

Gottlob Berger and Waffen-SS Recruitment: 1939–1945

The creation of a »parallel army« alongside the tradition-laden German Armed Forces is a rather unique phenomenon in political-military history. While elite troops and guard units have always existed in modern armies, none of them took on the proportion, function or combat efficacy of Heinrich Himmler's Waffen-SS¹. Unit histories, memoirs and general accounts of the SS organization have traced the development of this politically-motivated force, but these have not told us exactly how it was possible to construct a separate million-man army, composed of volunteers, under conditions of war when all young men were subject to the draft². Himmler's ambition and maneuvering alone do not account for it. He had many capable competitors within the Nazi Party and faced staunch resistance from the professionals in the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW = High Command of the Armed Forces). The answer lies in a hitherto neglected area: the unprecedented effectiveness of SS recruiting policy, implemented with verve and resolution by Gottlob Berger, the unsung and despised creator of the SS recruiting system and the real founder of the Waffen-SS³. Berger and his aggressive young staff of pied pipers developed the means and methods to provide the manpower which made the Waffen-SS a political and military force to be reckoned with.

While SS expansion and organizational differentiation commenced after Hitler became chancellor and defused the military pretensions of Ernst Röhm's SA, a recruiting office was not established until the spring of 1935, shortly before the introduction of conscription. Its work floundered for three years, lost in the labyrinth of internal conflict and external pressure from the military establishment. In 1938 Hitler rearranged the military command structure and at the same time gave the various SS armed formations a kind of functional and constitutional legitimacy⁴. At about the same time Himmler appointed Gottlob Berger chief of a refurbished *Ergänzungsamt* (Recruiting Office). The latter took charge immediately and decisively.

With minor organizational successes and cantankerous interpersonal struggles behind him⁵, Berger proceeded to wrest recruiting from the faltering hands of the General-SS. He set up a relatively independent recruiting apparatus, which, in terms of efficiency, soon rivaled the replacement machinery of the Wehrmacht. Seventeen *Ergänzungsstellen* (Recruiting Stations), one in each *Wehrbezirk* (Military Area), and the SS Recruiting Office in Berlin, vastly enlarged and staffed with a variety of experts, began to concentrate on finding highly qualified manpower⁶. Within eight months Berger's men found some 32,000 new recruits, more than the General-SS had procured in several years. Most of these came from the *Hitler-Jugend* (HJ = Hitler Youth) and were probably the result of two significant agreements Himmler concluded with the *Reichsjugendführer* (National Youth Directorate). Berger had a hand in negotiating these agreements and managed to establish a »warm, working relationship« with top youth leaders⁷.

Hitler's attack on Poland in September 1939 stimulated vigorous activity in the *Ergänzungsamt*. Berger fought his own peculiar war on several bureaucratic fronts simultaneously. He was still in the middle of a struggle with General-SS leaders, who resented his rising power. OKW, with whom he negotiated official recognition of the Waffen-SS and an adequate reserve, delayed and temporized. During the first few months of the war OKW reserved the prime age groups for the regular army, thus forcing Berger to rely on party organizations to furnish personnel⁸. But the SA in par-

ticular recalcitrated, still smarting from the brutal humiliation of the 1934 purge at the hands of the SS. On the eve of war the SA actually tried to assert dominance over the HJ, an effort which might have closed the main source of manpower to the SS. It did not succeed because Himmler and Berger interceded to keep the *Reichsjugendführer* independent⁹. This naturally added to the disenchantment of the SA and soon created difficulties for Berger's recruiters. In November Hitler decreed that SA men could and should join the SS. During the following months Berger made determined efforts to recruit within the SA and other adult party formations. The results were very discouraging. The intra-party effort only brought some 1,700 new men into the Waffen-SS¹⁰.

Since older party men were not noticeably eager to join, Berger turned his attention to younger ones. But these were under the jurisdiction of the HJ until the age of eighteen and the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (DAF = German Labor Front) for six months of compulsory labor thereafter. However, Dr. Robert Ley, chief of the DAF, proved to be helpful. He released youths between the ages of eighteen and twenty from labor duty if they volunteered for long-term service. OKW chief Wilhelm Keitel allowed the SS to recruit twenty-year-olds for its field units¹¹ and even younger recruits if they enlisted for at least four-and-one-half years. But these concessions were not unlimited. Berger was granted a quota of 8,500 men and all of them had to volunteer by the first of April¹².

Recruitment proceeded with such speed and success that Berger began to speak of »flocking masses of volunteers« in February. Throughout Germany the siren calls of the SS were heard in HJ camps and dens, in schools and labor camps, in police stations and rooms rented for the purpose. Most potential volunteers were approached individually. Since no one knew how long the war would last, recruitment was planned with far-reaching perspectives in mind and on the broadest possible basis. Lines of communication were established even with the smallest towns and villages by men who enjoyed the respect of their communities. For the most part these were SS men not subject to the draft, but suitable mayors, teachers and police officers were also pressed into service. The propaganda line emphasized »basic SS principles«, e. g., that the Germans were a people without adequate space and that the war was one of mutually exclusive ideas, not merely one between major political powers. The SS with its special tasks was pictured as the ultimate defender of freedom and progress. Service in its guard regiments was presented as an extraordinary honor¹³.

Variety was the key to success, Berger believed. So recruiting efforts varied in method and approach. Sometimes newspaper advertisements were used, sometimes carefully prepared postcards were mailed, but always there was personal, verbal persuasion. Berger encouraged his recruiters to use appropriate tact, tailored to the peculiarities of each district and the varied attitudes of the inhabitants. Volunteers who were rejected during examination were usually handled with special care, so as not to make enemies but increase the circle of SS friends. For the lucky ones who were accepted every effort was made to get them released by the *Wehrbezirkskommandos* (WBKs = Military District Commands) as soon as possible. The WBKs played a crucial role since all volunteers had to be officially released by them before final enlistment¹⁴.

Berger put tremendous pressure on his recruiters, which led to some unpleasant methods from time to time. Early in March he complained that applications were declining and blamed tactless recruiting. In one area a group of secondary school graduates had been assembled by HJ leaders, who told them that the SS was organizing »an army of 100,000 men in the East« for which all Hitler youths, especially secondary school graduates, had to volunteer. Those who refused would be prosecuted for »treason against the movement and desertion«. Such methods were counter-productive and

Berger ordered his men to stop them¹⁵.

Himmler, meanwhile, enticed HJ leaders by shortening the required military experience for officer candidates and arranged special courses for them in the SS Cadet Schools. In each SS unit lists of former HJ leaders were compiled and submitted to the SS Personnel Office in order to expedite their promotion. There were more than 8,000 full-time youth leaders in 1939 and this order at least partially accounts for the fact that a sizeable percentage of them became officers and NCO's in the Waffen-SS early in the war¹⁶.

While recruitment continued unabated, OKW finally realized that it could not ignore the development of a »parallel army« indefinitely. Himmler had first used the term Waffen-SS in an official sense on December 1, 1939, and included three field divisions with their reserve units, various other small groups and a number of supply and support offices in its ranks. On March 8, 1940, OKW formally recognized all of these as composites of the Waffen-SS. Keitel and Himmler also agreed that personnel for the supply and support bureaus would come from those who had fulfilled their military duty in the former *Verfügungstruppe* or the *Totenkopfstandarten*. Army reserve authorities were then ordered to collaborate closely with the SS *Ergänzungsstellen* in the enlistment and call-up of personnel. Berger had every reason to be satisfied since his successful recruiting had indirectly forced OKW to face the reality of Waffen-SS existence¹⁷.

But some General-SS functionaries, mostly chiefs-of-staff in SS-Oberabschnitte (SS Main Sectors), resented Berger's political ascent and his exclusive control over the *Ergänzungsstellen*, which they felt should be subordinated to sectoral headquarters. He wrote to one of them in May insisting that the number of recruits who had been called up since January alone was sufficient evidence that he was »on the right track«¹⁸. And this unprecedented success had been achieved despite the fact that he had to build his system under war-time conditions and with admittedly inferior personnel. In July 1938 when he had taken charge of recruiting, all he had had at his disposal was a desk, a chair, a file cabinet and a pile of contradictory orders. But his superiors, meaning Himmler and August Heissmeyer (chief of the SS-Hauptamt), had given every encouragement and defended him against shortsighted and malevolent detractors. While he and his men were working day and night to meet Himmler's demands for volunteers, he hoped that the chiefs-of-staff had more important things to do than to call each other on the telephone in order to spread exaggerated stories about the shortcomings of the *Ergänzungsstellen*¹⁹.

