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AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION NO. VII/55

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EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS
OF FUEHRER CONFERENCES
HELD ON 24.2.45, AT THE
BEGINNING OF MARCH 1945,
AND ON 23.3.45.

TRANSLATED BY

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6.

22.11.47.

G.178125.

CONFERENCE HELD ON 24TH FEBRUARY, 1945.

Russian Front. Von Humboldt began his review of the situation in the east by reporting the satisfactory completion of operations against a bridgehead near the Platten Lake. The 1st and 12th SS Divisions had been withdrawn and it now had to be decided which division to take out next. There had been a small-scale enemy attack in the southern sector of the Ratibor bridgehead.

In the area south of Breslau, the enemy had continued his attacks, but had had no success; the attacks were weaker than the earlier ones and not so well sustained. It was to be assumed that the enemy's heavy losses prevented him from attacking in greater strength. In Breslau itself, the enemy had taken the Kuerassierkasérne (barracks), and was continuing to apply pressure in a southerly direction. In addition, the airfield (at Glandow?) was being threatened.

Fighting was going on in Lauban itself; in the southern sector, the position had been maintained, while in the north the German forces had had some success. Enemy losses consisted of 33 tanks and 12 anti-tank guns. 10 of the tanks were in running order.

Pyritz had been attacked from the south-west and south-east, but the enemy had had no success. Of the 10 tanks he used, 7 were destroyed.

On the sector held by the 2nd Army, the enemy, reinforced by troops from Finland, had attacked with 5 divisions; spearheads had reached the road from Konitz to Landeck.

The only German counter measure so far possible had been to throw parts of the French volunteer "Charlemagne" brigade into the battle.

The Fuehrer was of the opinion that they would be useless.

Western Front. Von Puttkammer said that the enemy had tried in vain to deepen his area of penetration in the sector to the south-west of Udem.

South of Goch the enemy had advanced as the result of an attack by two regiments. On the right flank of the LXXXI Korps the enemy had attacked from Guerzenich and Kofren, in the direction of Loewenich, and had entered Hambach and Nieder-Zier, to the south-east of Juelich. He had also penetrated into Arnoldsweiler with 15 tanks.

In a counter-attack to the south of Dueren, German troops re-occupied Nieder-Au. Enemy forces with 8 tanks had entered Wachweiler and Nieder-Vierscheid, and 50 tanks were included in the enemy units which had advanced into Neuhaus.

From Italy, the only report was of an attack in battalion strength against the left flank of the 232nd Infanteriedivision.

Air Activity. Von Puttkamer then went on to give details of intense air activity.

Nearly 1,000 American bombers had attacked communication facilities in Harburg, Wilhelmshaven, Bremen and Quakenbrueck, and targets in Hanover. Smaller attacks had been made on Bielefeld, Guetersloh, and Wesel, while 400 British aircraft had attacked industrial targets in Dortmund, Unna, and other places in the Ruhr.

400 twin-engined aircraft had been active in the western battle area, concentrating on Muenster and the Ruhr, and fighter bombers had been extremely active. 250 American bombers had flown in from the south to attack Graz and Klagenfurt. 213 German fighters had taken part in operations to the east of Linnich. 4 enemy aircraft had been destroyed; 9 fighters were missing.

In Italy, about 400 fighter bombers and 120 twin-engined bombers attacked the Brenner railway between Ala and Brixen. A further 250 bombers attacked communication targets in Verona, Ferrara, Pudia, and Udine.

In the east, 450 German aircraft had supported the attacks in the region of Guben and Neukirch.

After reading an article in the "Times" about the "Schnorchel" submarines, the Fuehrer commented that the majority of U-boat losses were a result of air attacks.

END OF CONFERENCE.

CONFERENCE HELD AT THE BEGINNING OF MARCH, 1945

An attack was being contemplated in the area of Pecs-Fuenfkirchen and the Fuehrer said that it was essential that the two bridges should be taken intact. The Army was no longer in a position to build such gigantic bridges; if he had any paratroops he would use them in this operation.

Jodl said that a landing had been made on the island of Piskopi, north west of Rhodes.

The Fuehrer was able to give further details. The landing had been supported by two destroyers and six gunboats. The escorting destroyers had provided quite heavy covering fire and the invading forces had had some success. Radio communications had been broken off during the night.

