SUBJECT: Interrogation of 24 German Officer Ps/Ow.

FOR USE IN SCRIMPED FORM

The following material may be used, in scrambled form, in leaflets, radio and press except for words underlined and passages side-lined, which are for background information only. Don't mention names or sites any indication of the source, without special permission from Intelligence, S.N.D.

POLICY

None of this material is to be used for output unless clearly within the terms of your present directive. If in doubt, or if the point is not covered, you must obtain permission for output from your Directive Section, with whom the responsibility will then lie.

(This report was prepared by F.W.D-SHAEF Interrogators.)

1. Introduction: On 5 March 1945 this team interrogated 24 German Officer Ps/Ow who had been captured in the Duennes-Jutland sector during the period of 24 to 27 Feb 45.

   a. Units: The Ps/Ow belonged to the following units:
      15 Ps/Ow from 363rd V.Gp
      5 Ps/Ow from 18th V.Gp
      3 Ps/Ow from 334th Inf Div
      1 P/Ow from 176th Inf Div
      1 P/Ow from 58th Inf Div
      1 P/Ow from 212th V.Gp
      1 P/Ow from 9th Panzer Div

   b. Age Groups:
      20 - 21 yrs       7 Ps/Ow
      22 - 28 yrs       11 Ps/Ow
      29 - 35 yrs       5 Ps/Ow
      42 yrs            1 P/Ow

   c. Dates when commissioned: 5 of the Ps/Ow were commissioned within the last 6 months, 8 of the Ps/Ow have been officers for 3 yrs and longer. The remaining 11 Ps/Ow were commissioned between those two periods.

   d. Ranks and Positions: The Ps/Ow included 4 Captains, 5 1st Lieutenants, 15 2nd Lieutenants. One Captain was En Comdr; one Captain was Artillery Liaison Officer; one Captain was CO of a Kampgruppe, which at the time consisted of 22 men, and which was in the process of being organized when it had to be thrown into battle hastily because of general conditions; one Captain was Company CO. All of the 1st Lieutenants, with the exception of 1 Adjutant, were Company Commanders. 10 of the 2nd Lieutenants were Company Commanders, 3 were Adjutants and 2 were platoon leaders. Many of the officers were former Regtl or En Staff Officers, who were thrown in as line officers at the last minute.

   e. Education and Professions: 5 of the Ps/Ow were professional officers; 7 were students; 4 were civil servants; 6 were white collar workers and merchants; 2 were skilled craftsmen. 10 of the 24 Ps/Ow had made their Ableiter; 10 have "Mittelreife" (approx. same as U.S. Highschool education) and 1 had a plain elementary school education.
CONFIDENTIAL

1. Regions of origin:
   Russian occupied and immediately threatened: 5
   Western occupied and immediately threatened: 5
   Central Germany and other areas: 12
   Austria: 2

2. General impression: One of the outstanding impressions immediately gained by the interrogators was the fact, that in contrast to previous lots of Officers, these men presented a clean and neat-looking picture, giving the impression that they had been more or less quietly sitting in OP's or bunkers without ever having been exposed to field warfare or engagements. Yet as far as their competence and intelligence as Officers were concerned, almost all of them were of a high caliber.

3. Circumstances of capture: The Officer Ps/Off were captured with groups of men as follows:
   7 of the Officers in groups of 3 - 6 men
   7 of the Officers in groups of 7 - 15 men
   6 of the Officers in groups of 16 - 25 men
   2 of the Officers in groups of 35 - 40 men
   1 of the Officers in groups of 80 men

All the Officers were under orders to fight to the last bullet. This order appears to be generally interpreted by the German Officers as meaning that they are only allowed to retreat after having tried everything in their power to hold their positions. 6 Officers reported that they fought to the last and were captured after all their ammunition had been used up or they were hopelessly outnumbered and outfought or any attempt to withdraw would have meant certain death. 14 others did not admit that through some action they could have avoided capture; they seem to have carried out their orders to resist knowing that that failure to withdraw would result in capture admitted frankly that half a year ago, under similar circumstances, they would at least have tried to break through to new positions. Quotations:
   "Ich war schon ofters in solchen Situationen. Des war eb'r noch zu einer Zeit als der ganze Krieg noch nicht so aussichtslos wurde." (Often I was in such situations and decided to fight my way out with my men. But that was at a time when the war didn't seem so desperate.)

