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SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE DIVISION
INTELLIGENCE SECTION

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14 March 1945
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SUBJECT: Consolidated report on the interrogation of 13 leaders of the Volkssturm

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(This report was prepared by PWD - SHAEF Interrogators.)

1. General data: On 11 March 45 this team has interrogated 13 leaders of the Volkssturm, all of whom were captured between 26 February and 1 March.

a. Ranks: 3 Bn Commanders
 2 Adjutants
 7 Co Commanders
 2 Platoon leaders

b. Age: 40 to 50 yrs - 5 men
 51 to 60 yrs - 6 men
 61 to 65 yrs - 2 men

c. Civilian Occupations:

School principals and teachers	5
Judges	1
Manufacturers, executives	2
Arbeitsfront officials	1
Retired Civil Servants	1
Independent architects	1
Merchants	1
Blacksmiths	1

d. Educational Background:

Volksschule	4
Higher education (seminaries, Einjaehriges, etc)	7
University graduates	2

e. Region of origin: All the Ps/W are from the area between Neuss, Krefeld, Muenchen-Gladbach and Cologne.

f. Military background: With the exception of 2, all were World War I veterans: 7 of them were officers during the last war, 3 were non-coms, 1 was a private: 4 out of the 13 have also served with the Wehrmacht in this war, 3 of them having been dismissed because of wounds or sickness, and 1 because of war essential occupation.

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g. Party affiliation: With only one exception all of these Ps/W were party members, however not one of them was a party member prior to 1933. 6 of them joined the party in 1933, the rest at some later date. 6 of them were party functionaries. 5 of them joined the party out of ideological conviction, the rest appeared to have joined for reasons of opportunism or because they were civil servants.

2. Selection of Volkssturm leaders: The Wehrbezirks Kommando recommended qualified Bn Comdrs to the Kreisleitung, who appointed these after having secured the approval of the Gauleitung. The Co Comdrs were all appointed by the Kreisleitung upon recommendation by the Ortsgruppenleiter (local party head), with one exception where the Bn Comdr himself had to select his own Co Comdrs and platoon leaders. The 2 platoon leaders were selected by the Ortsgruppenleiter. It appears that in larger towns prominent party members are given first choice over men with military background or social prominence. In smaller towns, the latter two qualifications seem to be given more consideration. Thus, the only man out of the 13 who was not a party member, was selected as Co Comdr because he was the head of the local voluntary fire brigade and at the same time the only former non-com in the community. One of the leaders, from Kreis Erkelenz, reports that there was resentment in the community over the fact that prominent party members were given preference over men with more qualified military background. The case of Co Comdr Spiecks, 59, from Kirchtroesdorf Kreis Bergheim, is worth mentioning. He was selected to lead an "Einsatz" Co, which his wife complained about to the Ortsgruppenleiter (local party head), claiming the old age of her husband and pointing out that there were younger men around with the same military qualifications. The Ortsgruppenleiter Jungburth replied: "Wenn er treu zur Fahne gehalten haette, dann haette ich ihn reklamiert und er waere zum Stab des Kreisleiters gekommen". In other words, had Spiecks attended more party meetings, he would have been eligible for a soft job. In smaller communities another factor which is given consideration in the selection of leaders, is that of the popularity of a man amongst his fellow citizens. None of Ps/W was particularly anxious for the job, and only the few ardent Nazis among them consider it to be something of an honor to them.

3. Explanation of the 4 Aufgebote: Aufgebot 1 consists of men who are more or less physically fit, of military age or above, and who are not working in war essential plants. Aufgebot 2 comprises the men of the same qualifications, only who are working in war essential plants. Aufgebot 3 are the boys of pre-military age. Aufgebot 4 are the physically unfit. Several of the Ps/W mentioned that there was a regular rush ("Flucht") to be classified in the 2nd and 4th Aufgebote. From the 1st Aufgebot men were detached for Instruction Bn's (Lehrbataillon), eventually to be returned to their own units. Other men are transferred to Einsatz Kompanien (Reinforcement Co's) and definitely dropped from their original units. The Einsatz Kompanien live in barracks and the transfer depends on the degree of their need in civilian occupations.