Naval activity. Assmann gave the latest details of the war at sea. Storms in the Baltic had prevented the disembarkation of 10,000 wounded from a ship in the Bay of Sassnitz. During the previous day, 800 tons of supplies had been carried from Pillau to Rosenberg. The number of refugees brought out of the eastern territories was now 491,000.

Christian interrupted to say that the Luftwaffe had carried 43,415 refugees and 7,000 wounded from the East.

Assmann went on to report that the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal had been closed on account of mines.

Two nights previously German M.T. boats had attempted to attack a south-bound convoy off Great Yarmouth; they had not been able to inflict any damage. Mines had been laid on the route followed by vessels sailing from the Thames to the Scheldt. A torpedo attack on a convoy sailing to Ostend with landing craft had been unsuccessful.

A submarine claimed to have sunk 25,000 tons in the North Channel and the Irish Sea; it was assumed that this tonnage comprised four ships, but complete details would only be available when the boat returned to base. A second U-boat claimed to have sunk a freighter and a destroyer off Gibraltar.

Air reconnaissance had revealed the presence in Taranto of two old Italian battleships and three transports. In Bari there were 50 auxiliary landing-craft, and a further 35 in Brindisi. Altogether the enemy had sufficient shipping in the Mediterranean to enable him to land 5 or 6 divisions, but reports gave no grounds for any special fears.

Air Activity. Buechs said that attacks had been made on railways to the south east of Budapest, and in the course of these, 2 trains had been destroyed. Two four-engined bombers and one enemy fighter were shot down. Four of the German fighters were lost.

Aircraft engaged in operations east of Budapest had reported that American aircraft were using the landing-ground at Zombor. This report had not yet been confirmed, but the German pilots said they had seen 20 four-engined bombers on the ground, and another 15 landing.

Enemy air activity over Breslau had been on a large scale, and three enemy aircraft had been lost.

German bombers had been successful in attacks on bridges. 30 metres of the bridge at Goerlitz had been destroyed, and two direct hits had been scored on the Lebus Bridge.

97 aircraft took part in attacks in Pomerania against enemy columns. The damage inflicted amounted to 50 vehicles and 8 guns destroyed and 18 tanks damaged.

300 enemy fighter bombers had been active in the Cologne area, and another 300 had attacked the Ruhr.

129 German fighters went up and several of them were engaged in dog-fights with the enemy, mostly Thunderbolts. 6 Thunderbolts and 2 Austers were shot down. 11 German aircraft were missing from this operation. Later, more German fighters met and engaged the enemy; two of the enemy were shot down and German losses were 10 aircraft. In another operation, 5 out of 10 Thunderbolts were shot down for the loss of 2 German aircraft. The total losses for the day were 18 enemy aircraft destroyed, with the Luftwaffe losing 31 of its aircraft.

Spitfires and Tempests had attacked the launching points of the V2 weapons. 5 fighter bombers had been shot down in the last few days on such raids.

Large enemy formations had flown over south-west Germany to launch terror attacks. Ulm was one of the principle targets, but Mannheim had also suffered a heavy attack. Considerable damage was done to houses and railway installations. One enemy fighter and one bomber were shot down, and two Me 262s were lost. Flak had claimed 7 of the enemy force, and it had been admitted by the enemy himself that his losses were 34 - 12 bombers and 22 fighters.

14 waves of bombers had attacked Moos-Bierbaum, over a period of four hours. They had dropped 2,500 high explosive bombs, but most of these had fallen in the open country.

Mosquito aircraft had attacked Berlin from the west.

During the night 265 German bombers had made successful attacks on places near the front line, particularly to the west of Cologne. 5 Ju 87s were missing from these attacks.

When he had heard Buhle describe an improvement in the range and fire-power of one of the German weapons, the Fuehrer said that the men who made such progress possible should receive some honour; they should be paid two or three hundred thousand marks.

During a short discussion on the range of German artillery, Buhle claimed that the "Huelse" could fire up to 10,200 metres with an additional charge.

END OF CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE HELD ON 23RD MARCH, 1945.

Brudermueller was the first spokesman, and he began to describe the position in the west.

At a point south of Arnheim, he said, 1,375 enemy vehicles had been spotted; that number included 233 tanks.

Enemy amphibian tanks had been able to cross the Rhine both sides of Rees. The 8th Fallschirm division considered that it could eradicate this threat, but the Fuehrer was not prepared to agree.

