13 March 1945

SUBJECT: Consolidated report on the interrogation of 30 members of the Volkssturm

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(This report was prepared by SHAEF Interrogators.)

1. General data: On 9 March this team interrogated 30 captured members of the Volkssturm, all of them captured between February 27th and March 1st.

   a. Age groups: 16 to 17 yrs - 3
                   30 to 39 yrs - 2
                   41 to 50 yrs - 12
                   51 to 59 yrs - 13

   b. Region of origin: With the exception of 3 men who were from the greater Cologne area, all others were from the Muenchen-Gladbach area, the majority coming from the village of Velden.

   c. Civilian Occupation:

      Workers - 13
      Clerical - 6
      Managers - 3
      Teachers - 1
      Merchants - 3
      White Collar Workers - 1
      Schoolboys - 3

   d. Number of World War I veterans: 18

   e. Reasons for not being in Wehrmacht:

      23 were UK (occupationally deferred)
      3 were too old
      3 were too young
      1 was physically unfit
2. General impressions: Even the presence of 3 young boys cannot change the overall impression of a group of bewildered, helpless, confused and tottering old men, thrown together in haphazard fashion. As "stellvortretender Kompaniefuehrer" (Acting Company CO) Jakob Wilms stated: "Ein Leecherlachor, fauler Kauflen." (A ridiculous, rotten crowd). In contrast to the usual efficiency in German organization, this group of Volksturm men presented a picture of utter confusion and disorganization in every respect. Their clothing was a mixed affair of civilian overcoats, army caps, occasional army blouses, collarless shirts but with the collar stud in its place, and civilian shoes. The physical condition of these men is best illustrated by the enormous troubles these men had in climbing in and out of a GI truck, and also by two men who declined a cigarette by saying that though they had been ordnance ammunitions before, their health did not permit them to smoke any longer.

3. Length of service: Training: Most of the men could not remember the date or even the month when they were enrolled in the Volksturm, but the majority have been members of the Volksturm since some time in December. With the exception of one particular group of men, all the others had not received any training of any importance. They used to meet on Sunday mornings for 2 to 3 hours which were spent in marching, close order drill, some lecturing on weapons and recognition of enemy tanks. They were also kept busy on such Sundays with spreading ashes over log roads and repairing of bomb damage. Only 8 of the 30 had fired a few shots on the rifle range. Peter Peters from Veldenstal stated: "Wir haben das alles nicht gesehen gemacht. Denn wir uns noch Sonntags gangen die bestellung, die das deutsche johder vornichtige Mischtropf." (We didn't take it too seriously, then, on Sundays, we saw each other as soldiers, any sensible human being had to laugh.) One P/L reported the following conversation between himself and his CO: "Komdr: P/L: 'Wann schiessen wir denn noch endlich?' (When will we have a chance to fire?) CO: 'Wir haben keine Patronen und keine Zeit.' (We have no bullets and no time) P/L: 'Ich wundert sich wir denn die Dummern.' (In the real thing we are the cheated ones) CO: 'Ich habe ja auch keine Patronen.' (I haven't any bullets either) Gregor Schwars from Veldenstal stated: "Ich hat schon die Panzerfaust schoen. Ich mich immer entweder vor oder hinter vorbringt." (When I shot the 'Panzerfaust' I always injured myself.) The particular group referred to above, viz., the Volksturm Einsatz Kompanie Bielox, commanded by the teacher and Reserve Lt. Schlicks, received training in the handling of the following weapons: Mine laying, Rifle, Panzerfaust, handgrenades, and also in tank identification and instruction in tank barriers. They were instructed by regular army non-CONS belonging to a bn of the 111th Panzer Division (?). The entire company of 130 men took part in this training, which lasted 8 days and was given to them while they were stationed in Dietz. Yet even those men say, "We will men schon in ein paar Tagen lernen." (That can be learned in a few days!)

4. Evacuation of Sunday duty: One of their major preoccupations was to find a legitimate excuse for staying away from these Sunday meetings, and in this respect factory foremen seemed to be quite helpful in ordering men for work in the factories on Sundays. (no P/L claims that "Schwerbombengefuehrte" (those wounded by heavy bombs) are for a while excused from the Sunday duties. Another P/L, who had to go on a business trip across the Rhine, carefully planned his trip so as to be away on Sunday. If absent for reasons
of sickness, they would send their wives down with a doctor's certificate, which apparently was not difficult to obtain. None of the 30 men attended the Sunday duties regularly, the average being 3 to 4 Sundays attended altogether.

