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PAPERS OF GENERAL WILHELM GROENER,
1867-1939

Introduction

The materials reproduced in this microscopy consist of papers of General Wilhelm Groener, prominent German military leader of World War I. The folders containing these documents are stamped "Heeresarchiv Potsdam," which institution was formerly the custodian of the collection. Originally the Heeresarchiv (Army Archives) was a part of the Reichsarchiv (German National Archives); but in 1936 it was separated from the Reichsarchiv, and all military records and related materials that were then in the legal custody of the Reichsarchiv were transferred to that of the Heeresarchiv. As a result of military operations in World War II, the documents reproduced in this microscopy came into the possession of United States armed forces. In 1947 the War Department transferred custody of them to the National Archives, where they constitute part of a body of records designated as Record Group 242, World War II Collection of Seized Enemy Records.

Generalleutnant Wilhelm Groener (1867-1939) was head of the railroad section of the German General Staff during the earlier years of World War I. In that capacity he was credited with outstanding accomplishment in directing the relatively smooth and efficient wartime transport service of the German forces. In 1917 he was shifted to field duty as commanding general of the 33d Infantry Division in France. In 1918 he was transferred to the Eastern Front as chief of staff of the Kiev Army Group under Field Marshal von Eichhorn; and, in November, he succeeded Ludendorff as First Quartermaster General. After the war, he was instrumental in aiding the reconstruction of German peacetime economy in his capacity as head of the Ministry of Communications (1920-23) and as Minister of Defense and Minister of the Interior in the cabinet of Chancellor Brüning (1928-32). This collection of Groener's private and official papers consists, in general, of correspondence, reports, notebooks, manuscript and typescript drafts of his autobiography and other writings, and some maps and press clippings. Of particular interest are Groener's war diary and war letters, his essays on military strategy and the Schlieffen Plan, and his correspondence and memoranda after 1918.

The Heeresarchiv's register of the Groener Papers is reproduced at the beginning of Roll 1 of this microscopy. The register, in addition to a detailed inventory of the documents, contains a chronology of Groener's life and a name and place index keyed to the stücke (section) and map numbers. However, the National Archives has not received all the materials listed in the register, nor were the materials in good order. The following items

are missing: Stücke 4, 81, 115, 131, 166, 167, 79, 83-186, 199, 223, 249, and 257-294; maneuver and campaign maps K 1-K 106; and railroad maps K 201-K 222.

Certain materials, because of duplication or irrelevance, have not been reproduced in this microscopy, but the National Archives will reproduce any such items specifically ordered. The following are the items omitted:

Stücke 2, 3, 5 I-II, 6-10, 11 I-II – These materials are preliminary typescript and manuscript drafts of Groener’s memoirs; the final and the next to final drafts in stück 1 have been reproduced, however, because of the considerable difference between those two drafts.

Stücke 78 a – This is a published French translation, *Le Generalissime Malgre Lui* (1933), of Groener’s critique of the German offensive in France and Belgium in 1914.

Stücke 94 and 96 – These are proofsheets of Groener’s “Die Liquidation des Weltkrieges,” and “Der Landkrieg.”

Stücke 124 – only the proofsheets are omitted, the remainder is reproduced.

Stücke 250-252 – These items are published reports of the Reich railroads and of the Reich economy, 1933-34.

The table of contents, showing the distribution of the stücke on the rolls, with a brief topical description of each roll, is reproduced on each of the 27 rolls of this microscopy.

In addition to the Groener papers, there are in the National Archives of the United States some 170 file boxes of other materials formerly in the Heeresarchiv Potsdam. These include the papers of German military leaders such as Fieldmarshals von Boyen (1771-1848), von Gneisenau (1760-1831), von Moltke (1800-1891), von Roon (1803-79), and von Schlieffen (1833-1913); and Generals von Winterfeldt (1707-57), Braunschweig-Bevern (1715-81), von Seeckt (1866-1936), and others. There is also an exhibit of documents that appears to have been prepared by the National Socialists for propaganda purposes, which opens with a passport signed by the Great Elector of Brandenburg and closes with leaflets dropped from balloons by Americans during World War I calling upon German soldiers to surrender. This exhibit has been reproduced as National Archives Microfilm Publication M-129, *An Exhibit of German Military Documents from the Heeresarchiv Potsdam*. The von Seeckt materials have been reproduced as M-132, *Papers of General Hans von Seeckt*.

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- 3 Stücke 12-13 I-Xa: Critique of Groener Manuscript by General Vogel; Groener's war diary, 1914-18; and genealogical memoranda.
- 4 Stücke 14, 15, 16 I-II, 17 I-VIII, 18-21: Correspondence, 1914; Groener's daybook as First Quartermaster General, 1918-19; his academic certificates, military and civil commissions, decorations and awards, greetings and commendations, and press clippings, 1877-1932; daughter Dorothea's notes on Groener's life; and Groener's last will and testament, 1934.
- 5 Stücke 22, 23 I-V: Groener's correspondence with his wife, 1908-17.
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- 8 Stücke 34, 34 I-V, 35, 36: Groener's correspondence with the Reichsarchiv, the war history section of the General Staff, and others, 1919-37; Reichswehr ministry memoranda, 1921; and miscellaneous memoranda, 1905-36.
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- 13 Stücke 125-130, 132-135: Groener's drafts and memoranda on military railroads, World War I history, Falkenhayn's strategy, Ludendorff's total war concept, and related subjects, 1905-35; and his correspondence with military publications, 1911.
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- 18 Stücke 157-165, 168, 169: Groener's war college study notes, essays, and examination papers, including tactical, terrain and siege studies and studies on the campaigns of 1814 and 1870; and his General Staff problems and papers on army service of supply, 1894-1906.
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- 20 Stücke 187-193: Correspondence and memoranda relating to military problems and training, and tactical papers and maps, 1891-1936; German staff critique of the French maneuvers of 1910; memoranda on the German War Food Administration, 1916; and Groener's war office organization manual and materials relating to this transfer from the war office to field command, 1917.
- 21 Stücke 194-198, 200-208: General Staff communications relating to war industry and Groener's appeal for more production, 1916-17; and Groener's memoranda, reports, and charts pertaining to German and Allied munitions programs and production, particularly iron ore, steel, nitrogen, and chemicals, 1916-17.
- 22 Stücke 209-216: Memoranda and maps on bulk goods transport, military operation, and political matters, 1913-19; Groener's drafts on regrouping the Western Front in 1914 and on the war's impact on world economy; and his correspondence with Generals von Winterfeldt, von Trotha, and von Seeckt on the peace and other social and political problems, 1918-19.

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- 27 Stücke 248, 253-256: Groener's personal mementos, letters, and photographs of the Ukrainian occupation; political and military reports; and orders and memoranda of the Kiev Army Group of Field marshal von Eichhorn, 1917-18.