It appears that the time had come to issue detailed regulations. These came out in June, when recruitment slackened somewhat, and left no doubt about Berger's new position in the SS hierarchy²⁰.

Functions and responsibilities of the *Ergänzungsstellen* were spelled out with a precision that left little to the imagination. First and foremost, they had to recruit volunteers, but good results would follow only if the required papers were handled expeditiously and recruits treated with judicious tact. Verbal persuasion was still considered to be one of the most effective means of recruitment. In order to secure fuller cooperation from the chiefs-of-staff this responsibility was allocated to the »leaders for recruiting« on their staffs. Press notices and radio spots should be used only if permission had been acquired from OKW through the *Ergänzungsamt*. Only pamphlets and placards prepared by the *Ergänzungsamt* could be used by the Stations. Finally, recruiters were given the salient points to be emphasized in all recruiting speeches: After a general discussion of compulsory military service and the role of the Waffen-SS as a »branch of the Armed Forces [sic]«, recruiters were to sketch the history of the SS, stressing the concept of »political soldier«. The axiom of voluntary enlistment was

to be treated next, accompanied by a discussion of Waffen-SS enlargement, recruiting procedures and the special relationship between HJ and SS. Then followed some technical details about conditions of enlistment, selective criteria, fringe benefits, officer candidates, cadet schools, various career opportunities in the Waffen-SS and other branches. Speeches were to be concluded by describing the utilization of the Waffen-SS in the Polish, Dutch, Belgian and French campaigns, followed by short accounts of those who had already earned the Knight's Cross.

Recruiting Stations also had to process applications, conduct musterings, handle the details of acceptance, assignment and eventual call-up through the facilities of the WBKs. Other duties included examination of applicants for the General-SS and the *HJ-Streifendienst* (Hitler Youth Patrol Service), whose members were considered to be automatic SS aspirants²¹. These activities appear to have been much more complex and time-consuming than one would normally have associated with such centers. Each of the Stations employed between twenty-six and thirty people divided into six different bureaus²²:

Section I	Section II	Section III
Territorial Matters	Notifications	Acceptance
Statistics	Examinations for	Enlistment
Security	Waffen-SS	Call-up
Liaison with	Police	Liaison with WBKs
General-SS	General-SS	Deferment
Hitler Youth	Cadet Schools	Records
Waffen-SS	Officer Candidates	
Travel Arrangements		
Mobilization Matters		
Recruiting		
Volunteer Needs		
Volunteer Allocations		
Leaders for Recruiting		
Section IV	Race Section	Adjutants Office
Business-Budget	Racial Matters	Personnel
Housing	Racial Statistics	Staff Directives
Civilian Employees	Demographic Matters	Transport
Health Matters		Household Affairs
Exercises		Ordnance
		Classified Matters
		Publications
		Recruiting Materials

Applicants were expected to provide two passport pictures and short personal histories, fill out questionnaires dealing with political attitudes and sign statements confirming that enlistment had been voluntary. For the *Verfügungsddivision* they had to be between seventeen and twenty-three years old. Their height had to be above five feet and seven inches, except for the *SS-Leibstandarte* (SS Body Guard) which demanded a minimum of six feet²³. Secondary education was to be completed by the time of application. The *Totenkopfddivision* required nineteen and twenty-year-olds at this time who were at least five feet and six inches tall and willing to serve for a period of twelve years. The *Polizeiddivision* (Police Division) was limited to older age groups by

OKW, as were recruits for the *Totenkopfstandarten* (Death Head Regiments), including their *Polizeiverstärkung* (Police Reinforcements)²⁴.

The examining process, particularly crucial for an elitist and racist organization like the SS, was regulated most carefully. The mustering was done by a commission, headed by the chief of Section II in the *Ergänzungsstelle* and including a physician, a racial examiner, three clerks and several medical orderlies. Obviously unqualified candidates were eliminated during a preliminary check by the doctor and the racial examiner, who were especially careful to hide their reasons by a secret code. Then followed the racial examination, which always preceded that of the physician so that health reasons could be given for rejection on racial grounds. A final decision was made by the leader of the commission. The latter then called together all those who had been accepted, handed them certificates to that effect and told them they would be called up when the need arose. Later Section III processed the papers and negotiated with the WBKs for releases. This frequently became a lengthy and rancorous business.

All party leaders were eligible for the officer corps and candidates were offered careers with any branch of the SS organization. Selection was based on the candidate's »character as a German man«, proven authenticity as a National Socialist and achievement as soldier and leader. After nine months of active service, candidates attended an SS cadet school, followed by specialty training, and then joined their chosen units as SS-Second Lieutenants. They had to be between seventeen and twenty-three years old, at least five feet, six inches tall, and agree to serve a minimum of four-and-one-half years²⁵.

These regulations helped to expedite recruitment, but releases were another matter. In July OKW ordered the WBKs to release only those who volunteered for prolonged periods of service in the three SS divisions, while those who committed themselves for the duration of the war had to be twenty-eight or older and could only serve in the *Verfügungsddivision* or the *Totenkopfddivision*. If differences of opinion between WBKs and Recruiting Stations developed, final decisions were reserved to OKW itself. In order to keep closer watch and tighter control over Berger's recruiters, OKW demanded monthly requests for replacements on the basis of which OKW would order releases. Each WBK was ordered to submit monthly reports showing the exact number of volunteers called up by the SS, the first of which, due on August 3, had to show the figures from the beginning of the war. The military establishment realized that Berger had been much more successful than they had anticipated²⁶.

Even in the Munich district, about which Berger had complained earlier, the situation improved with respect to HJ cooperation. In November the race specialist of the General-SS examined all seventeen-year-old HJ members and found that 1,300 out of 3,600 were suitable for SS membership. These could not be inducted, but they certainly promised good hunting for SS recruiters in the immediate future²⁷. Reports from the Frankfurt area were equally sanguine. Recruiting in secondary schools had been especially good there, since most students were already HJ members and since school administrators provided empty class-rooms for recruiting purposes²⁸.

All in all Berger had reason to be satisfied with the efforts of his recruiters in 1940. While probably more than twice as many volunteers were examined, 48,894 were actually called up by the Waffen-SS during the year. More than two-thirds of them were twenty years or younger — in fact, 168 of them were only sixteen. An almost equal number of police reinforcements were also called up. By the end of the year the Waffen-SS had become an army of 150,000 men. It was an expansion of unprecedented proportions²⁹.

After this initial success Berger was compelled to clip the wings of his recruiters. En-

couraged by Hitler's hesitancy to unleash SS expansionists and angered by Berger's aggressive and somewhat irregular methods, OKW put roadblocks in his way. Early in January 1941 OKW demanded a breakdown of age-groups in the Waffen-SS from Hans Jüttner, head of the Waffen-SS Operations Office³⁰. Berger advised him strongly not to comply, fearing, no doubt, that revelation of underage recruitment would hamper future efforts. He told Jüttner to report only older men and give some pretext for not reporting the others. He believed OKW would never find out exactly how many men the SS had recruited, since the WBKs were quite incapable of producing accurate figures³¹.

Himmler, meanwhile, ordered that all General-SS reservists be called up immediately and demanded that all possible Hitler youths be recruited. He rejected categorically suggestions that this call-up be staggered over several months in order to avoid critical notice and angrily asserted that he and he alone was responsible for the build up of the Waffen-SS. New units being formed in January and February had to receive adequate personnel³². Taking a cue from his chief, Berger sought to keep HJ boys exclusively available for the SS by closing doors to the Army and SA³³.

