2 January 1945

Second Consolidated Report on the Interrogation of Pa/W captured in the first stage of the present German Offensive.

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(This report was prepared by FTD, SHAEF Interrogators)

FTE # 15, 28 December 1944.

1. In all this report covers the interrogation of 22 Pa/W captured between the dates of December 16th-19th; of these 15 were captured in the northern sector of the offensive, 2 in the Luxembourg sector, and 5 in other sectors not involved in the offensive.

2. Characteristics of the Pa/W Unit: 6 Pa/W belonged to the Kampfgruppe: Von der Heyde (Paratroopers, see first Consolidated Report), 3 to the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, 3 to the 272nd Volksgrenadiers Div., 3 to the 47th Volksgrenadier Div., 2 to the 326th Volksgrenadiers Div., and one from each of the following units: 277th Volksgrenadiers Div., 352nd Volksgrenadiers Div., 12th SS Panzer Grenadiers Div. (Hitler Jugend), 343rd Volksgrenadiers Div., 17th Inf.Div.

Age and Background: Age Group 17-21 14 Pa/W 22-30 6 " 30-38 2 "

20 of the Pa/W were Reichsdeutsche, 1 from Austria, 1 from Luxembourg; 7 of the Pa/W have been members of the Wehrmacht 6 months or less, 5 out of the 22 Pa/W were NCOs.

3. General Impressions: The members of the Parachute unit had excellent morale in every respect. Members of the SS vary between fanatics and average soldiers. This group of SS men displayed a very low level of intelligence. The rest of the Pa/W (largely from Volksgrenadier units) do not differ strikingly from the Pa/W encountered during the last few months.

4. Western Offensive:

a) Briefing and knowledge of offensive: 2 men, both members of Volksgrenadier Divisions, received an official reading at formation on December 16th of von Rundstedt’s Special Order. In addition to this, 9 Pa/W had some knowledge of an offensive which had been conveyed to them by their Company or Platoon C.Os.
1 P/W, captured on December 16th, was transferred to the Eastern Front in August 1944. The special training for the engineers lasted 31/2 weeks and showed its efficiency: the P/W has the following to say: "Wir gab eine Stunde das und eine Stunde das, als ging hier herein und da heraus." (We were taught something else every hour. It went in at one ear and out at the other.) Unteroberfähnrich Johannes Schnieder, 326th Volksgrenadier Division, Oberfähnrich Johannes Schnieder, 326th Volksgrenadier Division, states: "Wir mussten, drei Stunden nach zwei Uhr, noch nach Fliegerkampfgruppe fliegen, haben, um die Flugzeugführer nicht einmal gesehen zu haben. (We were told the last minute that this was supposed to be a practice jump for the Reichsmarschall and that afterwards we would all get Christmas leave.)

Besides briefing there were many rumours going around amongst the men, such as: "Aachen soll das Weihnachtsgeschenk fuer den Fuehrer sein. (Aachen is to be the Christmas present for the Fuehrer.)" "Wir werden Cherbourg und die anderen Haufen wieder erobern." (We shall recapture Cherbourg and the other ports.) "Die Amerikaner werden bis zum Frohes Jahr in den Kanal geworfen werden." (Before spring the Americans will all be in the Channel.)

One man who had not received any briefing states: "Wir sind die ganze Nacht vom 17. zu 18. hin- und hermarschiert, wahnen, gernacht, was es bedeutet und was der Sinn und Zweck war." (All night from the 17th to the 18th we had been marching up and down, neither of us knew what it all meant and what its purpose was.) Another one states: "Ich musste nicht, ob wir angreifen oder davonlaufen." (I didn't know whether we attacked or ran away.)

The 5 P/W captured in the Jarren-Selliskirchen sector did not have any direct knowledge of the offensive. However, two of them told in the afternoon of December 16th: "Haltet aus, die nachsten 12 Stunden werden entscheidend fuer unsere Kriegsfuehrung sein." (Hold out, the next 12 hours will be decisive for us.)
Brig.) Another P/F (Erich Weber, Grenadier, 326th Volksgrenadier Div.) states: "Unser Angriff auf Hoefen, der kurz nach 3 Uhr morgens nach halbfourherdiger Feuerpauseleistung losbrach, ist blutig lagegelaufen. Wir hatten wenig Erfahrung mit diesen automatischen Waffen. Ich habe meine Maschinengewehre vorher, nur zweimal auf den Unangenehme Platz abgefeuert. (Our attack on Hoefen, which, after half an hour's preparation, had started shortly after 3 o'clock in the morning, broke down completely. We had little experience with our automatic weapons. I had fired my machine gun only twice before on the drill ground.) Cpl. Gefreiter Rolf Fischer of the 277th Volksgrenadier Div. states: "Sogar im Frontgebiet mussten wir exzentratisch. Wir mussten auch alle Offiziere und Unteroffiziere grussen, 4 Schritte vorher, und 2 Schritte nachher. Der Kompanie Chef, lt. Hafner, sagte: 'Ich lasse jeden Unteroffizier bestreifen, der sich nicht grusen lasst.' (Even at the front we had to drill. We had to salute all officers and NCOs too, 4 steps before the salute and 2 steps after. The Company Commander said: I shall have every NCO punished who does not make the man salute him.)