5. Weapons and ammunition: Most of the men were issued rifles only when the final alarm was given. The predominant weapon was the French rifle model 1874, but German, Dutch, Czech and Danish rifles were also issued. One man was issued a Sportbuechse 9,6. Some men who received the French rifles were issued Dutch bullets which did not fit the rifles. Peter Fellmann of Waldhob stated, "Das Gewehr, das ich bekam hatte einen so vorzügten Lauf, dass man da keine Patronen reinstocken konnte." (The rifle I received had such a rusty barrel that I could not insert the bullet). Those who had proper rifles and ammunition were issued anywhere from 3 to 50 rounds. Two men were issued the Panzerfaust, one of those immediately threw his away, because he did not know how to use it.

6. Chain of Command: This group of Volkssturm Ps/N reported that their units were directed by the following chain of command:

Company commander - A reliable Nazi official, preferably with army background

En Cond - Party official from the staff of the Kreisleiter

As noted previously the En was the largest organized Volkssturm unit. It was the opinion of the man that only the party can commit a unit into action, but once the unit is committed, it comes under the operational command of the local Wehrmacht Cond.

7. Relations with the Wehrmacht: The relationship with the Wehrmacht was illustrated in part by the following quotations: Jakob Vögele from Waldhob - "Unsere eigene Wehrmacht hat uns such fürchter Wehrmacht haben und da war ich sehr glücklich, dass man nach den Rechten und heute nicht mehr so drückt auf uns." (Our own Wehrmacht has treated us nicely. They ridiculed, derided and scoffed at us continuously). Wilhelm Otto from Rhevidt, "Bleib mal stehen, ihr Volkswindo," an army officer yelled at this group (Volkswindo weil sie sich gleich in alle Winde zerstreuen) (Stop, you Volkswindo - Volkswindo, because they scatter into all winds). According to Stefan Gruber from Waldhob, his platoon leader and a Wehrmacht Sergeant got into an argument as to who was to give orders, when the unit was already committed. According to Otto Rockton from Duernich, when the Volkssturm Einsatz Kommando Spielske was already committed, a Lt of the Panzerjäger said the Go Cond Spielske in no uncertain terms that he himself was taking over the command of the Go. Heinrich Schnitz of Simmeren states, "Wir hatten schon den Befehl von der Partei bekommen nach Königshofen zurückzuziehen. Die Wehrmacht hat uns aber in Dietz behalten, und der der de von der Wehrmacht aphanumeric, jetzt sind ich die ordnung, die Wehrmacht, however, retained us in Dietz and each one who appeared told us that we are to subordinate us to him.

8. Opinions on Volkssturm and on Hitler: None of these Ps/N considered the Volkssturm and they were all opposed to the idea of it. Wilhelm Geerts from Rhevidt declared, "Wir sollen wir dann schon machen, wenn unsere eigene Wehrmacht den Feind nicht mehr aufhalten kann. Ist ja heller Wehnsinn".
(What are we supposed to do if our own Wehrmacht cannot stop the enemy? It is sheer madness). Albert Piegeo from Rhovit stated, "Ein vernunftiger Mensch nimmt als Zivilist die Schuld nicht in die Hand. (A sensible human being does not take a rifle into his hands as a civilian). Stefan Graber from Waldnich stated, "Wir waren alle erbrost, dass die Uns die Schuld in die Schulc schoben, anstatt uns aufzuklairen" (We were all angry that they left it up to us instead of orienting us. They knew that there were no weapons for us). Johann Kuppers from Rhovit said, "Ein grosser Bluthund, das komm nur von diesen Partisanen." (Great nonsense, party people are responsible for it). Heinrich Schmutz from Schmunter stated, "Die Herren von der Partei hatten die Volksturmen heute einen Zweck, die sind je aber auch selbst nicht mitgegangen." (The gentlemen of the party thought that the Volksturmen had a purpose. They themselves did not join). Josef Driesen from Rhovit stated, "Die Volksturmen werden die letzten Patrons bleiben, und aus von Kommandeur Kuhnert eines Sonntags vorgelesen. Das hat klerer ernst genommen, wir haben alle darüber gelernt." (The Volksturmen will fight to the last bullet was read to us one Sunday by O0 Kuhnert. No one took it seriously, we all laughed about it). Ernst Guack from Rhovit said, "Es war klerer bei der sich fuer die Schale interessiert hat, wir wussten ganz genau, wo die Unga einsatz, denn ist der Kren vorleron." (Those were none among us who were interested in the matter, we knew exactly that if they commit us, the whole issue is lost.) Reactions on Himmler were all negative, and contrary to the Wehrmacht Pa/W. None of those men was reluctant in voicing his opinion. These opinions were summed up in such terms as: Der groesste Bluthund aller Zeiten, der groesste Saukull von allen, schlizar wie der groesste Verracher, der Menschenlosen. Der ist verpalm beil allen Deutschen aussau den Pa's, der geichelt uns noch als seine Vorbran." (The greatest bloodhound of all times, the foulest fellow of all, worse than the worst criminal, the mass murderer. He is taboo to all Germans except the party members. He will bring all of us into ruin yet). Two of the Pa/W report that they had heard of an attempt on Himmler's life.