When OKW began to induct retired Waffen-SS men, Berger objected vehemently and with apparent results. He even asked that General-SS men who had enlisted in the Armed Forces for long periods be handed over. Since the *Ergänzungsamt* now had to find replacements for five active SS divisions, Berger wanted all the privileges granted to OKW, such as unlimited use of radio, press and film. At the end of February Berger discovered that OKW had forced the WBKs to hold back some 3,000 volunteers. Angrily he threatened to seek intervention with Hitler if they were not released soon. In the ranks of the HJ, meanwhile, Army and SS recruiters competed vigorously for a shrinking number of young men³⁴.

As soon as it became clear that Hitler was going to invade the Soviet Union, OKW allowed Berger to recruit an unlimited number of men during the month of May, provided they enlisted for a period of twelve years. He actually got 22,361 men by ignoring what OKW thought would be a safe deterrent and telling potential recruits they would serve only for the duration of the war, most probably only two years. Most of them came from the class of 1923, not yet subject to conscription³⁵. At the same time he began to recruit foreign nationals and ethnic Germans from occupied countries, primarily in southeastern Europe. There was very little OKW could do about these efforts, since Hitler had approved the formation of national legions. In Holland, Belgium, France, Finland and Denmark Berger's recruiters worked with sympathetic national movements and individuals. In Hungary, Rumania and the rest of the Balkans he used leaders of ethnic German minorities to smuggle volunteers out of these countries. Gradually force and intimidation were used and when these did not produce enough »volunteers« conscription was introduced³⁶.

But OKW was not cowed. Old regulations were simply reiterated; no new privileges were granted; and army reserve authorities were advised to report SS methods which defamed the regular Army. The Armed Forces had to receive parity with the SS in presentations to the HJ. Use of force or undue pressure should be prevented at all cost, particularly the use of police power³⁷. As a gesture of goodwill OKW reminded the WBKs that they were expected to work with the SS *Ergänzungsstellen* in a cooperative manner and reduce the tensions hitherto prevailing in many quarters³⁸.

On September 1, 1941, Berger told OKW that the SS had to have some 6,000 new men by the end of the month. OKW officers doubted that that many volunteers could be found in so short a time, but made those born in 1923 to 1925 available. As usual, OKW underestimated Berger and he managed to get most of what he wanted³⁹. Even with this belated coup the recruiting numbers for 1941 within Germany proper were

almost two-thirds below those of 1940. Yet, foreign recruitment helped to raise the size of the Waffen-SS to 171,215 men by the end of the year⁴⁰.

The euphoria of uninterrupted military victories encouraged OKW to continue its resistance toward SS expansion. Berger was forced to make some minor agreements with the HJ in order to find a few hundred more recruits⁴¹. In February, 1942, Hitler gave the SS permission to muster underage HJ members without the consent of parents or guardians⁴². This aided recruitment but led to complaints and put strains on recruiters, many of whom were inexperienced men recently brought in to replace the old hands drafted for active duty. Heinrich Jürs, who had replaced Berger as chief of the *Ergänzungsamt*, seemed to spend much time in the spring of 1942 confronting these problems⁴³. Foreign recruitment, however, picked up speed. From Hungary alone Berger extracted 16,000 volunteers between March and May and in the Baltic countries volunteers were formed into special units⁴⁴.

In Germany the quest for manpower dipped lower into younger age groups. During the summer Berger reached an accommodation with the DAF that allowed him to recruit sixteen-year-old boys, who were pulled into labor duty prematurely and then channelled into the Waffen-SS immediately after. Normally labor service did not become obligatory until the age of eighteen, but this arrangement gave Berger the opportunity to snatch these boys before the draft got them⁴⁵. It was a typical expedient, one of many which made Gottlob Berger anathema at OKW headquarters.

A convenient situation was created in March 1942 when Hitler permitted the *Reichsjugendführer* to establish *Wehrtüchtigungslager* (Premilitary Training Camps) for all sixteen and seventeen-year-old Hitler youths. Eventually some 200 camps were set up and Berger managed to have about thirty to forty of them staffed with SS trainers who doubled as recruiters. There was keen competition with Army and Air Force trainer-recruiters and persistent conflict with HJ leaders, but through it all Berger's men culled sizeable numbers of young men from these tailor-made recruiting corals⁴⁶.

The prime age group was not entirely off limits to the SS. Keitel had agreed earlier to allocate 24,000 battleworthy eighteen-year-olds to Himmler's divisions. By early August, 1942, some 16,000 had already been called up and the remaining 8,000 had been accepted by the SS but not yet released by the WBKs; 6,000 of the former were then performing labor service. But Berger continued to recruit since OKW had refused to release the remaining volunteers for immediate call-up. Consequently several thousand beyond the 24,000 quota had been recruited. At the end of the month Berger begged Keitel to give him all he had collected, pleading difficult replacement problems. Through Karl Wolff he alerted Himmler and thus sought to bring pressure on Keitel from the vulnerable flank. This oblique method appears to have worked, at least as far as the 1924 class is concerned, since the quota was eventually raised to 28,500 men⁴⁷.

The class of 1925 was another matter. Keitel granted the SS only 15,000 of these seventeen-year-olds. Berger complained that the Army, Air Force and Navy had an unfair advantage since they could always avail themselves of draftees when there were insufficient volunteers. He proceeded to accuse OKW of irresponsibility and bureaucratic trickery. Since the SS was forced to recruit pre-draft-age youngsters certain age groups might be thinned to dangerous levels. Furthermore, once quotas were reached, WBKs stopped releases and then drafted the remaining volunteers into the Army. So Berger demanded that the quota be enlarged to 26,000. It was hardly unreasonable to expect that Hitler would allow this, since this age group was considerably larger than its predecessor and since he had granted a quota of 28,500 from that smaller group. Berger turned out to be correct. In November, 1942, Hitler granted the larger figure

without hesitation⁴⁸.

By the end of 1942 Berger thought his problems had been resolved. During the last quarter of the year some 30,000 reservists, including foreign nationals, had been called up, beside the quota of young volunteers. He reported early in December that the barracks were full. But he had not figured on new SS battle groups then being formed in rapid succession⁴⁹. Since eligible young men would be needed by the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* in the coming months, the reinforcement situation was once more precarious. One would probably have to depend on foreign recruitment. Some 6,000 had already been gathered in Croatia and another 3,000 had volunteered in Czechoslovakia. Recruiting in »Germanic lands« really accelerated now, elitist pretensions being apparently forgotten⁵⁰.

But recruitment in occupied areas ran into temporary trouble⁵¹ and Berger was compelled to focus his sights on labor camps. Early in 1943 Hitler gave permission to recruit there in order to fill the extended quota of 26,000 men from the 1926 class and to meet the needs of two new SS divisions. These youngsters were inducted immediately and directly, since OKW temporarily removed the WBKs from the process⁵². It soon became apparent that OKW's cooperative attitude stemmed from Hitler's increasing confidence in the fighting virtues of the Waffen-SS, perhaps inspired by the Stalingrad disaster and the African fiasco. At any rate, Berger's men embarked on the biggest recruiting effort since early 1940. OKW soon enlarged the quota for the 1925 class to the unprecedented figure of 60,000 men, which must have surprised even Berger⁵³. Recruitment proceeded so fast and furiously, particularly in the camps, that niceties were overlooked and methods bordered on boot-camp *brusquerie*. Thousands of young men were simply drafted. This led to a controversy of major proportions, involving parents, inductees, labor camp leaders, and top party officials. But the brutal methods worked. While OKW had anticipated that Berger would get about 7,000 volunteers in the camps, Jürs reported that 35,000 young men had been recruited and inducted within the space of fourteen days⁵⁴.

The SS also launched a special campaign within the HJ between February 27 and March 14, which utilized not only the leaders of the HJ but all party officials as recruiters. Berger had made a special agreement with HJ-Führer Artur Axmann to accomplish this task. This so-called *Großwerbeaktion*, also characterized by coercion and complaints, had equally good results⁵⁵. Berger was not to be restrained now and Himmler's correspondence with party officials, while outwardly cordial, assumed a new and uncharacteristic aggressiveness.