Lt. Richard Berg, Co Comdr., 3rd Co 957 Regt, 363 VDP, said: "Man wird ja immerhin so resigniert, dass man Gefangenennahmen als etwas langweiliger und unvermeidlicher entgegennimmt und sich nicht mehr darum kümmert." (One becomes so resigned inside that captivity is accepted as something long-sought and unavoidable and one no longer resists it.)

Obst. Franz Josef Hazel, Ordonnanz Officer, 30th Div., 363 VDP, said: "Wir der Normandy hatten und das nachdenklich versucht, jedoch hier war die Hoffnunglosigkeit so groß, dass bright doch alles umso uns zusammen, warum soll man schließlich noch 5 Minuten vor Tor abschluss des Lebens seiner Leute aufs Spiel setzen." (In Normandy one would try again, however here the hopelessness is so great. Everything is collapsing on us, so why should one risk the lives of his men just five minutes before the end.)

Obst. Walter Orgazl, Co Comdr., 1st Co, Pioneer 363, 363 VDP. "Wenn die allgemeinen Lage Aussicht auf Erfolg gibt, hatten, waren ich bis zur Ausseren gegangen, aber der Kampf hauptsächlich ja nur noch ein Einflußüber das Gefangengestalt." (If the general situation had a chance of success, I would have gone to the extreme, but the war now means only passing over into captivity.)

Obst. Erich Rohm, Co Comdr., 1st Co, Gren. Regt 16, 16 Inf. Div. "Gefangennahmen ist heute die beste Lösung." (Now we are under the understanding that we consider the situation the best solution.)

Obst. Hans Juergen Koch, Co Comdr., 10th Co, Fusilier Regt 27, 12 VDP. "(Capture is the best solution today. We are very happy about every acquaintance we meet here. At least they are alive.)"
4. Outcome of War:

The following is a tabulation of these 24 officers' expectations about the outcome of the war, as expressed after capture:

15 Officers believe the war is lost for Germany.
3 Officers believe in compromise peace as result of a stalemate.
4 Officers still believe in the possibility of avoiding a German defeat. They consider the creation of a new weapon possible but are not certain of it.
2 Officers believe in German victory, because (c) one is certain that there is a new war-decisive weapon which will be used shortly, and
(b) the other one is of the opinion that the German Army compressed into a small area is strong enough to beat Allies and Russians.

The consensus of opinion among the Officers is that the material superiority of the Allied armies is so overwhelming and their own lack of material in comparison is so great that there is no chance for Germany to win. "Es ist nur noch ein Ketze und Meas Spiel." (It's only a cat-and-mouse game). Cdt, Walter Gritzbuhl, lst Co, Flieger En 363, 363 VGD. "Der gute Glaube hilft nicht. Selbst Hitler's Reden enthalten nichts mehr als einen Hoffnung geboten kann, hoffehobens nur noch eine Situation fuer Goebbels". (Good faith alone doesn't help. Even Hitler's speeches contain nothing that can give hope, only another opportunity for Goebbels). Lt, Richard Scholander, 3rd Co, Gren, Regt 720, 333 Inf. Div. "Die Verhaltung unserer Lage hat den Friedrich den Groesen. Der kann es noch mit Tektik schaffen, aber jetzt kann man ihn Krieg nur mit einer Masse Material gewinnen und der noch fehlt es uns." (Our position is compared to Frederick the Great's. He could do it with tactics but now a war can only be won with masses of material and therein we are lacking). Lt, Phil, 14th Co, Gren, Regt 959 363 VGD. One Officer states that the expected counter-offensive against the Russians will show the Western Allies that Germany is still in a position to go on fighting and that England and America will then decide to come to terms with Germany (Vergleiche Friede). "Jeder Russbrot Deutschen Bodens, den Ihr von nun an verkauft werdet, wird euch so viel Blut kosten, dass euch Amerikaner die Hand bald ausgedehnt wird. Mit den Russen werden wir schon allein fertig werden." (Every foot of German soil that you gain from now on, will cost you so much blood that you Americans will soon lose patience. We'll take care of the Russians ourselves). Lt, Phil, Lachmann, 9th Panzer Division. One officer who believes in a complete German victory, asserts, because he states "Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, dass die Führungs sozial deutsches Blut und Gut opfert ohne die bestimmte Aussicht auf einen endgültigen Sieg." (I can't believe that our leadership is sacrificing so much German blood and property without the real chance of a final victory).