4. Leader's attitude to the Volkssturm: Out of the 13 only 4 only supported the Volkssturm, advocating that it was quite natural that Germany, in its present plight, should call on every man. The opponents of the Volkssturm made remarks such as, "Boesartiger Schlamassel, schweinemaessige Aufgabe, ich versuchte zur Wehrmacht zu kommen", (Malicious fellows, a dirty task, I tried to join the Wehrmacht), Bn Fuehrer Knorr from Rotheim Kreis Erkelenz. "Das war blos tan-tan, die Herren wollten sich dicke tun und melden, dass alles bereit steht", (Just a lot of noise, the gentlemen wanted to feel important and to report that everything is ready), Komp. Fuehrer Spiecks from Kirchtroesdorf Kreis Bergheim. "Ein Bloedsinn, jeder wollte nur kommandieren", (Sheer folly, everybody wanted to give orders only), Komp. Fuehrer Nagel from Elfgon. "Die Aufstellung des Volkssturms ist unverantwortlich. Menschen, die der Qualitaet nach nicht Soldaten sind, werden dem Feind als

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Soldaten ausgeliefert," (The employment of the Volkssturm was done irresponsibly: Men, who are not soldiers, are sent as such against the enemy), Bn Fuehrer Gormanns from Viersen. "Das hat auf einen wie ein Albdruck gelastet, dass man solch einen Haufen von Krueppeln und Greisen fuehren sollte. Ich war gluecklich als das Bn aufgelooest wurde," (It affected me like a nightmare that I should lead such a group of cripples and old men. I was glad when the Bn was dissolved), Bn Fuehrer und Major der Reserve Wienands from Viersen.

5. Training and Equipment: Wherever there was a Wehrmacht unit stationed, there was some amount of regular and organized training, since the Wehrmacht provided both instructors and weapons. Most of the leaders complained about the high degree of absenteeism at the Sunday meetings, however, none of the 13 leaders ever imposed penalties on any of their men for not attending training classes. Komp. Fuehrer Nagel from Elfigen summed the situation up as "Alle meine Leute waren meine Kunden als Bauern und ich werde mir schliesslich meine Kundschaft nicht verderben wegen der Volkssturmgeschichte und dem Sonntagsdienst. Ausserdem haben die Leute schon sowieso genug zu tun." (All the men were customers of mine and I shall certainly not destroy my business because of the Volkssturm affair and Sunday duty. Besides, the men had enough to do already). Komp. Fuehrer Peltzer from Hemmerden said, "Mit dem Sonntagsdienst war das so 'ne Sache. Meistens trieb uns das Wetter oder die Jabos gleich wieder nach Hause". (That Sunday duty was a half-hearted affair. Usually the weather or the attack bombers forced us to return home). Komp. Fuehrer Grandorath from Waldniel stated, "Es waere besser gegangen wenn man wenigstens die Leute haette kasernieren koennen. Am Sonntag kamen die in ihren Sonntagschuhen und nach Moeglichkeit sogar in schwarzen Frack an." (It would have worked better if we could have billeted the men in barracks. Sundays the men appeared wearing their Sunday shoes and even their Sunday suits). All leaders complained about the complete lack of equipment. The 41st Bn (Erkelenz) had 50 Panzerfaeste (each Panzerfaust contains one round), 15 rifles with half a dozen rounds each, plus 180 Danish rifles without a single round of ammunition. The 3rd Co. Bn 209 (Waldniel) was issued the night before capture between 30 and 40 new Panzerfaeste, which they all gave away to retreating Wehrmacht units, with the permission of Komp Fuehrer Grandorath. One man reported that on the other hand the Wehrmacht was handing out at the last minute hand grenades and Panzerfaeste, but the men refused to accept these, because they did not know how to handle them. The following story is told by Bn Fuehrer Gormanns from Viersen: At the last minute the Kreisleiter sent an Adjutant to him with the order to defend the tank barriers with Panzerfaeste. He immediately called a meeting of his 4 Komp. Fuehrers and in the presence of the Adjutant he asked each one of them how many of their men knew how to operate the Panzerfaust and would be willing to do it. After a long silence the 4 Komp. Fuehrer could name 7 men all total from the 4 Companies. Whereupon Bn Fuehrer Gormanns told the Adjutant that he would not carry out the Kreisleiter's order; since it was suicide to defend the tank barriers with only 7 men.

6. Volkssturm Missions: The two main missions of the Volkssturm units covered in this report were to close the tank barriers and to guard them (to see that small bands of retreating Landsers would not leave them open). After that they were supposed to retire ("sich absetzen"), but where to or exactly when, most of them did not know. Other missions included two weeks of roofing of bomb-damaged houses; trench digging; general assistance to the local population; defense against broken through armored spearheads; defense against airborne landings; defense against uprising of foreign workers and Ps/W; political security missions in case of general revolt; to fight as regular soldiers if and when split up into small groups and attached to Wehrmacht units.

