, and operations would be coordinated. This group operated out of a central headquarters at Rheinsburg, northwest of Berlin.<sup>12</sup> Through this headquarters staff, the first *Werwolf* units were organized and deployed by the beginning of November 1944, mainly for the purposes of reconnaissance and intelligence gathering in areas already overrun by the Allies. By January of 1945, supply caches of food and weapons had been established in the Reichswald, Eifel, Saar, Palatinate, and Baden areas.<sup>13</sup>

Regionally the movement was organized based on the boundaries of the Reich’s twenty-one *Wehrkreise* (home defense regions), and was controlled by the Higher SS and Police Leaders

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<sup>10</sup> Direction des Services de Documentation Allemagne “Note sur la formation du Werwolf” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

<sup>11</sup> “Werewolf Activities” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

<sup>12</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 23.

(HSSPF). This use of regional police inspectors in the *Werwolf* chain of command rather than officers within the SS or *Waffen-SS* can be seen as a continuance of Himmler's customary practice of asserting his authority through the ever-present police force. The regional directors in turn were to designate local commanders who, as "*Werwolf* Commissioners" would coordinate the recruitment and use of *Werwolf* operatives.<sup>14</sup>

At the ground level, *Werwolf* units were to be organized into groups of four to six men. Six to ten of these groups would make up a sector (or platoon), and six to eight platoons a section. In theory, each basic group was to be equipped with small arms, *Panzerfäuste*, grenades, and plastic explosives. Uniforms were to be issued, but fighters were allowed to don civilian clothing should a specific mission call for it.<sup>15</sup>

#### Organizational Issues and the *Waffen-SS*

As stated above, *Werwolf* cells were under the control of the SS Police commissioners, to ensure that Himmler would be able to maintain personal control over the organization. Serious frustrations with regards to organization began at the regional level. Though the HSSPFs held positions of relatively high authority within their respective regions, and had the backing of subordinate groups like the local Gestapo and Criminal Police, they could not order adjacent organizations (military or otherwise) to surrender recruits and supplies to the *Werwolf* cause. They also had to contend with competition from the regional *Gauleiter* (governor), who commanded the area's *Volkssturm* units and fell under Party jurisdiction.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the involvement of so many different military and government agencies made coordination extremely difficult. One interrogation report detailing *Werwolf* preparations and activity in the

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<sup>14</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 32.

Munich *Wehrkreis* states that each of the following organizations or offices was to elect a *Werwolf* “officer” for the region: the Hitler Youth, the HSSPF, the *Gauleitung*, the SA, and the commanding general of the *Wehrkreis*, a Wehrmacht officer.<sup>17</sup> The disruption of communications networks throughout Germany made it even more difficult for these five offices to coordinate with one another; direction of *Werwolf* units to areas where they were needed, requesting supplies, and passing of important messages all became near-impossible tasks.<sup>18</sup> Because it also drew its recruits from young, indoctrinated German youth, a nebulous Hitler Youth partisan organization-the brainchild of Artur Axmann- also found itself under the control of the *Werwolf*, requiring coordination with HJ leaders and further adding to the confusion.<sup>19</sup>

The inability of the HSSPFs to exercise any command authority over these various organizations also meant that leaders were more or less free to do what they pleased with regards to their personal *Werwolf* activities. Following a meeting of Gestapo officials in Bad Tölz, Bavaria in late April 1945, for example, it was decided by their chief, an *Obersturmbannführer* Glitz, that due to *Werwolf*'s disorganization and inaction in the region, the Gestapo would no longer be associated with the movement. Rather, he stated, it was the Gestapo's responsibility to “keep alive the national idea...and to encourage [Germans] in keeping up the birth rate.”<sup>20</sup>

The exclusion of the *Waffen-SS* in the *Werwolf* chain of command caused friction between its commanders and *Werwolf* leaders; as the *Waffen-SS* was the combat arm of the organization, it would make more tactical sense to place the *Werwolf* under their authority.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 5: “O/Gruf and Gen d Pol Freiherr Friedrich Karl von Eberstein”, in IRR File XE 049 888, „Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

<sup>18</sup> Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 18: “Krim Rat Stubaf Wagner, Ernst”, in IRR File XE 049 888, „Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

<sup>19</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 18: “Krim Rat Stubaf Wagner, Ernst”, in IRR File XE 049 888, „Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

<sup>21</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 14.

embodiment of this friction was the relationship between Prützmann and SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Otto Skorzeny, leader of the newly-formed SS-*Jagdverbände*, or “Ranger” units, which carried out special operations during the last year of the war. One interrogation report describes their dealings with one another as “not openly hostile” but “decidedly cool”.<sup>22</sup> Animosity between Prützmann and Skorzeny began as early as November 1944, during a meeting of SS Police leaders at Himmler’s headquarters near Hohenlychen. There, and in front of Prützmann, Himmler openly offered command of the fledgling *Werwolf* to Skorzeny. Prützmann is said to have shifted uncomfortably in his seat and lowered his head as Skorzeny respectfully replied that he already had enough military duties to keep him occupied.<sup>23</sup> In reality, Skorzeny had other reasons for turning down the assignment; his memoirs reveal he did not believe the organization could ever be successful, and that he did not think he should have any part in it.<sup>24</sup> Still, Himmler ordered that Skorzeny’s office provide assistance and advice to Prützmann; it was agreed upon that SS-*Jagdverbände* schools would serve as training centers for *Werwolf* recruits, and that *Werwolf* units would have access to up to twenty-five percent of the sabotage equipment from Skorzeny’s own depots.<sup>25</sup> This arrangement only furthered Skorzeny’s dislike of *Werwolf*-he resented having to share personnel and supplies with a fledgling sabotage organization not unlike his own “Ranger” units, who he felt were better suited to the task of guerrilla operations. In addition, he knew his own resources were already stretched thin attempting to equip and train Ranger members for future operations.<sup>26</sup> Soon complaints

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<sup>22</sup> “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Whiting, *Hitler’s Werewolves: The Story of the Nazi Resistance Movement, 1944-45*, New York: Stein and Day, 1972, 68-69.