At the Führer's headquarters OKW presented Karl Wolff with a list of complaints which soon found their way to Berger and Jürs⁵⁶. Martin Bormann charged that »pencils were pressed into the hands« of young men »accompanied by accusations of treason if they refused to sign up« and none were permitted to consult parents. Signatures were elicited under false pretexts. Since some recruits were only fifteen they failed to detect these clumsy subterfuges. Bormann warned Himmler to stop these things, otherwise he feared »substantial consequences«⁵⁷. Himmler was not moved. Although »here and there pressure had been used«, he insisted that most of the men and boys had enlisted voluntarily. He attributed the complaints to »fanatical Catholic parents«, an argument the anticlerical Bormann could sympathize with, and claimed Hitler had given him the right to draft these men just like the Army and Air Force. He went on to suggest that a little more assistance from party provincial chiefs, instead of »constant carping criticism«, would be appreciated⁵⁸.

Then *Reichsarbeitsführer* Konstantin Hierl listed another series of complaints by parents and labor officials and suggested that men recruited under forceful circumstances could hardly do the SS much good and might even be harmful⁵⁹. It was the last straw.

Berger unburdened himself by passing all responsibility to others. He seemed quite irritated that party functionaries were interfering with his mode of operation⁶⁰. But general resentment towards SS methods could not be disposed of so easily. Dr. Hans Lammers, chief of the *Reichskanzlei* wanted to see the alleged Hitler order which empowered Himmler to draft the class of 1925. Numerous complaints from labor camps had been addressed to the Führer himself and Lammers wanted to squelch them by citing the mysterious decree⁶¹. Himmler, it turns out, had no such document, but »surmised« that Hitler's order had been given orally and then passed on to him through OKW and labor leaders⁶². There is no doubt that Hitler gave permission to recruit in the camps, but Himmler obviously exceeded his authority and then created confusion to cover his tracks and protect Berger.

Berger had other problems in the spring of 1943. A national survey compiled by Jüttner's office found the physical and racial characteristics of the current crop of recruits to be far below those of the prewar generation. Some forty per cent had to be rejected as unsuitable. The attitudes of many recruits were even more disturbing: few volunteered readily; most came because they had to, meanwhile, fearing disapproval by parents and priest and combat itself. Some signed papers with unabashed tears in their eyes; others expressed happiness at being rejected. The cause for such negativism was attributed to high casualty rates in the Waffen-SS, its engagement at critical points, sharp drill during training, little chance for promotion and the apparent duty to leave the church — all of which were condemned as »rumors« generated by »boastful« SS men⁶³. The HJ received especially pointed criticism. Almost all reporters, including HJ leaders themselves, charged that the HJ had failed to foster understanding for the »greatness of the times and the joys of combat«⁶⁴. Himmler was disturbed and hastened to inform Bormann, but he neglected to mention the swaggering behavior of his recruiters and laid all blame for the »systematic poisoning of youth« at the door of the church. A counter-religious propaganda campaign would have to be inaugurated to deal with the situation⁶⁵.

Berger was soon forced to admit that volunteering had little meaning anymore. OKW sent General Rudolf Schmundt to see Himmler personally and the latter subsequently ordered that charges against Berger's recruiting personnel be investigated. Berger responded with typical bravado. He did not fear any surprising discoveries, he told Himmler, only the disturbance and uncertainty such inquiries would produce among his recruiters. In the process »enemies within« would be encouraged to resume their attacks. Several Main Sector leaders were just waiting for such an inviting opportunity. While »over-zealous« acts had undoubtedly been committed by hard-bitten front veterans, he felt that legal action was not called for. OKW was merely trying to »save itself from a prevailing mood of universal collapse«, because of the military situation and the rapid expansion of the Waffen-SS⁶⁶.

In reality Berger had little to fear. Hearings were held for a number of recruiters accused by General Schmundt and regional SS leaders, but the convicted received mild penalties. Himmler made sure of this by instructing his legal experts to produce uniform findings, which amounted to reprimands and transfers. In most cases Berger produced written affidavits denying the substance of all charges. Since the accused had worked in the interest of effective recruiting their guilt was considered to be minimal⁶⁷.

Heavy casualties made the replacement situation difficult and produced a recruiting tempo that smacked of desperation. The class of 1925 had hardly been exhausted when Berger and OKW began to spar over the next one. Initially only 15,000 of the 1926 class had been allocated to the SS, but this number had to be revised several times in order to accommodate the new HJ Division and several other nascent SS

formations⁶⁸. By September, 1943, some 44,000 of the 1926 class had already joined the ranks and on the third of the month Keitel enlarged the quota to 60,000, which he considered extremely generous since this class was considerably smaller than its predecessor⁶⁹. On the eighteenth Berger reported that 17,000 eighteen-year-olds had already joined the HJ Division and another 25,000 were about to be called up for other units. He asked Himmler to make sure OKW released the additional numbers⁷⁰. So, once more Berger far exceeded his quota and OKW seemed powerless to stop him. In 1943 recruitment went so well at home and abroad that the Waffen-SS went over the half-million mark. Divisions and regiments, composed largely of foreign personnel, were formed with staggering rapidity. Some two thirds of thirty-eight divisions were created during the last two years of the war⁷¹.

The HJ, particularly its *Streifendienst*, was becoming little more than a conduit for SS troops⁷². Early in 1944 Berger launched another major recruiting campaign within the HJ, patterned on the one of the preceding year. Both of these efforts were quite successful, at least partially because Hitler gave special permission to exempt some 10,000 HJ members from compulsory labor service each year and halved the six-month term for the rest. The 1944 campaign, entitled »*Gerade Du*« (»Just You«), continued throughout the spring and summer, concentrating mostly on the 1926 and 1927 classes, although it included also a sizeable proportion of the 1928 class⁷³.

The latter two groups were certainly underage and the SS share from these classes had not yet been determined, but that did not seem to bother Gottlob Berger. Himmler became commander-in-chief of the *Ersatzheer* (Replacement Army) in September and soon persuaded Keitel to eliminate the WBKs from the hitherto cumbersome process of recruitment for the SS⁷⁴. Then in December the last vestige of OKW control vanished when Berger virtually received authority to draft outright twenty per cent of the 1927 and 1928 classes. Most of them were called up almost immediately, which meant that the SS was able to induct probably more than 150,000 teenagers during the last six months of the war⁷⁵. It was a belated victory for Himmler's chief piper, who was more than pleased with himself. »The battle which I began in 1940«, he wrote to Himmler, »and which SS General Jüres continued with toughness and endurance, has reached a conclusion«⁷⁶.

More than 900,000 men served in the Waffen-SS during World War Two. Over half of them were ethnic Germans, Germanics or foreigners from occupied or friendly countries, where Berger's recruiters worked with particular zeal and reckless efficiency⁷⁷. At home methods were somewhat milder but just as effective, despite opposition within the SS, the party and from OKW.

In retrospect this inefficient competition for soldiers, this wasteful conflict between OKW and SS, would seem to have had only one rational answer: the concentration of manpower allocation within the hands of a single agency. It is a measure of the man's bureaucratic proficiency and no surprise that this idea occurred to Gottlob Berger. From July 1944 until January 1945 he vigorously promoted a scheme for the »reorganization of the entire replacement machinery«. Berger believed that the external supply of manpower would be exhausted by the end of 1944 with the incorporation of the »wave of refugees from the East«. The supply of internal »working reserves« was about to vanish. Rationalization and concentration of the control apparatus was the only feasible answer in Berger's mind. He suggested that »central guidance of the entire reserves of the German *Volkskraft*« be initiated. This would have included Armed Forces, Waffen-SS, Police, Reich Labor Service, Organization Todt, and the civilian labor sector. On the local level, a single new Military Report Office was to incorporate all existing recruiting centers for military and civilian personnel. The proposed bureaus were to be subordinated to a Manpower Central in Berlin, di-

rected by the Reichsführer-SS or his deputized representative. Here Berger, without a doubt, had himself in mind. It was a power base he could hardly resist⁷⁸. Had this scheme been adopted Berger would have controlled the recruitment and draft of all soldiers and workers. An overwhelming majority of the German population would thus have fallen into the iron grasp of the SS during the twilight of the Third Reich. It was not adopted and it could not have been otherwise. Such rational orderliness would have been most atypical of the political reality that prevailed in Nazi-governed Germany. By nature and experience Berger preferred to fight his battles in a world of competing pluralities. Within the ambience of inter-organizational tension and personal conflict Berger was at home. It was an environment that called for the kind of skills which made him an operator with few peers in the Nazi hierarchy.