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7. Status of the Volkssturm: Several men report that their men refused to accept weapons before they were issued armbands and Soldbuecher, for fear that otherwise the Allies might treat them as partisans. Part of the Bn 41, Erkelenz, had not been issued any armbands or Soldbuecher in spite of continued insistence from the leaders to the Kreisleitung. At the last minute the Kreisleitung telephoned the Adjutant of the Bn and told him to have the men make up their own armbands out of yellow cloth, with the inscription "Deutsche Wehrmacht" and to have them stamped with the regular Volkssturm rubber stamp. Of the Komp, Wenzel from Grevenbreich only the Komp, Fuehrer, Wilhelm Wenzel; himself had a Soldbuch. In the Bn 165, Neuss, only the Bn Comdr, a reserve officer, had a uniform, the Co Comdrs and squad leaders had armbands, the men had nothing. The leaders and the men were generally aware of the fact that if properly identified the Allies would treat them as regular soldiers, which knowledge had been chiefly gained from Allied leaflets and Radio broadcasts (Luxembourg). Yet Bn Comdr Gormanns reported that there was a tendency among his men to throw away their armbands, and he constantly warned them against doing so.

8. Relations with the Wehrmacht: The leaders claim that they and their men all have been treated with respect and courtesy by members of the Wehrmacht, and that they also knew that in the final stage they were to come under the command of the Wehrmacht. The only 2 exceptions were, one Co Comdr who had strict orders from the Kreisleitung not to take any orders from the Wehrmacht to the very end, and Co Comdr Spiecks, who complained to have been treated by Wehrmacht officers as a second rate officer and to have been the only one who was not offered a drink during a meeting at a Regtl Hqs. Co Comdr Nagel reports that at one time a Feldwebel gave him orders to build Panzersperren (Tank barriers), to which he replied, "Nicht jeder Luemmel wird nich hier run-kommandieren," (Not every lout around here is going to boss me around), whereupon the furious Feldwebel threatened to report him. Nagel reported this incident to his Bn Comdr who promised to cover him.

9. Action and capture: Bn Comdr Gormanns reports that had the men known they were being called up for action, 50% would not have shown up at all, 25% would have shown up for fear of punishment, and the remainder out of a soldierly attitude. The same P/W reports that when he received his final orders to assemble his Bn, the following number of men showed up:

1st Co	strength	120 men	40 showed up
2nd Co	strength	70 men	10 showed up
3rd Co	strength	34 men	34 showed up
4th Co	strength	150 men	nobody showed up.

The same Comdr later received an order to also take under his command a Schanz Bn of 500 men, which was given to him as reinforcements. These 500 men were armed with a total of 50 Italian rifles. He asked the leader of this Schanz Bn whether his men had received any military training and having received an answer to the negative, he said, "Ich verzichte auf Ihre Unterstuetzung; das waere Mord." (I shall do without your support. It would be murder). Bn Fuehrer Knorr reports that the 2 Erkelenz Battalions had been in existence since late 1944, that by February they had dwindled down to a single Bn due to voluntary evacuations. Of this Bn 2 Companies were located outside the town and by the time the situation had become critical, he had lost all contact with them. Of the 2 Companies in the town, 1 platoon eventually showed up. These examples are typical also for the rest of the units. In fact, in each case they all professed that their units had not fired a single shot. All of the Ps/W were captured either individually or with small groups of their men, the 2 others were picked up in their homes several days after entry of US troops. Practically all of these leaders did not know what had happened to their men. In one of the two cases where the leaders were captured in their homes, the leader reports that his Co had been

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building tank barriers until 25 February, that the men then were sent home and that nobody bothered them any more until the Americans arrived on the 28th. In the other case, the Co Condr waited until the Americans had reached a neighboring village and then he gave his men the order to disband and return home. Platoon leader Wilhelm Vertmann, after learning that the Wehrmacht had withdrawn, got very mad about this and decided to assemble his men and have them lay down their arms. "Denn dass die Wehrmacht weg war, das war Verrat." (The disappearance of the Wehrmacht was treason). The Adjutant of Bn 154 (Willich n. Krefeld) reports that the entire Bn had disappeared over night and that except for the Condrs he could not find a single Volkssturmmann. One Co Condr seemed greatly perturbed over the fact that the Siegfried Line, which had cost 83 Billion Marks to build, did not prove its worth. He also mentioned with sarcasm that the anti-tank ditches which had been dug with such great pains since September 1944, had only the effect of providing the American infantry with excellent covered avenues of approach.

10. The fiasco of the "Linksrheinischer Volkssturm" (Volkssturm of the left bank of the Rhine): Specifically referring to the "Linksrheinischer Volkssturm" all the Ps/W agreed that the entire undertaking was a complete flop. The main reasons for this were the lack of organization and equipment and the unwillingness of the people to fight.