Anyway, said Brudermueller, the 15 Panzergrenadierdivision was also being sent to deal with the situation, and throw the enemy back.

Strong artillery fire and intense air activity had led the C.-in-C. in the west to expect an attack in the area of Wesel.

There had been considerable activity in the Remagen bridgehead, by motorised units.

Orders had been given that all the bridges from the lower course of the Main as far up the river as Hoechst should be blown; the bridges in Frankfurt were to be prepared for detonation, and charges were to be put in the bridges as far up the river as Miltenberg.

The enemy had penetrated into the centre of Ludwigshafen, street fighting was in progress, and losses were heavy. The Kreisleiter had given splendid support in the fighting, but there were still 70,000 civilians in the area and they hampered operations.

The C.-in-C. in the west had instructed that, as no advantage would be gained by continuing that particular battle, and as a unified command was no longer to be maintained, Oberstleutnant Loeffler and the remnants of the garrison should be withdrawn; Oberstleutnant Loeffler was urgently needed as a commander elsewhere.

The Fuehrer approved of this decision.

Brudermueller went on to say that enemy troops had taken Bergzabern, and they had pushed forward as far as Hergsheim.

The Fuehrer quoted American reports that they were taking between 7,000 and 9,000 prisoners daily; if these figures were correct, it meant that there was practically no resistance.

Brudermueller completed his commentary by saying that there was nothing of importance to report from Italy or the south-east.

Russian front. De Maiziere said that he had to report a tense situation on the 6th Army front. Balatonfuezfue was firmly held by German troops, but the enemy had occupied Veszprem.

It was feared that the commander of the "Hoch-und Deutschmeister Division", General Rost, had been killed.

The Fuehrer demanded that every possible man in the "Leibstandarte" and the 6th Panzer Army should be used straight away. Sepp Dietrich must be told immediately of this order.

Goehler said that Dietrich had already received a message from the Reichsfuehrer, saying that the strength of the units must be maintained.

That was not good enough, said the Fuehrer; every man in the 6th Panzer Army must be thrown into the battle.

De Maiziere went on to say that attacks to the south and south-east of Komorn had been repelled, though advanced units of the 2nd. SS Panzer division had had to be withdrawn.

The situation to the south of Neusohl had become more acute, and in spite of German counter-attacks the enemy had been able to advance in some places.

Loebenschutz and Neisse were the focal points on the central sector, where it was intended to set up a new line of defence by adjustments of the front. In Breslau the only activity was weaker enemy attacks on the southern sector.

De Maiziere then dealt with the fighting around Kuestrin; the enemy had attacked all day without success. A German counter-attack was in progress at a point where the enemy had achieved a local penetration. During the day 116 tanks had been destroyed, more than 20 of them by the Luftwaffe.

The Fuehrer said that he had difficulty in accepting the figures given for tanks destroyed. The losses the Russians were supposed to have suffered were as many as the total number of tanks originally announced as in action. If this was true, so much the better; but he just did not believe it.

De Maiziere reported that the position south west of Danzig was still confused; the enemy had attacked in strength and had made considerable penetrations.

The Fuehrer considered that the only possible move now would be a withdrawal to the line of the Vistula; the position would have to come under review again the following morning. He also saw danger in the Oppenheim bridgehead.

Air activity. Von Below said that 117 fighters had been sent to attack that point, but some were engaged before they arrived. Details of the attack were still awaited, but it was known that 9 of the German fighters had been shot down.

The Fuehrer said that he was beginning to have suspicions about the meaning of the sentence that so many aircraft were missing. How could they be missing over Reich territory? Surely some trace would be found a day or two later. The only other possible conclusion was that some of the pilots had flown over to the enemy.

Von Below reported attacks by American four-engined bombers on transport targets on the Rhine, in Muenster and Osnabrueck. Another group of bombers had raided Bochum, Essen, Iserlohn, Hagen and Dinslaken.

British four-engined bombers had attacked communication targets in the area of Bocholt, and other formations had dropped bombs on Bremen and the airfield at Quackenbrueck. 17 Me 262s had been sent up to meet the raiders and had shot down four without loss to themselves. No other fighters had engaged the enemy.

600 American four-engined bombers had flown in from the south to attack the hydro-electric works at Schwarzheide and other industrial targets in the area; a further 200 aircraft attacked communications at St. Valentin and in the Vienna area.