- ¹ The term »parallel army«, first used by E. Neustüss-Hunkel: *Die SS*. Hannover 1956 (= Schriftenreihe des Instituts für wiss. Politik in Marburg/Lahn. Nr. 2.), is appropriate since the Waffen-SS was never fully integrated with the Wehrmacht, although OKW and OKH assumed tactical command in the field. Recruitment, training and indoctrination remained under Himmler's control. The best and only full-length history of the Waffen-SS is G. H. Stein's *The Waffen-SS. Hitler's Elite Guard at War. 1939–1945*. Ithaca, N. Y. 1966. More compact accounts can be found in W. Görlitz: *Die Waffen-SS*. Berlin 1960; H. Buchheim in H. Krausnick et al.: *Anatomy of the SS State*. New York 1968, pp. 254–274; H. Höhne: *The Order of the Death's Head*. New York 1971, pp. 493–545.
- ² Stein and Höhne deal with recruitment to some extent, but not in a consistent or exhaustive manner. The same holds true for the rather more limited unit and campaign histories J. J. Weingartner: *Hitler's Guard. The Story of the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, 1933–1945*. Carbondale, Ill. 1974; O. Weidinger: *Division Das Reich. Die Geschichte der Stammdivision der Waffen-SS*. Vol. 1.2. Osnabrück 1967–69; F. Husemann: *Die guten Glaubens waren. Geschichte der SS-Polizei-Division (4. SS-Polizei-PzGrenDiv)*. Vol. 1: 1939–1942. Vol. 2: 1943–1945. Osnabrück 1971–73; W. Tieke: *Tragödie um die Treue. Kampf und Untergang des 3. (germ.) SS-Panzer-Korps*. Osnabrück 1968; P. Strassner: *Europäische Freiwillige. Die Geschichte der 5. SS Panzer-Division »Wiking«*. Osnabrück 1968. Three former Waffen-SS generals have written tendentious but still valuable memoirs: P. Hausser: *Waffen-SS im Einsatz*. Göttingen 1953 and id.: *Soldaten wie andere auch. Der Weg der Waffen-SS*. Osnabrück 1966; F. Steiner: *Die Freiwilligen. Idee und Opfergang*. Göttingen 1958 and id.: *Die Armee der Geächteten*. Göttingen 1963; Panzermeyer (d. i. Kurt Meyer): *Grenadiere*. München 1957. Two doctoral dissertations make important contributions Charles W. Sydnor jr.: *Soldiers of Destruction. The SS Death's Head Division, 1933–1945*. Princeton, N. J. 1977 and Robert A. Gelwick: *Personnel Policies and Procedures of the Waffen-SS*. Nebraska 1971, unpublished.
- ³ Berger has made only one brief published comment about his activities, see id.: *Zum Aufbau der Waffen-SS*. In: *Nation Europa*. 3 (1953) Nr. 4, pp. 55f. When questioned by Heinz Höhne in 1968 Felix Steiner said, »Berger? He had nothing whatever to do with the Waffen-SS«, and Wilhelm Bittrich, former commander of the II. SS Panzerkorps, referred to Berger as a »mountebank« and »swindler« in 1966 (Höhne, p. 511). Berger had his detractors then and now, but he was one of Himmler's intimates and his abrasive and ingenious methods made the Waffen-SS a reality.
- ⁴ Reichsführer-SS (RFSS): *Einteilung der SS*. Geheim. December 14, 1934 — Records of the National Socialist German Labor Party (National Archives, Washington, D. C. (NA), Microcopy T-580, roll 87, folder 436); RFSS order. N. d. (January or February, 1935?) — Records of the Reich Leader of the SS and Chief of the German Police (NA, Microcopy T-175, roll 96, frames 2615952, 2615836, 2615888); Chef des SS-Hauptamtes (CdSSHA): *Einstellung in die SS-Verfügungstruppe*. September 3, December 9, 12, 1935 (ibid., T-175/96/2616701-3); CdSSHA/VI: *Bearbeitung des Sachgebietes VI (Ergänzungsamt) bei den Abschnitten und Standards*. November 11, 1936 (ibid., T-175/152/2681150-1); RFSS: *Neuordnung des Ergänzungswesens*. July 18, 1937 (ibid., T-175/159/2690588-9). With regard to changes made by Hitler in 1938 see *Der Führer und Reichskanzler: Geheime Kommandosache. Durch Ernennung des RFSSuCdDtPol ... August 17, 1938* (printed in K.-G. Klietmann: *Die Waffen-SS. Eine Dokumentation*. Osnabrück 1965, pp. 26–31). See also W. Warlimont: *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*. New York 1964, pp. 6–11; J. W. Wheeler-Bennett: *The Nemesis of Power. The German Army in*

Politics, 1918–1945. New York 1967, pp. 374 ff.; Stein, pp. 18–24, 32. Hitler's assumption of personal command over the Armed Forces through the newly-created Oberkommando der Wehrmacht in February and his clarification of the relationship between Wehrmacht and SS armed formations in August set the stage for OKW-SS conflict over recruitment. Himmler retained command over SS armed formations in peacetime, when they were to function as police units, but OKW took control during wartime operations. Size and formation of new units were left to the Führer's discretion, meaning that recruiting scope and policy would be determined by negotiations between Himmler (or Berger) and OKW officials.