11. The Volkssturm in the East: Their opinions are divided as to whether the Volkssturm is more effective on the Eastern front. While some of the Ps/W claimed that they really would have fought in the East and would have never surrendered to the Russians, there are also the following 2 opinions: one P/W had talked to refugees from the East while travelling through Saxony end of January, and these refugees had reported that the Volkssturm in the East had deserted in droves. Another P/W dismissed the German reports about large numbers of Russian tanks being destroyed by the Volkssturm as ridiculous. His argument is, that although each individual report published in the German papers looked very impressive in itself, an observant reader could not be fooled and that by adding up all these individual reports, the total of Russian tanks destroyed by the Volkssturm turned out to be ridiculously small in proportion to the number of Volkssturm Companies in action, which he gave as 1000.

12. Outcome of war:

Belief in German victory	:	1
Belief in compromise	:	2
Belief in German defeat	:	8
no opinion	:	2

The war will be continued to its very bitter end and Bn Fuehrer Gernanns from Vierson has this to say, "Ueberall in Deutschland sieht man die Parole: Sieg oder Tod. Gewiss gibt es Helden, die lieber sterben als dass sie ihr Vaterland untergehn sehen. Ich habe Achtung fuer solche Helden. Aber dann sollte man dazu Freiwillige aufrufen, die den Heldentod sterben wollen, und nicht Sieg oder Tod einen ganzen Volk aufzuktruieren, man darf doch nicht ein ganzes Volk dazu verurteilen". (All over Germany the word 'Victory or Death' is apparent. Certainly there are heroes who prefer death to defeat of the fatherland. I respect such heroes. But they should call for volunteers who want to die a hero's death rather than force a nation into 'Victory or Death'. The whole nation should not be thus condemned).

13. Future of Germany: Volkssturm (The majority of these Ps/W look at the future of Germany as a nation after a defeat with more gloom than the average P/W. Some see the complete end of Germany; such as one P/W who exclaimed with great pathos "Finis Germania", but

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most of them do not have a clear picture as to what this future is actually going to be like. The usual fear of Russia and the expectations of a clash between the USA and Russia were voiced. 5 of the Ps/W spoke of and would welcome an independent Rhineland or a Union of the Rhineland with one of the Western countries. There is no fear of mistreatment by the Americans, and news of good treatment has filtered through from the Aachen area.

14. Personal future of the Ps/W: 6 of the Ps/W believed all members of the Volkssturm will be sent home before Wehrmacht Ps/W, two of these believed that members of the Volkssturm will be sent home even before the end of hostilities. The remaining 7 have no opinion, but they hope that they will be sent home early because of their age and the key positions they held in civilian life. All 12 party members believe that there will be no discrimination or punishment whatsoever awaiting them personally but they do believe that there will be punishment for the real top leaders. A significant fact also is that all these 12 party members sincerely believe that they will get their old jobs back in spite of their affiliation with the party and their convictions. The 61 yr old Rektor of a Volksschule in Rheydt, Johannes Heck (he has taught for 41 yrs.), an ardent admirer of Hitler and National Socialism, who sees in Hitler a great educator and who believes that Hitler's ideas such as the "Fuehrergedanke" and the linking up of Nationalism with Socialism will survive no matter what happens, was completely flabbergasted when the interrogator implied that his convictions would rule him out as a school principal in the future. He felt that he had walked into a trap by having given the interrogator a frank and sincere statement of his convictions. Two other school principals among the Ps/W, whose families are inside Germany are afraid to take their jobs up again as long as the war is on, for fear of reprisals against their families. *Volkssturm*

(2) 15. Opinions on Hitler: [With only one exception these Ps/W believe in the sincerity of Hitler, look upon him as an idealist who is trying his best for the German people. All excesses and reverses are blamed upon his advisers who influence and misinform him.]

16. Opinions on Himmler: These Ps/W do not differ much from the average Landser in their opinions on Himmler, even though they do not express themselves in terms nearly as violent as the average P/W. The Volkssturm is generally blamed on Himmler. "Der hat uns den Volkssturm aufgebrannt." (He is responsible for the creation of the Volkssturm)

17. Evacuation of families: There was no compulsory evacuation from any towns of this region, excepting only Erkelenz and surroundings. Nevertheless of the 13 Ps/W there were 8 who had their families evacuated. Komp Fuehrer and Amtsgerichtsrat (District Court judge) Wilhelm Wenzel from Grevenbreich got two days leave from the Volkssturm in order to take his family across the Rhine and though he denies that it is mostly party members who evacuated their families, he admits, "Jeder der es sich finanziell leisten konnte, hat es natuerlich getan." (Whoever could afford it financially, did it). One of the Ps/W had sent his family away already in 1943 in order to avoid the KLV and RAD for his children. 3 of the Ps/W were forced to evacuate their wives because of the nervous breakdowns these had suffered during the bombing raids.

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