5. Do German leaders fight to save their skins? 14 of the 24 agree or the opinion that the fighting now merely continues because the "Führung" realizes the jig is up and they are therefore prolonging the war in order to prolong their own lives. 10 of them are of the opinion that the German government is continuing the fight because they believe it is in the interest of the German people. Amongst
the former group of 14 Officers there is a growing trend to include Hitler personally into the term "Fuehrung". Formerly the majority opinion was that Hitler himself would end the war when he realized that the situation had become hopeless. Hitler would not sacrifice the German people, "Selbst wenn Hitler kein so blind sein und nicht zu sehen, dass der Krieg verloren ist, erstrebt er um sein Leben zu verlängern oder will er uns alle hinunterschmeißen sein will!" (Only if Hitler can be so blind as not to see that the war is lost, he fights on either to lengthen his own life or because he wants us to go down with him. Lt. Reinhardt Schaefer, 10th Co., Gren. Regt., 557th, 35th Div.) "Ich habe oft däuben nachgedacht. Unterstützung würde Hitler's Tod bedeutet, deshalb kehrt er nachth. (I've thought about it often. Surrender would mean Hitler's death; therefore he fights on. Lt. Arich Schopfeiker, 5th Co., 759th Regt., 353rd Inf. Div.) "Ich wüßte sehr gegen die Erkenntnis, dass Hitler thausende von Menschleben opfert nur um sein eigenes Leben zu verlängern. Es ist des leder aber die einzige Erkenntnis". (One resists the thought that Hitler is sacrificing thousands of human lives to lengthen his own life. Unfortunately, that is the only explanation. Lt. Johann Kron, 2nd Co., Furdin. Regt., 18th Inf. Div.) "Die Fuehrung kündigt weiter an das Volk zu erklären, wann sie nichts mehr, was es an ungeschminkten Verbrechen weiter zum Kämpfen und dass man ihr nicht mehr vorstehlen". (The leadership fights on to uphold the people. If they had nothing it would be a terrible crime to fight on. I don't imagine that. Lt. Wilhelm Jstasch, 10th Co., Kompaniege Rang of same name, 35 Inf. Div.) "Wir kriegen nur noch fuer Hinlund und die SS." (We fight on only for Hinlund and the SS. Lt. Arich Rohrer, 1st Co., Gren. Regt., 30th, 18 Inf. Div.) "Wir kennen alles gewinnen und haben nichts zu verlieren, dann ein Verlust des Krieges würden ein Leben fuer uns bedeutan, den Tod vorzuziehen wären". (We have everything to gain and nothing to lose since less of the war would mean a life for us to which death would be preferable. Lt. Ludwig Kofler, 3rd Co., 759th Gren. Regt., 353rd Div.)

6. My Officers fight on: The following reasons and motives were produced by the Officers as reasons why they continue to fight: Their oath and their military as well as personal honor. The attitude of "Der Krieg ist acht und muss ausgefuehr werden". (Orders are orders and they must be carried out). Belief in the "Fuehrung" is still strong enough. Their uncertainty of Germany's future after defeat is due to their ignorance of Allied Post War plans. Fear that Germany's fate after defeat will be worse than death (Russian fear, economic chaos, etc). The latent hope that perhaps Germany may yet have somewhere, somehow enough weapons and strength to stave off complete and utter defeat. "Wir haben die Gewissheit, dass wir den Krieg gewinnen wollen, oder wir kennen unsere Sache nicht genau. Obwohl wahrscheinlich, es ist vielleicht doch noch etwas da." (We are certain that we want to win the war but we don't exactly know our own strength. Although improbable, there may be something). "Jahres, ehrliche. Ein unaenderiger Deutscher kann ja nicht schliessen." (Forthenless, honorable, a decent German couldn't part then).

7. Von Seydlitz from German Committee and events of 20 July 1944. Every one of the Officers interviewed had knowledge of the existence of the Committee. 14 of them rejected the Committee and what it stands for. "Seydlitz gebohert derselben Kliske an die am 20. Juli ebd nicht gescheut not ein Attentat auf den Fuehrer zu versuchen. Der personlicher Anhanger ist so gross, dass sie bereit sind das deutsche Volk zu verzerren," "Hittel zum Zweek", "Schwinderol". (Seydlitz belongs to the same clique that did not shy away from the attempt on the Fuehrer's life. They
CONFIDENTIAL