<sup>24</sup> Otto Skorzeny, *La Guerre inconnue*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1975, 196-97; “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

<sup>25</sup> Otto Skorzeny, *For Germany: The Otto Skorzeny Memoirs*, Edited by Craigh W.H. Luther and Hugh Page Taylor, San Jose: R. James Bender Publishing, 2005, 339.

<sup>26</sup> “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

began to pour into Skorzeny's office from disgruntled "Ranger" units regarding the outrageous demands of *Werwolf* organizers, demands which were promptly denied by Skorzeny himself.<sup>27</sup>

Prützmann's *Werwolf* put in requests for plenty of sabotage-related equipment from other sources as well; a firm in Reutlingen was ordered to provide 5,000 containers to be used for *Werwolf* sabotage kits containing explosives and an anti-personnel mine, and 2,000 "light portable receiver-transmitter sets" were requested from the Blaupunkt radio factory in Berlin. None of the wireless sets made it to *Werwolf* groups, and manufacturers managed to deliver just five hundred of the sabotage kits.<sup>28</sup>

Lack of supplies meant cells often had to survive on what they could scrounge from Wehrmacht supply depots and captured Allied war material. One *Werwolf* member recalls scavenging the Siegfried Line in southwestern Germany for explosives:

There were gaps and holes all over the place, and we could see exactly where the miens had been planted. This was crazy, but we would carefully pull the mine out and take off the lid. Then, holding the pin steady with two fingers, we would deactivate the bomb. Next, we would remove the detonator to take with us. We took hundreds of them and used them to blow up French military vehicles.<sup>29</sup>

### Recruiting and Training

At a time when the Reich's manpower resources were being stretched to their limit, organizations like the SS and the Wehrmacht were extremely reluctant to surrender recruits and instructors to a newly created guerrilla force when frontline units were already deprived of essential personnel.<sup>30</sup> In addition, on Skorzeny's orders, the SS often withheld its best recruits for membership in one of their own *Jagdverbände*, and the *Gauleiter* kept a number of suitable men

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<sup>27</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> GSI (b) Main HQ 21 Army Group, BLA. "Current Notes on Enemy Espionage" in IRR File XE 049 888, "Werewolf Activities Vol. I", RG 319, NA.

<sup>29</sup> Johannes Steinhoff, *Voices from the Third Reich*, Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1989, 492-93.

<sup>30</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 30.

for service in the *Volkssturm*. *Werwolf* units also required the use of Hitler Youth training camps and *Waffen-SS* schools to train their recruits, having no facilities of their own. This often created heated debates over which organization had ownership of a particular school's "graduating class". One such example took place in the Wiesbaden area in the spring of 1945. *Werwolf* officials claimed ownership of several classes of Hitler Youth trainees graduating from a local sabotage school-trainees that would ordinarily have gone to the *Waffen-SS*. Before Wiesbaden's HSSPF, Jürgen Stroop, could authorize the transfer, however, SS-General Berger, his commanding officer, radioed him directly, forbidding the use of any of "his boys" for *Werwolf* activities.<sup>31</sup> Cadre to train *Werwolf* recruits was also to be drawn from the Wehrmacht and SS officer corps, further depriving those units of experienced leadership (it was the intent that *Werwolf* instructors be veterans of anti-partisan fighting on the Eastern Front).<sup>32</sup>

Many times the issue was not finding recruits, but willing recruits. For most ordinary Germans, *Werwolf* had little appeal. Nazi wartime propaganda regarding anti-partisan operations in the Balkans, the Soviet Union, and Western Europe had conditioned them to view resistance fighters as criminals and sub-humans, and gave the German population a subconscious disdain for guerrilla fighting.<sup>33</sup> In addition, partisan life offered few comforts to ordinary German citizens who had already suffered so much. It was highly unlikely that the average citizen would join a movement which stood against the end of the war which created these conditions in the first place.

Some schools took questionable steps in order to fill their quotas, including putting trainees through a *Werwolf* course of instruction and only once it was completed informing them

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<sup>31</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 32.

<sup>32</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 34.

<sup>33</sup> British Public Record Office, FO 898/187 (Records of the Foreign Office): "Summary of and comments on German Propaganda Ministry broadcasts".

that they were a member of the organization. *Gauleiters* called for volunteers from the local Party's ranks, and often times when numbers were low they conveniently forgot to mention the phrase *Werwolf* in their decrees, instead stating simply that dedicated volunteers were required for "special duties". In accordance with their powers as defense coordinators and head of the *Volkssturm* for their respective regions, *Gauleiters* also had the ability to, when necessary, force men into the *Werwolf* against their will. Even these desperate acts were not guaranteed to provide the manpower needed: interrogation reports from captured German soldiers revealed instances of Werewolves sent out on foot to their assigned locations and simply deserting, instead seizing the opportunity to make their way home.<sup>34</sup>

Herbert Mittelstädt, an eighteen year-old drafted into the Wehrmacht in January of 1945 recalls how, on May 1<sup>st</sup> of that same year:

Our lieutenant approached the 25 of us, and gravely announced, 'I no longer believe that there is any way possible for us to win this war. I am going to discharge you, and whoever wants to, can continue to fight with me as a Werewolf.' Only one guy raised his hand...Since the lieutenant only had a single ally, he said, 'The whole thing is not worth it. I'm going to discharge myself as well!'<sup>35</sup>

Melita Maschmann, head of the Department for Press and Propaganda for the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM, the female counterpart to the Hitler Youth), was twenty-five years old in the spring of 1945. A dedicated National Socialist, she joined forces with an SS "Ranger" Unit hiding out in a remote mountain valley near Innsbruck for the last few weeks of the war, but seemed unimpressed by the *Werwolf*; in her memoirs, Maschmann describes her willingness to fight on during the "dark future" that lay ahead, but also recalls that "I was ordered to report to Garmisch for 'Werewolf' training, but I paid no attention to this."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement" in IRR File XE 049 888, "Werewolf Activities Vol. I", RG 319, NA.

<sup>35</sup> Steinhoff, *Voices*, 490.

<sup>36</sup> Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered: A Dossier On My Former Self*, London, New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1965, 167.

Yet there were inevitably some who took their duties seriously, and continued to resist.

Klaus Messmer was a sixteen year-old member of a *Werwolf* detachment based in southwestern Germany, and recalls:

For us ‘Werewolves’ it was only natural that we resist in any way we could, and we really did some pretty dumb things. We snuck out and made our way to the [French] vehicles. We smashed dashboards to pieces, and poured sand by the handfuls into the gas tanks. After a while we decided to change our tactics and began to blow them up...Our church youth group had a small cabin in the mountains. We used it as our main headquarters and as a place to store our weapons, hand grenades, carbines, and all of the explosives we had removed from along the Rhine. And it was there we planned all of our attacks.

Even Messmer’s group, however, eventually realized “that our efforts to resist had done absolutely nothing to change anything. A new era had begun and there was nothing we could do about it.”<sup>37</sup>

### Poor Leadership

Substandard leadership began at the highest echelons of *Werwolf* command. Prützmann had established a reputation for being “vain and idle” during his time on Himmler’s staff, long before *Werwolf*’s formation, so much so that it was the opinion of several high-ranking SS-Generals that he should be stripped of command entirely.<sup>38</sup> The ever-worsening war situation and the multitude of problems that plagued *Werwolf* throughout its existence only exacerbated Prützmann’s behavior. Far from a shining example of the spirit of resistance and the will to fight on, Prützmann was no different than many other top Nazis during the end of the war; by April 1945 he saw the writing on the wall, and amid nights of drunken desperation he, like his superior Himmler, began to contemplate ways of negotiating a truce with the Western Allies via the

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<sup>37</sup> Steinhoff, *Voices*, 492-93.

<sup>38</sup> Whiting, *Hitler’s Werewolves*, 67.

Danish Resistance. In May 1945, after issuing a brief message to his Werewolves urging them to avoid “unnecessary losses”, Prützmann fled north to join the new Dönitz government, and eager to find a way out of Germany before it was too late for him.<sup>39</sup>

The unwillingness to participate in *Werwolf* activities existed not only at the ground level, but also amongst higher echelons of leadership. *SS-Sturmbannführer* and Munich *Kriminalpolizei* officer Ernst Wagner was informed of his new duties as *Werwolf* commissioner for the Munich area in mid-April 1945 by his superior, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Freiherr Friedrich Karl von Eberstein. Von Eberstein admitted privately to Wagner that he had no faith in the idea of *Werwolf*, and that he only appointed him because he could no longer ignore the order calling for a *Werwolf* organization in Munich without risking a reprisal from higher levels of command. As such, and given that Wagner also had to manage an entire division of the Munich *Kriminalpolizei* during this time, few preparations were made for *Werwolf* activities in the Munich area.<sup>40</sup>

### *Werwolf* and the Nazi Party

The propaganda activities of senior Nazi Party officials Martin Bormann and Joseph Goebbels in the spring of 1945 further confused the *Werwolf* situation. As the war situation grew ever worse, *Werwolf* resistance became of the utmost interest to the Party, with Goebbels in particular seizing upon the idea. He first mentions *Werwolf* in his diary on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1945, announcing that “I am now busy organizing the so-called ‘Werwolf’ movement on a large scale. The purpose of *Werwolf* is to organize partisan groups in enemy-occupied territories. Not much

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<sup>39</sup>Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 47; Whiting, *Hitler’s Werewolves*, 192-93.

<sup>40</sup> Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 18: “Krim Rat Stubaf Wagner, Ernst”, in IRR File XE 049 888, „Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

preparation has been made so far.”<sup>41</sup> Given that Prützmann had formed *Werwolf* the previous autumn, and the organization had just the day before carried out a successful assassination of Aachen mayor Franz Oppenhoff, this entry smacks of arrogance, and illustrates the lack of trust Goebbels placed in Prützmann and the SS-led organization in general.