In the east German bombers had attacked bridges, scoring three direct hits on the bridge at Lebus, and one on the bridge at Goeritz-Mitte.

The Fuehrer then returned to the situation in the west. He saw the greatest danger from the Oppenheim bridgehead. Admittedly the Rhine was 250 metres wide at this point, but it was only necessary for one sentry on the river bank to fall asleep and anything could happen. The conduct of operations at this part of the front left much to be desired; the troops had been fed on the mistaken idea that it was better to fight in the open country than in their dug-outs. The truth was that, once the dug-outs were abandoned, it was difficult for the defence to hold its ground.

/Burgdorf

Burgdorf revealed that Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels had asked for permission to transform the east-west axis in Berlin into a runway. It would be necessary to cut down some trees and clear 20 metres of the Tiergarten on either side of the road.

The Fuehrer was prepared to agree to Goebbels' plan, though he did not think it absolutely essential; a breadth of 50 metres, he thought, would be adequate; after all no one was going to attempt to land with "Goliaths" there.

He then added that he wanted the doctor's report on Wenck's health without delay. Either the man was cured or he was not. The doctors seemed to ramble on eternally; even now they were not certain whether they would have to operate or not.

(There then followed discussion in some detail about the relative value of various bunkers as headquarters for the Fuehrer and his generals).

It would be a great handicap, said the Fuehrer, if all the records held at headquarters were suddenly lost through enemy air attacks. The underground shelter at Zossen had been suggested as an alternative, but it would not stand comparison with the one which they were now using (under the Chancellery). The Chancellery was a massive building and it afforded considerable protection in itself, and the underground structures had been properly built. But the places at Zossen had been built by the Army, not by the Todt Organisation, and the people who had built them had made mistakes through no fault of their own. The result was that if Zossen were ever subjected to a heavy attack, the underground bunkers would collapse, in addition to the buildings above ground.

The Fuehrer said he was amazed at the way some details were handled; he had heard for the first time of the existence of a Ukrainian SS Division; it had popped up from somewhere and that was the first he had heard about it.

Goehler said that it had been formed quite a long time ago.

The Fuehrer then wanted to know if this Ukrainian unit consisted of reliable troops; there was no point in giving weapons and equipment to unreliable foreign units when German divisions were going short. He asked for a full report on all the foreign units attached to the German Army.

Borgmann mentioned the Indian Legion.

The Fuehrer replied that the Indian Legion was a joke; there were Indians who would not kill a flea. Why should we expect these Indian troops to acquit themselves any better than the men who had fought under Bose in India itself. Give them a prayer-wheel to turn, and the Indians would be indefatigable; but it was just funny to suggest throwing them into a fierce engagement. In times when the Germans had had too many weapons they could permit themselves the luxury of these foreign units on the grounds of propaganda. But when things were difficult, these units were no longer trustworthy. Any one who said to the Indians; "You can give up shooting," would cause them the greatest pleasure.

He intended to speak to the Reichsminister the following morning, about the reliability of all these foreign troops; the so-called Galician Division (the 30th), the Ukrainian Division (the 14th.) and the Austro-Ruthenians. It was true that, given the right conditions, they could be made into decent soldiers - but it would take 10 years. As it was, some of these formations had spent all their time behind the line, and they had not taken part in any fighting.

Brudermueller then gave the text of a message which had just come in from Army Group H. (Heeresgruppe H) The enemy had attacked 1.5 Km. south of Wesel, after several hours of extremely heavy artillery preparation.

The attack had been expected.

In the closing minutes of the meeting, the Fuehrer urged the necessity of discovering some aircraft capable of opposing the ever increasing Mosquito attacks. These raids did not worry the Fuehrer or his staff very much because they were in a shelter under the ground; but they were very unpleasant for the civilian population. What was needed was an aircraft of superior speed, and preferably with two engines, so that it would land safely, even if one engine had been put out of action.

Von Below asked the Fuehrer if it would not be possible to have a meeting of all the people connected with the production of the Me 262; namely Goering, General Koller, Kammhuber, General Peltz, Speer, Saur, Degenkolb, Messerschmidt and Dorsch. There were certain problems which only the Fuehrer himself could settle.

The Fuehrer said that he had held a similar view all along. There was no proportion between the production figures and the number of aircraft actually put into operation.

END OF CONFERENCE

A.H.B.6. Distribution

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