c) Weapons: There is great enthusiasm amongst the members of the Volksgrenadier Division over their weapons, especially over the quantity and quality of the new 'Maschinengewehre 44'. Contrary to the P/F of the Volksgrenadier Division in the Duren Sector, who were still equipped with the厀arabiner 98 K", those divisions that took part in the offensive seemed to have been equipped with the semi-automatic rifle (Gewehrladegewehr). One P/F of the 17th Co., 352nd Volksgrenadier Division stated that every squad in his company had one machine gun, and every man in the company a 'Maschinengewehre 44' and a Pferdesattel. Every man had seen V-weapons being shot over the lines which they could easily distinguish at night. No man reports having seen an unidentified shiny object go up straight into the air, but nobody knows what it was.

d) Food: It seems that there was a general lack of food among the units mentioned in this report. Examples: "Wir haben 5 Tage nichts zu essen gehabt, nur was die amerikanischen P.O.Ws haben. Sie können sich daher denken, wie die Kämpfer waren." (For 5 days we haven't had anything to eat except what the Americans had left behind. You will imagine what our fighting spirits were like.) Cpl. Gefreiter Rolf Fischer, 277th Volksgrenadier Div. "Seit Beginn der Offensive haben wir kaum etwas zu essen bekommen." (Since the offensive started we have hardly had anything to eat.) Grenadier Paul Schodler, 12th Waffen SS Div., Hitler Jugend: "Ich weiss nicht, warum das landet hat, aber die letzten 5 Tage hatten wir nichts als unsere isernete Ration. (I don't know what was wrong, but the last 5 days we had nothing but our iron ration.)" Sturmmann Just Klink, 16th Pz. Regt., Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler: "Wir sind schliesslich keine Russen, die Schlacht ohne Fuss kampfen konnen. "(After all, we are no Russians who can fight for days without any grub.) Feldwebel Holski, Kamer, Combat Team Von der Herde: "Wir bekamen Verpflegung nur 3 Tage an dritten Tag fing der Angriff an und wir hatten nichts mehr zu essen." (We had been given food for 3 days, then the attack started and we had nothing more to eat.) Grenadier Siefried Zeddell, Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. Another interesting incident, although dating back 10 weeks, is reported by Grenadier Heinz Jakob, 47th Volksgrenadier Division: "Als wir vor Merode Lagem (vicinity of Duren) hatten wir 5 Tage lang nichts zu essen. 45 Mann von Plorder Zug von 60 Mann sind aus den gelaufen. Flugblatter haben sicher dazu geholfen. (When we were lying outside Merode, we had nothing to eat for 5 days. 45 men out of the Pioneer Platoon were sent home from their lines, encouraged by your leaflets. -Leaflets with 6 points on American treatment of P/F.)

e) Fear of Capture: There is no evidence that Pa/F knew anything about the shooting of American P/F by German tank crews; consequently their attitude towards captivity did not differ from that of Pa/F captured in previous months. Cpl. Gefreiter Rolf Fischer of the 277th Volksgrenadier Division states: "Ich habe viele gesprochen, die meines Wissens waren. Sie waren alles weidend und am Angriff, da sie gingen ihnen allen gut in amerikanischer Gestanzung und sie waren aus der Schlusserei. (I have spoken to many who had been exchanged. They were all furious about it as they had nothing to worry about in American captivity and had been gassed to be out of the war.)

f) Germans in US Uniforms: All Pa/F denied any knowledge of the use of U.S. uniforms by German troops, at least before captivity. Some heard about it.
7. Allied Occupation of German Territory: The majority of the PoW think that the Germans under Allied occupation do not fare badly.

8. Political attitude: "Der ganze Staat wird nur noch mit Dug und Trug zusammengehalten." (The state machine is only kept together by falsehood and deceit.) "Hitler ist gut, es sind die kleinen Ortgruppenleiter, die es ver- sauen, die wollen kleine Hitler sein." (Hitler is alright, it's the district leaders who mess up everything. Everyone of them likes to be a little Hitler himself.) "Ob Hitler oder Himmler die Macht hat, macht für uns keinen Unterschied. Schliesslich geht es um Deutschland, und beide wollen für Deutschland das Beste." (Whether Hitler or Himmler has the power doesn't make any difference to us. After all, it's Germany that matters and both want to do the best they can for Germany.) "Der schwarze Heinrich ist ungeheuer radiakal, man weiss aber eigentlich nicht viel von ihm, weil er bis zum 20. Juli nie in den Vordergrund getreten ist." (The Black Henry is frightfully radical. However, one doesn't really know very much about him as prior to July 20th he did not seem to be much in the limelight.) "Wenn Granden vorgesehen sind, so war das unter den Militärs. Jetzt, wo Himmler die Sache ganz in der Hand hat, ist auras ganz ausgeschlossen. Nach dem Kriege werden die Schuldigen bestraft, besonders in Falle eines deutschen Slaes wird der Führer darauf sehen." (If there were atrocities, they happened under the military. Now, that Himmler is in charge, this is quite out of the question. The guilty will be punished after the war, especially if they think the Führer will see that.) "Hitler ist das Schicksal des deutschen Volkes, mit ihm fallen wir oder stehen wir." (Hitler's fate is closely tied up with that of the German people; with him we die or live.

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