That Goebbels had little respect for Prützmann is evident in a diary entry dated March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1945. He stated outright that “I am not satisfied with the work of our *Werwolf* organization...At my next interview with the Führer I may well try to annex this organization myself. I would impart more drive to it than it has at present”.<sup>42</sup> How Goebbels and other Party officials would exercise control over anything other than the group’s propaganda is unclear, given that military control of *Werwolf* rested ultimately with Himmler. Still, attempts were made, most notably a letter written by Party Minister Martin Bormann to all *Gauleitung* ordering them to appoint *Werwolf* officers, and, even more ridiculous, a directive issued by Bormann during the last days of the battle for Berlin, which stated “All *Werwolf* activity is to be suspended...the *Werwolf* is dissolved!”.<sup>43</sup>

What Goebbels lacked in direct action, he attempted to make up for with an excessive propaganda campaign championing the idea of *Werwolf* resistance. His original plans called for both a *Werwolf* radio station and a newspaper, though the radio station was the only venture to get off the ground before war’s end. With its first broadcast on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945, *Werwolf Radio*’s mission was twofold: report the activities (real or fabricated) of *Werwolf* groups throughout Germany, and issue threats and warnings to would-be German collaborators and Allied

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph Goebbels. *Final Entries 1945: The Diaries of Joseph Goebbels*, Edited by Hugh Trevor-Roper, New York: Putnam, 1978, 234.

<sup>42</sup>Goebbels, *Final Entries*, 258.

<sup>43</sup>Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 133.

sympathizers.<sup>44</sup> The propaganda aspect of this “news outlet” cannot be understated; much of what was reported was fabricated or grossly over exaggerated to benefit the Nazi cause. The killing of U.S. General Maurice Rose, for example, was attributed to *Werwolf* fighters, when in fact the general was killed near Paderborn after stumbling upon a German tank patrol.<sup>45</sup> Biddiscombe notes that “Goebbels himself was the first to admit, at least privately, that *Werwolf* Radio’s output was not actually the news, but ‘the news as it should be.’”<sup>46</sup>

These exaggerations naturally produced friction between the Propaganda Ministry and the Bureau Prützmann, which lamented that *Werwolf Radio* had no way of proving that the few real instances of guerrilla activity they reported were the work of actual Werewolves, and that the propaganda campaign as a whole cast the *Werwolf* in a bad light and embarrassed the organization.<sup>47</sup> In a conversation with Hamburg *Gauleiter* Karl Kaufmann, Prützmann freely admitted, “that he too considered the activity of the *Wehrwolf* station to be wrong, dangerous, and stupid, and, that because of this, there were grave dissensions between himself and the Propaganda Ministry.”<sup>48</sup>

### Rejection by the Dönitz Government and Cancellation

*The fact that at present an armistice reigns means that I must ask every German man and woman to stop any illegal activity in the *Werewolf* or other such organizations in those territories occupied by the Western Allies because this can only injure our people.*<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Goebbels, *Final Entries*, 258; “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

<sup>45</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 139-40.

<sup>46</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 140.

<sup>47</sup> “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

<sup>48</sup> Appendix “A” to Report on Kaufmann, Karl, Otto, in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

<sup>49</sup> Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 249.

-May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945 radio address by Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz

By May 1<sup>st</sup>, with Hitler dead and the end rapidly approaching, Prützmann followed Himmler north to meet with newly-appointed *Reichspräsident* Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz in Flensburg, who brusquely ignored both men. Dönitz, eager to disassociate himself and his new government with any and all radical Nazi figures, had no use for Himmler on his staff, and dismissed him. The new regime, freed from the constraints of Hitler's fanatical "victory or death" mentality, sought out representatives from the Western Allies in order to establish peace before the Soviets arrived. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, a regional cease-fire was declared in northwest Europe, and thus the new regime sought to terminate any instances of military activity that might violate the agreement and potentially jeopardize their chance to escape a Soviet occupation. As a result, all *Werwolf* activities on the Western front were cancelled via a radio broadcast made that same night.<sup>50</sup> Both Himmler and Prützmann ended up suffering similar fates; captured by the British, they committed suicide by means of poison, with Prützmann ending his life in a detention camp on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1945.<sup>51</sup>

Given these numerous issues and setbacks, as well as a daily worsening of the situations on both fronts that often prevented the formation and training of new *Werwolf* units, it is not surprising that very few SS-*Werwolf* operations were actually carried out. Perhaps the most well-known and successful of these was the assassination of American-appointed Aachen Mayor Franz Oppenhoff in late March 1945.<sup>52</sup> On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1945, under cover of darkness, a joint SS-*Werwolf* hit team comprised of a sixteen-year old Hitler Youth, a BDM girl, an SS "Ranger" officer and NCO, and two scouts with knowledge of the Aachen area parachuted into a nearby

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<sup>50</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 48.

<sup>51</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 48.

<sup>52</sup> Ian Kershaw. *The End: The Defiance and Destruction of Hitler's Germany, 1944-1945*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2011, 279.

forest and then made their way into the city, confronting Oppenhoff at his doorstep on the evening of March 25<sup>th</sup> and shooting him in the head.<sup>53</sup>

Further operations undertaken in the name of *Werwolf* resistance were carried out on the orders of local commanders acting independently of any established chain of command. Indeed, by the time of the Oppenhoff assassination, the chaotic state of communications networks inside Germany made it nearly impossible for Prützmann to maintain contact with or relay orders to the HSSPFs and other *Werwolf* commissioners. As command and control at the top faltered, local commanders on the ground were forced to act on their own initiative, and the resulting power vacuum left by an absence of leadership (or too much of it; often the squabbling between local Army, SS, Police, and other leadership proved worse than having no one in charge) produced results that varied with each region, area, and *Werwolf* commander (self-proclaimed or otherwise).<sup>54</sup> Some, when they could safely do so, chose to simply disband their partisan groups in the face of vastly superior Allied forces. Karl Kaufmann, *Gauleiter* of Hamburg, was careful “to keep the Hamburg Wehrwolf Organisation under my control in all circumstances”, so as not to jeopardize his surrender of northwest Germany to the Allies.<sup>55</sup> Others, indoctrinated by years as functionaries of the Nazi party, dutifully carried out whatever final orders they had been given, which for most entailed no surrender and fighting on until resources and manpower were exhausted, no matter the cost. There were other Nazis who chose fanatical resistance as well, bound not by a sense of duty but an overpowering realization that the end was coming, that they had nowhere to run, and that, based on their thorough indoctrination in Nazi values and ideology, it was better to die in this final battle than live to see a world without Hitler and Nazism.