are so hungry for power that they are ready to betray the German nation. Means to an end. 2 Officers expressed themselves in favor of the Committee, while the remaining 8 took a non-committal attitude. "Das Söyditz-Komitee war zuviel, ich meine, die Söyditz-Ordnung in Deutschland, nach dem Verlust der Kriege zu bewahren". "Söyditz hat leider voreiliges Schon als wir alle." (The Söyditz committee would perhaps be the possibility for keeping order in Germany after the loss of the war. Söyditz has greater foresight than we.) As to the events of the 20th of July 44, the majority of the Officers agreed that a successful attempt on Hitler's life would have marked the end of the war and therefore come to the conclusion that it would have been well in the affair at the time would have been successful. 15 Officers who voiced the above stated opinion maintained that the motives of the organizers of the 20 July attempt were sincere and idealistic, aiming to end the war and save what remained to be saved of Germany. The rest of the Officers stated that the Officers responsible for the "Putsch" were traitors and instigated the entire affair in order to further their own personal ambitions for power. Some of the Officers were of the opinion that had it not been for the events of the 20th July, the present military situation would be decisively more favorable. One Officer asked about what had happened to Hess in British captivity, and declared with thoughtful nodding of the head: "Hess war ganz besonders schick". (Hess was particularly clever). Most of the Officers agreed that the Göring-led involvement in the "Putsch" were in positions which permitted them to get a clear picture of the German war situation and that they acted in the knowledge that it was impossible for Germany to win the war.

8. Yalta Conference: All the Officers interrogated had knowledge of the Yalta conference. They all showed eagerness to find out from the interrogators what had been decided there. Some typical reactions: "Die Yalta Konferenz hat beschlossen den Nationalsozialismus und den deutschen Militarismus auszunehmen, wie weit es das deutsche Volk derzeit identifizieren wird die Zukunft zeigen". (The Yalta Conference decided to exterminate National Socialism and German Military; how will the German nation be identified with them only the future will tell). "In fact, they seem to be unhappy with the current German plan for the future of Europe, the plan for a complete destruction of German industry, mass deportations to Russia, and a thorough partition of the Nation). "Das Schicksal Deutschlands ist dort ein zum allgemeinen Bedacht werden". (The fate of Germany has been sealed forever. How strong these falls must feel that they've set up a Peace Conference).

9. Russian Offensive: Even those of the Officers who are not as yet convinced of the inevitability of German defeat fail to envisage any measures which would stop the Russians while the present war situation exists. Some hope that continued resistance in the West will result in cessation of hostilities on that front and that the freed forces will then deal with the Russians successfully. Today the events on the eastern front are no longer predominant over those on the western front, but are considered as equally
critical and decisive. Though the old fear of Russia is largely unchanged, it can be noticed, especially among Ps/Js from Russian occupied or immediately threatened areas, that certain doubts as to the truthfulness of the German propaganda regarding the Russian occupation are being encountered; these are in part consequences of unconscious wishful thinking. The only outstanding difference is the fact that all officers interrogated maintained that the fall of Berlin will have no influence on the continuation of the war.

10. Western Offensive: Though the Rhine will mean a temporary slowing down of the Allied offensive, the majority of the Officers have no illusion as to the inevitability of the offensive's success. They consider it the "Todesstoss". Even those officers who are still hoping for German victory are unable to give any but vague reasons why they think the Allied offensive will be stopped. They do not attach any decisive importance to the expected crossing of the Rhine, that is as far as the immediate end of the war is concerned. "Vorder der Fall Berlin's noch die Überschreitung des Rheins' wird die Haltung des Führungs beeinflussen. Der Krieg wird beendet sein, wenn sich die Truppen der westlichen und die der Sowjet Union die Nände reichen". (Neither the fall of Berlin nor the crossing of the Rhine will influence the attitude of the leadership. The war will be over when the troops of the Western Powers join hands with those of the Soviet Union). One of them believing in a statement made the following statement: "Unser aller Hoffnung ist der Rhein. Wenn der Amerikaner das schafft und herausbringt, dann ist's vorbei". (All our hope is the Rhine, if the Americans accomplish that and cross it, then it's all over).

Distribution:

General McIlroy
Mr. Jackson
Mr. Crossman
Lt. Col. Gurfein
Major Napier
Lt. Comdr. McLaughlin
Capt. Herx
Lt. Nagy
Intelligence (3)
Plans & Directives (3)
Leaflets
Radio

Political Advisers; SHAPE (2)
Political Officers, SHAPE (2)
SHAPE (Main) 6-9
F&G (6)
F&G (12) (6)
F&G (21) (6)
CSS, Mr. Schlesinger (3)
Radio Luxembourg (3)
Major O'Brien, RND Intelligence (Ross) for further distribution in London.