- ⁵ As a wounded and decorated veteran of World War One, Berger involved himself in two simultaneous careers during the 1920s and 1930s. He became a gymnastics coach, grade school teacher, secondary school headmaster, and minor official in the Württemberg Ministry of Culture. In his spare time he became embroiled in the activities of the Free Corps, led an SA group in Württemberg, graduated to SA training chief and then became a protégé of F. W. Krüger, the latter SS police chief in occupied Poland. His career in the SA was shattered and he was forced to resign in 1933 as a result of disagreements with other SA leaders. Although despised and derided by former colleagues as a »big mouth« with »regrettable lack of self-criticism and soldierly discretion«, he ingratiated himself with Himmler and finally joined the SS in 1935, holding several different staff positions before 1938 in Württemberg and Berlin. I am indebted to Professor Robert Koehl for this biographic data on Berger, which comes from personnel records in the Berlin Document Center (cf. Höhne, pp. 511–513).
- ⁶ RFSS/VIII: Neuordnung des Ergänzungswesens und Ausführungsbestimmungen. May 26, 1939 (NA, T-175/39/2549195-7); Dienstweisung für das Ergänzungsamt der Waffen-SS (bewaffneten Einheiten der SS) und dessen Bezirkseinheiten v. 29. 10. 1939. Geheime Kommandosache (ibid., T-175/104/2626774-806); Berger to Wolff: OKW und RJF. November 1, 1939 (ibid., T-175/20/2525136); Berger to Himmler: Gegenüberstellung der Stärken, Ergänzungsamt der Waffen-SS-Wehrmachersatzstellen. December 1, 1939; Berger to Himmler: Neuordnung des Ergänzungswesens. December 1, 1939 (ibid., T-175/104/2626770-2).
- ⁷ CdSS Ergänzungsamtes an Leiter der Ergänzungsstellen. Geheim. February 1, 1940 (NA, T-175/104/2626680-90). Two Hitler Youth suborganizations, the Patrol Service and the Land Service, literally became exclusive feeder-organizations for the SS since its members were expected to transfer to the SS upon reaching their eighteenth birthday. Anordnung des RJF. über die Umgliederung des Streifendienstes als Nachwuchsorganisation für die Schutzstaffel v. 26. 8. 1938 (Vorschriftenhandbuch der Hitler-Jugend. Berlin: Reichsjugendführung, 1942–1943, pp. 895 f.; Streifendienst als Sonderformation. February 21, 1939 (NA, T-175/45/2557165-71); RFSS: Aktennotiz. August 14, 1940 (ibid., T-175/20/2525114-5); Schutzstaffel und Landdienst der Hitler-Jugend. February 10, 1939 (ibid., T-175/45/2557209-10). Ernennung von HJ-Verbindungsführern zur SS. June 16, 1939 — Records of the National Socialist German Labor Party (NA, Microcopy T-81, roll 113, frames 13207, 132421); Berger to Himmler: Betr. Reichsjugendführung. Persönlich! Verschlossen! Geheim! November 9, 1939 (ibid., T-175/20/2525133-5).
- ⁸ Regional chiefs of the part-time, civilian or General-SS had been largely responsible for local recruiting before the war and now struggled to retain that privilege against Berger's new Recruiting Stations. Some veteran leaders, like Kurt Kaul of SS-Oberabschnitt Südwest in Stuttgart, carried their fight to extreme lengths. Kaul had to be subdued and punished by Himmler himself (see NA, T-175/104/2626664-84, T-175/110/2635116, T-175/137/2664640). For Berger's early and relatively unsuccessful negotiations with OKW see Stein, pp. 34–42.
- ⁹ See G. Rempel: The Misguided Generation. Hitler Youth and SS, 1933–1945. University of Wisconsin, Phil. Diss. 1971, pp. 278–285. Keitel appears to have aided the SS in preventing a takeover of the HJ by the SA, but at the same time some OKH officers seem to have entertained such a coup themselves.
- ¹⁰ Stein, p. 43. For an example of SA recalcitrance and general reluctance of other party men to volunteer see Ergänzungsstelle Nordost (Königsberg): Bericht über die anlässlich des Führerbefehls zur Musterung von SA-Freiwilligen für die Waffen-SS durchgeführte SS-Annahme-Untersuchung v. 3.–7. 1. 1940 bei Angehörigen der SA-Wehrmannschaft. January 11, 1940 (NA, T-175/70/2586854-9). This report contains some interesting details showing the relative willingness to volunteer among all the major party formations.
- ¹¹ By this time the field units of the Waffen-SS consisted of the Verfügungsddivision, the Totenkopfdivision, the Polizeidivision and fourteen Totenkopfstandarten (Stein, p. 34).
- ¹² OKW: Reichsarbeitsdienst während des Krieges. January 16, 1940 (NA, T-175/104/2626749-51); Der Reichsarbeitsführer: Freiwillige der Polizei und der SS-VT. January 25, 1940 (ibid., T-175/104/2626752).
- ¹³ Berger an alle Leiter der Ergänzungsstellen. Geheim! February 1, 1940 (NA, T-175/104/2626688-90); Anordnung des Stellvertreters des Führers: Ergänzung der Waffen-SS. January 1, 1940 (ibid., T-81/113/132740); Hess Anordnung: Ergänzung der Waffen-SS. February 21, 1940 (Vorschriftenhandbuch der Hitler-Jugend, p. 1166).
- ¹⁴ Berger memo cited in fn. 13. On the WBKs see Stein, p. 35.
- ¹⁵ Berger an die Leiter der Ergänzungsstellen. March 8, 1940; Miscellaneous SS Records: Einwan-

- dererzentralstelle, Waffen-SS and SS-Oberabschnitte (NA, Microcopy T-354, roll 552, frames 4319634-5).
- ¹⁶ RFSS: HJ-Führer in der Waffen-SS. March 14, 1940 (NA, T-175/36/2545693); Reichsjugendführung, Presse und Propaganda-Amt: Kriegsjugend Adolf Hitler (unpublished manuscript, written in 1944, can be found in the Hauptarchiv der NSDAP. Microfilmed by the Hoover Institution, Stanford, Calif., roll 19, folder 358, pp. 3–9); Hitler-Jugend 1933–1943. Special issue of *Das Junge Deutschland*. Jg 37, Nr. 1 (January 30, 1943), pp. 40, 46. See also OKH order of May 14, 1940: Militärische Weiterbildung der zum Heeresdienst eingezogenen SS-, HJ-Führer, Politischen Leiter und Reichsarbeitsführer (NA, T-175/41/2552554).
 - ¹⁷ OKW: Neuordnung des Ergänzungswesens der SS und Polizei. November 30, 1939 (NA, T-175/104/2626687); CdSSHA: Neuordnung des Ergänzungswesens. December 2, 1939 (ibid., T-175/104/2626685-6); OKW: Wehrdienstverhältnis und Wehrüberwachung der Angehörigen der Waffen-SS während des Krieges. Geheim. March 8, 1940 (ibid., T-175/36/2545973-5). For a perceptive, if not necessarily groundbreaking, article that puts the SS-Wehrmacht relationship in broad perspective see A. Schickel: Wehrmacht und SS. Eine Untersuchung über ihre Stellung und Rolle in den Planungen der nationalsozialistischen Führer. In: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*. 21 (1970) 581–606.
 - ¹⁸ During the month of January alone the Recruiting Stations examined 49,211 prospects, 19,087 of whom qualified and were called up. Berger to Himmler: Annahmeuntersuchungen im Monat Januar. February 6, 1940 (NA, T-175/104/2626592 f.).
 - ¹⁹ Berger to Stabsführer des SS-Oberabschnitts Süd, SS-Brigadeführer Jaegy. May 4, 1940 (NA, T-175/70/2586845-9).
 - ²⁰ The following passage is based on *Ergänzungsbestimmungen der Waffen-SS*. N. d. — June, 1940? — (NA, T-354/552/4320001-13); *Grundriß zum Werbevortrag über den freiwilligen Eintritt in die Waffen-SS*. N. d. — June, 1940? — (ibid., T-354/552/4319625); *Merkblatt für den Eintritt als Freiwilliger in die Waffen-SS, Polizei und Allgemeine-SS*. N. d. — June, 1940? — (ibid., T-81/99/115664-5); for sample application papers see ibid., T-580/352/#9; cf. J. Seuffert: *Franz muß in den Krieg. Ein Junge in Hitlers Armee*. Düsseldorf 1964, pp. 6f. and Kl. Granzow: *Tagebuch eines Hitlerjungen, 1943–1945*. Bremen 1965, pp. 31 f.
 - ²¹ For a detailed discussion of the HJ-Streifendienst see Rempel, pp. 408–500.
 - ²² *Dienstanweisung für das Ergänzungsammt der Waffen-SS* (NA, T-175/104/2626774-806). See especially frames 2626795–800.
 - ²³ Requirements for the *Leibstandarte* were always stiffer than for other Waffen-SS units. On the elite characteristics of the *Leibstandarte* see Rempel, pp. 244–249, 602–606 and Weingartner, *passim*.
 - ²⁴ In order to form two new divisions authorized by Hitler after the Polish campaign Berger conceived a clever scheme to circumvent OKW restrictions on recruitment. He transferred *Totenkopf* and Police personnel to the Waffen-SS and then recruited volunteers to bring the latter back up to full strength. The number of these new recruits, and a host of General-SS reservists also called up, amounted to some 50,000 men altogether (see Stein, pp. 32–34).
 - ²⁵ *Merkblatt für die Dauer des Krieges für den Eintritt als Führerbewerber in die Waffen-SS*. N. d. — June, 1940? — (NA, T-175/191/2729217-9); cf. SA-, SS-, HJ-Führer und Politische Leiter bei den Ersatzeinheiten der Waffen-SS. *Verfügung des Kommandos der Waffen-SS*. August 1, 1940 (*Vorschriftenhandbuch der Hitler-Jugend*, p. 1168) and memo by Hans Jüttner, chief-of-staff of the SS-Führungshauptamt, relating to »Führerbewerber« of December 2, 1940 (NA, T-354/552/4319825-6).
 - ²⁶ OKW: *Ersatzgestellung für Reichsführer-SS*. July 10, 1940 (NA, T-175/27/2534114-7).
 - ²⁷ *Gebietsführer Peschke, HJ Gebiet Schwaben: Untersuchung der Jugend*. July 30, 1940 (NA, T-175/120/2645464); *SS Ergänzungsstelle Süd: HJ-Untersuchung des Jahrganges 1923 München*. November 7, 1940 (ibid., T-354/552/4319543); cf. *Stabsführer Lauterbacher: Überführung des Jahrganges 1921 in die Schutzstaffel*. *Reichsbefehl der Reichsjugendführung*. September 2, 1940 (ibid., T-81/113/133225-6).
 - ²⁸ *Der Leiter der Ergänzungsstelle Main: Rundschreiben Nr. 1*. N. d. — late 1940? — (NA, T-175/191/2729204-6).
 - ²⁹ *Einberufungen zur Waffen-SS-Polizei im Jahre 1940* (NA, T-175/110/2635112-4); cf. *Übersicht über Stärke der Geburtsjahrgänge 1916–1939, Stand 1. VI. 1940* (ibid., T-175/127/2652410-2); *Höhne*, p. XII.
 - ³⁰ The *Kommandoamt der Waffen-SS* became a part of the SS-Führungshauptamt created in August 1940. Jüttner served simultaneously as head of the former and chief-of-staff of the latter — see Stein, pp. 105 f. and Himmler memo of August 15, 1940 (NA, T-175/27/2534076-7).
 - ³¹ Berger: *OKW Anforderungen des Altersaufbaus der Waffen-SS*. January 14, 1941 (NA, T-175/110/2635/2635126-7).
 - ³² RFSS an alle SS-Oberabschnittsführer, January 31, 1941 (NA, T-175/110/2635109-10).
 - ³³ See Berger memo to Brandt, February 10, 1941 (NA, T-175/123/2648485-6). The ploy involved use of the HJ Patrol Service as a wedge to get the right to train and influence HJ members generally; cf. *Notiz für den Stabsführer* (in Rudolf Hess' office). November 1, 1940 (ibid., T-580/38/239).