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<sup>53</sup> Whiting, *Hitler's Werewolves*, 117, 138.

<sup>54</sup> “Appreciation of the Werewolf Movement” in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I”, RG 319, NA.

<sup>55</sup> Appendix “A” to Report on Kaufmann, Karl, Otto, in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

## Part II: The American Impact

### Werwolf Postwar

The issues described above by and large prevented the survival of any major *Werwolf* movement into the postwar era. It was inevitable, however, that given the sheer number of *Werwolf* cells in varying states of readiness throughout Germany, the multitude of tasks facing American forces in the first few weeks of the occupation, and the fact that many cells had already been operating independent of any central command structure for the last several weeks of the war, a number of *Werwolf* groups were able to “slip through the cracks” and remain undetected by Allied authorities in the first hectic weeks and months of the occupation. SS-*Obergruppenführer* Jürgen Stroop, HSSPF for Wehrkreis XII (Wiesbaden) and *Werwolf* organizer in that region, recalled during his interrogation an April 30<sup>th</sup> meeting with one SS-Sturmbannführer Dietze in the Bavarian town of Bad Tölz. Dietze remarked to Stroop that “the war was not lost so far as he was concerned”, and that “he was going to lead 240-250 men to prepared positions in the Karwendel-Gebirge to await better times.”<sup>56</sup> *Werwolf* units composed of Hitler Youth members and cadre took up residence in the Bad Tölz area beginning in May of 1945 and, assisted by SS-*Feldwebel* Max Reutemann and a forest ranger named Höfner, they remained there until July. When their presence attracted the attention of nearby US forces, the guerrillas abandoned their mountain huts and scattered throughout the region.<sup>57</sup> Captured minutes from a meeting of *Werwolf* leaders in early May 1945 instructed operatives to pose as

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<sup>56</sup>Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 24: “O/Gruf Stroop, Juergen, HSSPf Wkr XII”, in IRR File XE 049 888, “Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

<sup>57</sup>HQ, Counter Intelligence Corps, USFET. “Memorandum for the Commanding Officer, Garmisch Sub-Region”, in IRR File XE 049 888 “Werewolf Activities, Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

anti-Nazis, thereby gaining the trust of American occupation authorities and buying time until conditions for guerrilla activity improved.<sup>58</sup>

While the reality of occupation proved far less frightening than the picture painted by Nazi propaganda (and, as a result, Allied intelligence reports), there were nevertheless instances of postwar guerrilla activity. Of particular importance are those acts which occurred well after the cessation of hostilities, when the confusion and disorganization brought about by the collapse of Nazism and the surrender of hundreds of thousands of German soldiers had long since dissipated. These acts were not committed in the hectic final days of the war, or in its immediate aftermath when some German military units were still being brought under control, but weeks and months after the May 8<sup>th</sup> surrender, when peace had definitively set in, and the German armed forces had completely ceased all operations.

The majority of *Werwolf* activity postwar was almost completely confined to southern Germany, in the American and Soviet zones of occupation. This was due in part to the region's rugged, mountainous terrain, well-suited for guerrilla operations, as well as the influx of military units south in the last few months of the war on the orders of the German High Command. Those diehards who were unaffected by the announcement of Hitler's death on May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Dönitz cancellation of guerrilla warfare on May 5<sup>th</sup>, and the unconditional surrender on May 8<sup>th</sup> resolved to continue their partisan activities for as long as possible. Their zealous devotion to Nazism and fanatical resistance against the occupiers did little to help their cause, however. Still, there were recorded instances of *Werwolf* activity, carried out by the most devoted Nazis:

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<sup>58</sup>Office of the Army Chief of Staff, G-2. "Minutes of the Secret Discussion of the Wehrwolf", in IRR File XE 049 888 "Werewolf Activities Vol. I" RG 319, NA.

-On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945, an American Soldier from the Fourth Armored Division was reported missing. His body washed up on the shores of the Danube five days later, with a wire wrapped around his neck.<sup>59</sup>

-On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1945, a bridge near the Austro-German frontier town of Unken was partially damaged by guerrilla explosives.<sup>60</sup>

-An intelligence report dated July 1945 warns of a *Werwolf* radio station still operating somewhere in the vicinity of Arlberg and Innsbruck, Austria.

-In January 1946, a *Werwolf* cell operating near Passau beat to death three U.S. Military Government officers investigating nearby black market operations and set their bodies on fire.<sup>61</sup>

These are several specific examples of a broader campaign of minor sabotage activities, which, according to both Biddiscombe and Fritz, included sniping, wire cutting, and the placement of decapitation wires and mines on frequently traveled roads. Such activities represented isolated incidents, however, and not the norm when it came to postwar Germany, due to the aggressive nature of the Allied occupation.