9. PSI: They all know that during the first 6 weeks their employers continue paying their salaries. The employer in turn is supposed to be compensated through the Arbeitsamt. After the first 6 weeks they are not quite sure as to who will pay them, all they know is that they are then entitled to a Wehrmachtssold.

10. Commitment of the Volksturmen in the East: According to the Pa/W they do not know of any Volksturmen units from the West which have been sent East. As to the Volksturmen in action on the Eastern front, they ridicule all stories about their fighting activities as mere propaganda.

11. Do they expect to be treated as Wehrmacht Pa/W? Basically they consider themselves civilians and would like to be treated as such. On the other hand they are then afraid of being considered as partisans, and therefore they claim that they are members of the Wehrmacht after all since they were issued the armband. Several of the Pa/W had heard on the BBC the following warning: "Don't think that by throwing away your weapons and simply going home, you become civilians again." He was annoyed by this and asked the interrogator helplessly "What else can we do?" None of the Pa/W had ever been told that they were to engage in guerilla fighting behind the enemy lines, nor would any of them have done so voluntarily. Their main hope was, as a matter of fact, that the front would sweep past their residences fast, so that they could resume normal civilian life. All of Pa/W believe that
they will be released from captivity shortly, the majority of
them considering themselves essential to the Allies for
the operation of local plants and factories.

12. Outcome of war: All 30 Fs/N are convinced of the
imminent German defeat. The majority claims to have lost
hope in a German victory a long time ago, and only a few of
them came to this conclusion after having seen the quantities
of Allied matériel tossed at the front.

13. Situation of families: The majority of the men de-
clared that their families were dispersed through evacuation,
bombings and war service of all kinds. With few exceptions
all families had suffered casualties. Although there was no
compulsory evacuation in the areas from which these men
came, there has been a wave of voluntary evacuation in De-
ember due to air-raids and to an expected Allied push.
Most of these families just went across the Rhine and returned
home in the course of January. The men seem happy that their
families are here and that the front has pushed past their
hometowns. The alarm for the Volkssturm came so suddenly
that some men for instance were stopped while on their way
to work and they had to proceed immediately to the Sammel-
stellstellen. They themselves had no chance to notify their fa-
milies, but since the communities were so small, the families
were given news through friends not on the streets. Even at
that time most of the men did not realize that they were
going into action, they thought they were being called up for
some training.

14. Capture stories:

a. 15 of the men belonged to the Volkssturm Waldniel,
and these 15 all surrendered in one single group in the
Burgemeisteramt, where they had gathered to discuss their
situation after the Wehrmacht had withdrawn. They rejected
the idea of simply dispersing and going home. The consensus
of opinion was that under these circumstances they would be
picked up by the Allied occupational forces anyhow and pos-
sibly considered as snipers or partisans. They also wanted
to prevent damage to their town from Allied guns and bombers.
They therefore decided to open again the tank barriers, the
closing of which had been their original mission and to send
two men over to the Americans who they knew had reached the
Reeser works. There an American officer accepted the
surrender of the entire group and promised that the town would
not be shelled. Some men, however, and fled and as far as
the Fs/N knew, those have not been captured.

b. 3 men were in the actual front lines with the
Panzergrenadier. They tried to escape, were held back by the
Wehrmacht. They stayed in a foxhole with 3 Wehrmacht non-cons
who had shot their last bullets and then remained in the
foxhole waiting to be captured by the Americans.

c. The rest of the Fs/N, those from Rhoydt and members
of the 5/165/2 (5,6cm, 165 Bn, 2 Kompanie) were captured
individually or in small groups while hiding as best they could
together with civilians from Allied gun-fire. This group
had been called to active service on 17 February already,
when they were quartered in barracks. The main occupation
during the entire period consisted of putting the barracks
into shape,
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