- ³⁴ CdSSHA (Berger) to OKW: Einstellung in die Waffen-SS. February 19, 1941 (NA, T-175/110/2635071-4). The competition was so keen that HJ leaders feared their organization was going to be deprived of essential leaders. A conference was held to deal with the problem in Hitler's presence. See Freistellung von HJ-Führern. March 3, 1941 (ibid., T-81/101/117366).
- ³⁵ Stein, pp. 151 f.; HJ Gebiet Schwaben: Einstellung in die Waffen-SS. May 16, 1941 (NA, T-580/349/# 5).
- ³⁶ Stein, pp. 152 ff.; Höhne, pp. 517 ff.
- ³⁷ Berger frequently induced local police officials to »invite« HJ members to police stations where they were subjected to strong appeals by SS recruiters. In that environment volunteering understandably took on a compulsory character.
- ³⁸ OKW: Ergänzung der Waffen-SS. July 15, 1941 (NA, T-175/135/2663191-4).
- ³⁹ OKW: Ersatzbedarf der Waffen-SS. September 3, 1941 (NA, T-175/131/2658038).
- ⁴⁰ CdSSHA: Statistik des Ergänzungsamtes der Waffen-SS. June 9, 1942 (NA, T-175/60/2576487-9); der Insp. für Statistik beim RFSS: Stärkemeldung. June 30, 1942 (ibid., T-175/60/2576464); Höhne, pp. XII, 520, gives a figure of 230,000 for the Waffen-SS, which is much too high. Interestingly enough, the General-SS still had 226,252 members at this time.
- ⁴¹ Berger to Himmler: Abkommen mit der Hitler-Jugend. January 1, 1942 (NA, T-175/20/2525075-6); Reichsjugendführung: Abstellung von Ausbildern und HJ-Führern, die bei der Waffen-SS sind. March 1, 1942 (Vorschriftenhandbuch der Hitler-Jugend, p. 1169). These arrangements had to do with a rotating exchange of personnel between the Waffen-SS and the HJ.
- ⁴² Kommandoamt der Waffen-SS: Einstellung von minderjährigen Freiwilligen in die Waffen-SS. March 3, 1942 (NA, T-175/159/2690476); cf. Reichsbefehl der Reichsjugendführung 9/42K. April 1, 1942 (ibid., T-81/114/134337). The National Youth Directorate advised that this order be kept secret.
- ⁴³ Jürs an alle Leiter der Ergänzungsstellen. April 27, 1942 (NA, T-175/159/2690467-8). While Jürs had been chief of the Recruiting Office since January 15, 1941 (Berger was promoted to head of the SS-Hauptamt in August 1940), he was completely overshadowed by Berger in all major recruitment matters. See RFSS: Bezeichnung der Ämter des SSHA und der dem Chef des SSHA unmittelbar unterstellten Dienststellen. January 21, 1941 (ibid., T-175/152/2681858); RFSS: Organisation des SS-Hauptamtes. February 28, 1941 (ibid., T-175/98/2619555-8). For Jürs' appointment see ibid., T-175/36/2546011.
- ⁴⁴ Stein, pp. 172–179.
- ⁴⁵ SSHA-Amt II: Einberufung von 16½-jährigen Freiwilligen zum RAD, bzw. zur Waffen-SS. July 24, 1942 (NA, T-354/552/4319786-8). This memo was written by Robert Brill, Jürs' second in command. For his testimony at Nuremberg see Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal. Vol. 20. Nuremberg 1946, pp. 337–356.
- ⁴⁶ Reichsbefehl der Reichsjugendführung 9/42K: Wehrtüchtigungslager der HJ. April 1, 1942 (NA, T-81/114/134334-5). For a detailed discussion of the camps and SS recruitment within them see Rempel, pp. 510–600.
- ⁴⁷ Berger to Keitel: Ersatzverteilung des Jahrgangs 1924. August 27, 1942 (NA, T-175/18/2522553); Berger to Wolff: Ersatzverteilung des Jahrgangs 1924. August 27, 1942 (ibid., T-175/18/2522552).
- ⁴⁸ Berger to OKW: Einschränkung der Einstellung von Freiwilligen des Geb.-Jahrgangs 1925. October 21, 1942 (NA, T-175/18/2522546); OKW: Einschränkung der Einstellung von Freiwilligen des Geburtsjahrgangs 1925. November 7, 1942 (ibid., T-175/18/2522536).
- ⁴⁹ Late in 1942 Hitler decided to allow a major Waffen-SS expansion. First the SS Cavalry Brigade was enlarged into the 8th SS Kavalleriedivision »Florian Geyer«, then the classic divisions »Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler«, »Das Reich«, and »Totenkopf« were strengthened and converted into Panzergrenadierdivisions (later the same was done for the 5th SS Division »Wiking«). Finally two new divisions (the first since 1940), Panzergrenadierdivisions »Hohenstauffen« and »Frundsberg« were authorized at the end of the year; Stein, pp. 201–203.
- ⁵⁰ CdSSHA: Ersatzlage. With three Anlagen. October 21, 1942 (NA, T-175/18/2522538-45); CdSSHA: Ersatzlage. November 20, 1942 (ibid., T-175/18/2522531). At the end of the year two new agreements were made with the Hitler Youth. Reichsjugendführung: Nachwuchs für die Nachrichtenverbände der Waffen-SS aus der Nachrichten-HJ. November 6, 1942 (ibid., T-580/348/# 2/2. Teil); Reichsjugendführung: Nachwuchs für die Waffen-SS aus der Motor-HJ. December 22, 1942 (ibid., T-81/115/134653).
- ⁵¹ Stein, pp. 160 ff. After Himmler moved to correct the most obvious abuses of SS recruiters abroad and the mishandling of foreign recruits during training the situation improved.
- ⁵² OKW: Aushebungen für die Waffen-SS in RAD-Lagern. February 11, 1943 (NA, T-175/131/2658036-7).
- ⁵³ Keitel to Himmler: Freiwillige für die Waffen-SS aus dem Geburtsjahrgang 1925. February 24, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586802).
- ⁵⁴ Jürs to Himmler. March 1, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586826).
- ⁵⁵ Reichsjugendführung: Verstärkte Werbung für die Waffen-SS. February 9, 1943 (NA, T-580/348/# 2/2. Teil); Ergänzungsstelle Süd: Großwerbeaktion der HJ für die Waffen-SS. February 19, 1943 (ibid., T-580/348/# 2/2. Teil); Rempel, pp. 360–363; SS-Oberabschnitt Südwest: Großwerbeaktion der HJ für die Waffen-SS. February 27, 1943 (ibid., T-175/159/2690426); Ent-