### Planning the Occupation

Occupation began swiftly and harshly in the American Zone, the result of months of planning and preparation by US policy makers and military commanders. Those given the task of preparing the American occupation policy for Germany did so with a keen eye for stamping out potential guerrilla activity. *Werwolf* had been on the minds of Allied intelligence agencies since the end of 1944. A document dated November 14<sup>th</sup> of that year from the G-3 division of SHAEF titled “Study of French Guerrilla and Resistance Tactics, and German Counter Measures”

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<sup>59</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 170.

<sup>60</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 186.

<sup>61</sup> Fritz, *Endkampf*, 206.

describes in detail common sabotage operations undertaken by the French *Maquis* and other resistance groups in occupied Europe, so as to offer examples of what Allied forces might face in Germany from *Werwolf* groups.<sup>62</sup>

The early months of 1945 brought American forces even closer to a victory in Europe, and the emphasis on preparing for and preventing guerrilla warfare increased. A memo dated April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945 from U.S. Twelfth Army Group Headquarters to SHAEF's G-2 Division makes it clear the necessity to stamp out traces of guerrilla activity:

[Werwolf] Organization numbers several hundred, possibly 1,000. Schools identified at Isserlohn and Lubeck, Westphalia, run by SS. Instruction, lasting a week, includes weapons, sabotage, and guerrilla warfare...to avoid terrorization of population in early stages, imperative you take energetic measures to identify and penetrate Werwolf and similar subversive organizations.<sup>63</sup>

Maps detailing the locations of underground caves suspected of containing arms caches or *Werwolf* hideouts were distributed to members of the American Twelfth, Twenty-First, and Sixth Army Groups in mid-April 1945.<sup>64</sup> Plans were even put in place to interrogate German "forest wardens", the equivalent of a park ranger, especially those appointed from September 1944 onward, due to the possibility that they could be working with the *Werwolf* to keep watch over hidden stocks of weapons and other equipment.<sup>65</sup>

A crucial aspect of these preparations for guerrilla warfare was the informing of American troops; the average GI needed to know what to expect when he entered Germany. This was accomplished through the issuing of numerous informational pamphlets to troops about to

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<sup>62</sup> British Public Record Office, WO 219/1602 (Records of the War Office): Underground movement in Germany: miscellaneous intelligence reports

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<sup>65</sup> British Public Record Office, WO 219/1602 (Records of the War Office): Underground movement in Germany: miscellaneous intelligence reports

enter Germany, or report for occupation duty. One such piece, entitled *Pocket Guide to Germany*, stated very clearly, in a section titled “Keep Your Distance”:

You are in *enemy* country! These people are *not* our allies or our friends...You are in unfriendly territory...*You cannot afford to relax caution now.*<sup>66</sup>

It goes on to describe how the remnants of 500,000 elite “SS Guards” would most likely blend into the general population, and begin underground activities, and then once more urges vigilance.<sup>67</sup> *Pocket Guide* was required reading for all occupation troops, and by order of General Eisenhower each man was to carry it in his helmet liner at all times.<sup>68</sup>

Another pamphlet, *Don't Be A Sucker in Germany*, emphasized the dangers of fraternization with the Germans, particularly women, stating “German women have been trained to seduce you. Is it worth a knife in the back?”<sup>69</sup> It went on to make a similar point about German youth, saying that many had been trained in sabotage and espionage activities, and not to trust them.<sup>70</sup> A handout specifically tailored towards guerrilla fighting, *Combatting the Guerilla*, offered an extensive history of the guerrilla movements faced by the Germans in their own occupied territories, counter measures that could be taken in the event of an ambush, raid, or attack on a railroad network or supply line, and a description of the *Werwolf*. It began with the statement that “German attempts at underground or guerrilla activity may increase as our forces complete the occupation of Germany.”<sup>71</sup>

That these pamphlets were distributed to the lowest echelons of fighting men, the men who would actually be conducting the occupation, is testament to the fact that Nazi guerrilla

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<sup>66</sup> Army Services Forces, ed. *Pocket Guide No. 10, Germany* (Washington, D.C.: Information Branch, US Army, 1944), 2.

<sup>67</sup> Army Services, *Pocket*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Frederiksen, Oliver J. *The American Military Occupation of Germany, 1945 195* (Frankfurt: Historical Division, U.S. Army, Europe, 1953), 130.

<sup>69</sup> U.S. Army, Twelfth Army Group. *Don't Be a Sucker in Germany* (Washington, D.C., May 1945), 3.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Army, *Don't*, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force. *Combatting the Guerilla* (1 May 1945), 6.

resistance, of which *Werwolf* was the embodiment, was a topic of great interest and concern to Allied strategists and planners, and to them a very real possibility, so much so that they felt it necessary to ensure every GI entering Germany knew what to expect.

### The Occupation Begins

At the end of hostilities on May 8th, combat troops deployed in Germany had overnight become occupation units. The aim was to establish an American military presence everywhere, and take the necessary steps to pacify the population and prevent resistance: roving patrols, bridge and road checkpoints, and stationary guards on all U.S. property and equipment.<sup>72</sup> All telephone and postal services were deemed off-limits to Germans, and a strict curfew was established. Citizens were allowed to travel by foot or bicycle only.<sup>73</sup> A proclamation was issued ordering all Germans to turn in all firearms, ammunition, explosives, knives, bayonets, and other “contraband” to Military Government Authorities by midnight on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1945.<sup>74</sup> In addition, all German courts were shut down and replaced with Military Government tribunals, and Allied currency became legal tender.<sup>75</sup> Subversive activity was, for the most part, ruthlessly stamped out or prevented through a series of sweeps and raids conducted by units of the US Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), combat support troops, and later the U.S. Constabulary throughout 1945-46.

No time was wasted in tracking down former Nazi leaders now on the run inside occupied Germany. This group of high-profile Nazis included many members of the *Werwolf*

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<sup>72</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *The US Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1975), 320.

<sup>73</sup> Office of the Chief Historian, European Command. *The First Year of the Occupation*. Occupation Forces in Europe Series, 1945-1946. Frankfurt: Office of the Chief Historian, European Command, 1947, 27-28.

<sup>74</sup> Ib Melchior. *Melchior a la Carte*. BearManor Media, 2009.

<sup>75</sup> Office of the Chief Historian, European Command. *The First Year of the Occupation*. Occupation Forces in Europe Series, 1945-1946. Frankfurt: Office of the Chief Historian, European Command, 1947, 28.

organization, and most who survived the war's end found themselves under arrest within just a few weeks after the surrender. Prützmann, as described above, was captured by the British and committed suicide in late May of 1945, as did his immediate superior Himmler. Martin Bormann and Joseph Goebbels died alongside Hitler in Berlin. Although many of the "big fish" of *Werwolf* did not survive to be tried or imprisoned, many of the smaller-level functionaries were netted during the summer of 1945, thus depriving surviving *Werwolf* cells of any significant command and control structure. Some of the first to be arrested, the interrogation reports for the following individuals gave the US some of its first credible intelligence regarding *Werwolf*, as well as lists of other Germans suspected or known to the prisoners as being involved in subversive activities:

-*SS-Obergruppenführer* Freiherr Friedrich Karl von Eberstein- arrested in May of 1945. HSSPF of Wehrkreis VII (Munich) and (unwillingly) designated *Werwolf* Commissioner for all of southern Germany.

-*SS-Sturmbannführer* Ernst Wagner- an officer of the Munich *Kriminalpolizei*, and subordinate to von Eberstein. Appointed *Werwolf* director for the Munich area in mid-April 1945. Arrested by the CIC on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

-*SS-Obergruppenführer* Jürgen Stroop-HSSPF for Wehrkreis XII (Wiesbaden) and thus organizer of the *Werwolf* there. Arrested in early May 1945 in Bavaria.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to arresting high-profile Nazis, US forces also attempted to discover and destroy *Werwolf* hideouts throughout the occupied zone. A SHAEF Intelligence Report dated May 19<sup>th</sup> 1945 details a raid made by CIC units on a *Werwolf* Headquarters in Bavaria, resulting in the capture of six officers and twenty-five operatives, as well as a civilian car, a Wehrmacht

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<sup>76</sup>Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 24: "O/Gruf Stroop, Juergen, HSSPf Wkr XII"; Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 18: "Krim Rat Stubaf Wagner, Ernst"; Intermediate Interrogation Report No. 5: "O/Gruf and Gen d Pol Freiherr Friedrich Karl von Eberstein", all in IRR File XE 049 888, "Werewolf Activities Vol. I" RG 319, NA.

motorcycle, a large stock of automatic weapons, and stores of food meant to last for months.<sup>77</sup> That same month, a CIC detachment with the U.S. Twelfth Armored Division uncovered a *Werwolf* cell and supply cache near Heidenheim that included arms and ammunition, and that June another CIC unit discovered an even larger stash of machine guns, *Panzerfäuste*, small arms, and motorcycles nearby.<sup>78</sup>

One large-scale security action undertaken soon after the war's end was Operation Tallyho, a CIC-led operation devised by Brigadier General Edwin L. Sibert, Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence Section, US Forces European Theater. Its objective was to seize illegally possessed weapons and root out any subversive activity already forming in the American Occupied Zone.<sup>79</sup> At 4:30am on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1945, CIC units all over the American Zone conducted raids of their respective sectors, capturing 2,747 illegal small arms and thousands of items belonging to the former German armed forces.<sup>80</sup>

The importance of the raid in stamping out early indications of *Werwolf* activity cannot be understated. Even in small hamlets located in relatively “quiet” sectors of the American Zone, startling discoveries were made. Ib Melchior, a member of CIC Detachment 212 in Kötzing, Bavaria, remembers the early-morning raid well:

In our operation alone we brought in quite a haul...one refugee hiding in a house, under interrogation turned out to be the former Nazi Police Chief of Prague...we found a Wehrmacht –issue BMWR-750 motorcycle hidden in a pile of hay in a barn. We unearthed military radio transmitters, binoculars...and enough dynamite to blow up the building in which we had our offices. In the chimney in one house we found three Army rifles, carefully oiled and protected in smoke-proof bags; the raid took place weeks after the war was over and the shooting had stopped, obviously some of the Germans had other ideas.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>“Werewolf (Miscellaneous Information)” in IRR File XE 049 888 “Werewolf Activities Vol. I” RG 319, NA

<sup>78</sup> Fritz, *Endkampf*, 205.

<sup>79</sup>Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 82.

<sup>80</sup>Ziemke, *The US Army*, 318-19.

<sup>81</sup>Melchior, *Melchior a la Carte*.