- wurf of Hitler order authorizing the Großwerbeaktion (ibid., T-175/159/2690427); Stabsführer beim SS-Oberabschnitt Südwest an SS-Sturmbannführer Regierungsrat Gädecke: Werbeaktion der HJ für die Waffen-SS. N. d. (ibid., T-175/159/2690429-30); Gauleiter Robert Wagner, Zivilverwaltung im Elsaß, an den Stabsführer beim SS-Oberabschnitt Südwest, re Werbeaktion. N. d. (ibid., T-175/159/2690431-2); Gauleiter Wagner: Werbeaktion der HJ für die Waffen-SS. March 16, 1943 (ibid., T-175/159/2690433-4).
- ⁵⁶ The complaints came from volunteers who had previously committed themselves to various army units, but who had subsequently been compelled to switch to the Waffen-SS (NA, T-175/70/2586827).
- ⁵⁷ Bormann to Himmler. February 24, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586828-31).
- ⁵⁸ Himmler to Bormann. March 13, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586813-4); Berger to Brandt: Beschwerde der Gauleitung Magdeburg-Anhalt wegen unzulässiger Werbung — Bezug: Schr. RFSS an Reichsleiter Bormann v. März 1943 (ibid., T-175/70/2586795-6).
- ⁵⁹ Reichsarbeitsführer Hierl to Himmler. March 9, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586820-2); Arbeitsführer Siegfried Kallmeyer an Generalarbeitsführer Simon, Halle/Saale: Werbeaktion der SS in der landwirtschaftlichen Schule und Wirtschaftsberatungsstelle Halle/Saale, Delitzscher Straße am 24. 2. 1943. February 26, 1943 (ibid., T-175/70/2586824-5); Himmler to Hierl. March 20, 1943 (ibid., T-175/70/2586799).
- ⁶⁰ Berger to Brandt. March?, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586795-6); Berger to Himmler. April 6, 1943 (ibid., T-175/70/2586793-4). For an example of how irate parents were eventually subdued see letter of Landwirt A. Müller, Neudorf, to Kommandeur des Ergänzungsamtes West der Waffen-SS, Düsseldorf. March 23, 1943 (ibid., T-175/131/2658042). See also Wehrkreiskommando I, Königsberg: Bestimmungswidrige Werbung für die Waffen-SS. April 2, 1943 (ibid., T-175/131/2658041).
- ⁶¹ Lammers to Himmler: Werbung für die Waffen-SS. March 28, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586798).
- ⁶² Himmler to Lammers. April 11, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586792).
- ⁶³ Zusammenfassung der Berichte vom SS-Führungshauptamt — Betr. Einsatz von Rednern für die RAD-Aktion. April, 1943 (ibid., T-175/131/2658012-25).
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 1.
- ⁶⁵ Himmler to Bormann. Geheime Reichssache. May 14, 1943 (NA, T-175/131/2658026); Himmler to Berger: RAD-Aktion. May 14, 1943 (ibid., T-175/70/2586780).
- ⁶⁶ Berger to Himmler: Vortrag General Schmudt bei Reichsführer-SS. May 18, 1943 (NA, T-175/131/2658031-5).
- ⁶⁷ Brandt to SS-Obersturmführer Horst Bender, SS-Hauptamt Gericht. April?, 1943 (NA, T-175/70/2586791); for a sample finding see ibid., T-175/70/2586740. All that OKW could do was to advise the WBKs to take those who had been forced to sign up with the Waffen-SS into the army and to »teach the Hitler Youth to have the courage to refuse to sign papers which do not meet their wishes«. OKW: Freiwillige der Waffen-SS. June 15, 1943; Miscellaneous German Records Collection (ibid., Microcopy T-84, roll 241, frame 6599899).
- ⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion of the 12. SS Panzerdivision »Hitler-Jugend«, see Rempel, pp. 601—699.
- ⁶⁹ Keitel to Himmler: Freiwillige des Geburtsjahrganges 1926. September 3, 1943 (NA, T-175/18/2522501).
- ⁷⁰ Berger to Himmler: Freiwillige des Geburtsjahrganges 1926. September 18, 1943 (NA, T-175/18/2522500). In the Hitler Youth Berger prepared for later recruitment by having sixteen, fifteen and fourteen-year-olds checked over under the subterfuge of a compulsory health examination, which even the Reichsjugendführung believed to be legitimate. Berger to Himmler: Untersuchung des Jahrganges 1927 (später 1928 und 1929). Geheim. August 17, 1943 (NA, T-175/18/2522485-6).
- ⁷¹ Stein, pp. 210 f. It should be noted that many of these so-called divisions were only of regiment-size and had little of the elite character possessed by the early divisions. Earlier requirements and conditions were literally abandoned in the desperate effort to scrap together more and more units. In addition to meeting personnel needs for new divisions, the problem of replacements for existing units became overwhelming because of high casualty rates. Up to the end of 1943 the Waffen-SS sustained 157,971 casualties: 48,240 dead and missing NCOs and men; 2,120 dead and missing officers; 104,521 heavily wounded NCOs and men; and 3,090 heavily wounded officers. Jüttner to Brandt. April 28, 1944 (NA, T-175/130/2657024).
- ⁷² Rempel, pp. 491—500; Berger to Brandt: Besprechung Parteikanzlei-Reichsjugendführung. May 27, 1944 (NA, T-175/155/2685701-2); SS-Ergänzungsstelle der Waffen-SS, Außenstelle Ulm, an den Verbindungsführer im HJ-Bann 438: Betr. Erhöhte Zusammenarbeit. March 1, 1944 (ibid., T-175/159/2690602).
- ⁷³ Reichsjugendführung: Werbeaktion für die Waffen-SS. January 22, 1944 (NA, T-580/38/239); HJ Gebiet Schwaben to Reichsjugendführung: Abschlußbericht über die Großwerbeaktion »Gerade Du« der HJ für die Waffen-SS. July 26, 1944 (ibid., T-580/352/#9); HJ Gebiet Schwaben: Freistellung vom RAD. N. d. — January, 1943? — (ibid., T-580/349/#5); HJ Gebiet Schwaben: Freistellung vom RAD des Jahrgangs 1927, die Freiwillige der Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS sind. February 19, 1944 (ibid., T-580/350/#5/2. Teil).
- ⁷⁴ HJ Gebiet Schwaben an Ergänzungsstelle Süd: Kriegsfreiwilligemeldescheine. October 20, 1944 (NA, T-580/352/#9). A copy of the agreement between Keitel and Himmler has not been

found, but the above memo states: »Es erübrigt sich demzufolge, die getroffene Vereinbarung zwischen OKW und Reichsführung-SS die Kriegsfreiwilligemeldescheine für die Waffen-SS direkt an die SS-Ergänzungsstelle zu senden, den Bannen derzeitig zur Kenntniss zu geben.«

⁷⁵ OKW/Wehrersatzamt an Wehrkreiskommandos I-XIII, XVII, XVIII, XX, XXI, Böhmen-Mähren und General-Gouvernement. Geheim. December 16, 1944 (NA, T-175/18/2522483). The 150,000 figure is arrived at by taking twenty per cent of the combined numbers of militarily-fit youngsters from the 1927 and 1928 classes (185,600) and allowing for eliminations due to extreme youthfulness and recruiting complications stemming from the confused situation at the end of the war. See Übersicht über Stärke der Geburtsjahrgänge 1916–1939 (ibid., T-175/127/2652410).

⁷⁶ Berger to Himmler. Geheim. December 18, 1944 (NA, T-175/18/2522482).

⁷⁷ Berger: Zum Aufbau der Waffen-SS. In: Nation Europa. 3 (1953) Nr. 4, pp. 55 f.; Krausnick et al.: Anatomy of the SS State, p. 600; Höhne, p. 520.

⁷⁸ Berger an SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Naumann im Ministerium für Propaganda und Volksaufklärung. Persönlich. Geheim. August 16, 1944 (NA, T-175/71/2588282-7); Brandt to Berger. August 27, 1944 (ibid., T-175/71/2588280); Berger to Himmler: Betr. Ersatzwesen. January 27, 1945 (ibid., T-580/88/436). Himmler read the proposal and noted »sehr gut« in the margin, but did nothing to implement it.