The end of the winter of 1945-46 brought on a renewed offensive against subversive activity in the American Zone. A sweep of the Bavarian Alpine region by US forces in April 1946 netted nine *Werwolf* operatives, as well as a “hit list” of prominent individuals to be wiped out by the group.<sup>82</sup> But the largest and most successful undertaking by occupation forces that spring was Operation Nursery. The result of months of investigation by CIC agents and other occupation forces, Nursery broke the back of an underground network consisting of former Hitler Youth leaders, led by none other than Reich Youth Minister Artur Axmann himself. Axmann, who had escaped the siege of Berlin and fled south in May of 1945, worked actively in the last few weeks of the war to funnel as many Reich Youth leaders and members south to Bavaria, with the intent of establishing a base for postwar guerrilla activity. Those members of the Hitler Youth and BDM who were able to reach southern Germany underwent several weeks of sabotage training at hastily-formed schools in the Tutzingerhütte and Benediktbeuren areas, run by SS non-commissioned officers. At war’s end these schools were abandoned and the recruits scattered throughout the region, presumably to await further orders.<sup>83</sup> Axmann, meanwhile, coordinated the establishment of a “front company” of sorts for the HJ-*Werwolf*; his economic advisor, Willi Heidemann, purchased a transportation firm based in Bad Tölz, Bavaria, and the profits generated by it postwar helped to fund the resistance movement. CIC agents managed to infiltrate Heidemann’s enterprise as early as the summer of 1945, however, and obtain lists of over 1,000 suspected participants in the HJ-*Werwolf*.<sup>84</sup> With this information in hand, CIC units launched “Nursery” in early 1946. Axmann himself was arrested at a roadblock in December of 1945, while traveling around southern Germany to coordinate activities amongst

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<sup>82</sup> Fritz, *Endkampf*, 206.

<sup>83</sup> HQ, Counter Intelligence Corps, USFET. “Memorandum for the Commanding Officer, Garmisch Sub-Region”, in IRR File XE 049 888 “Werewolf Activities, Vol. I” RG 319, NA.

<sup>84</sup> Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!*, 81-2, 84.

the various *Werwolf* cells in the area. Heidemann was arrested on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1945, and Nursery raids in March of 1946 netted a further 800 Werewolves, some surrendering only after gunfights with American forces.<sup>85</sup> The result of the entire operation was the arrest of virtually the entire remaining HJ leadership by April of 1946, and the end of any HJ-inspired *Werwolf* activity in southern Germany.<sup>86</sup>

### The U.S. Constabulary

The establishment of the U.S. Constabulary in February 1946 brought more support to the American counter-insurgency campaign. Envisioned as a small mobile police and security force specifically trained for occupation duty, U.S. Constabulary Headquarters was established on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1946, in the Bavarian town of Bamberg.<sup>87</sup> This hand-picked and well trained force, which gradually replaced the combat troops currently occupying the American Zone, focused its efforts on roving security patrols, the maintenance of law and order amongst the German population, and the conducting of search and seizure operations to secure surviving Nazi propaganda, weapons, and high value targets. CIC units continued to prevent the formation of resistance movements and other subversive elements, while the constabulary handled physical security.

Given the extent of this anti-*Werwolf* campaign, it is little surprise that *The New York Times* published an article on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1946, proclaiming “German Resistance Threat Has Failed to Materialize.” The article notes the success of Operation Nursery, and the lack of

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<sup>85</sup>Sydney Gruson, “Night Raids Staged: Arrests Follow 10-Month Investigation in U.S. and British Zones.” *New York Times*, March 31, 1946.

<sup>86</sup>“200 Towns Raided in Hunt for Nazis.” *New York Times*, April 1, 1946.

<sup>87</sup> Oliver J. Frederickson, *The American Military Occupation of Germany, 1945-1953*(Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe, 1953), 66.

evidence regarding rumors of “SS men hiding out in the mountains”.<sup>88</sup> Following the extensive raids of the previous spring, subversive activity had all but disappeared; a 1947 study showed that from July 1946-June 1947, only five U.S. personnel were “murdered” in the American Zone. The other causes of death were “suicide”, “manslaughter”, “accidental”, and “traffic”. In addition, no explanation was given as to the details of the five murders, and no subversive activity was mentioned.<sup>89</sup>

### Conclusions

Biddiscombe, considered by many the expert on *Werwolf*, attempts in his book to explain its failure while still maintaining the idea that the movement was in some ways successful, offering postwar incidents of sabotage as proof of this. This paper, while certainly embracing aspects of all *Werwolf* historiography written thus far, rejects the idea of *Werwolf* success. In order to fully explain the movement’s failure, it must be maintained that it was in fact, from start to finish, a failure. It failed to gain popularity amongst the military, it failed to bring about any major policy changes in Allied strategy, and most notably it failed to prolong the war for any significant period of time. German inefficiency and bureaucratization doomed any chances the movement had at establishing itself so as to direct behind-the-lines activity, and those isolated cells that did manage to mobilize in time and survive the end of the war stood little chance against American occupation forces. The threat of Nazi guerrilla activity was a factor taken into consideration during the formation of American postwar occupation policy. American forces entered Germany with the intent of establishing a firm hold over the German population and

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<sup>88</sup>Dana Adams Schmidt, “German Resistance Threat Has Failed To Materialize”, *The New York Times*, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

<sup>89</sup>James M. Snyder, *Establishment and Operations of the United States Constabulary, 3 October 1945 – 30 June 1947*, Historical Sub-Section C-3, United States Constabulary, 1947, 105.

preventing *Werwolf* guerrillas from operating in a postwar environment. They wasted no time in arresting former *Werwolf* leaders, infiltrating resistance movements, and confiscating weapons and other subversive material.

Isolated incidents of sabotage or resistance, while certainly significant to those who experienced them, cannot be taken as anything more than the final gasps of radicalism and terror of a regime in its death throes. Indeed, successful sabotage activities occurred not *because* of *Werwolf*, but in spite of it.

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