

German pilot interrogation

HEADQUARTERS 362ND FIGHTER GROUP

APO 141, U.S. Army
21, April 1945

RESULTS OF INTERROGATION OF GAF PILOTS WHO LANDED AT Y-73

Unter-Offiziere Gerhardt Kuerscher, born 10-3-1920, with four years of service in the German Army and the holder of the Iron Cross first class and another decoration comparable to our D.F.C., was a member of the 4th Staffel of Stabgeschweder No. 3.

This group had been based at Finow A/D, located at coordinate V-0490, twenty-six miles north-northeast of Berlin, since 7 Feb. 1945 where the entire group was based together with A fighter Gruppe consisting of about 20 Me-109s. This A/D came under the jurisdiction of the Berlin area. The Gruppe Commander was Hauptmann Himlich, and the Geschweder commander was Major Hamester. The aircraft PW was flying was a FW-190 F-8 marked with a yellow number 14 and a yellow rectangle; the Staffel or squadron marking was yellow, which would correspond with our 379th Squadron.

At the time of interrogation, the PW stated that there were about 7 or 8 aircraft per Staffel with six serviceable. In the Gruppe there were 30 to 33 aircraft of which about 25 were serviceable. In each Staffel there were 10 pilots, of whom seven were on duty and in the Gruppe there were 35 to 36 pilots, of whom 28 were on duty.

On the 19th of April, after running three close support missions on the Eastern Front against Russian ground forces, the fourth mission for the day was laid on. This mission was as follows: several Gruppe were to dive-bomb ack ack positions east of the Oder River bridgehead at Cross Nurdorf near Kuertrin, and the PW's Gruppe was to attack the bridge itself. For this mission PW's plane was loaded with AB500SD1 (containing 1 Kg bombs). The unit took off from Finow A/D at 1745 hours and PW jettisoned his bombs and deserted with his aircraft, landing at Y-73 at 1900 hours.

PW stated that at the time of this mission there were only 60,000 liters of gasoline left for his Gruppe and that when this was finished there would be no more. He also stated that all members of the command had been told this before the mission, with the additional information that when the gasoline was gone the ground crews would be transferred to the Infantry. His Commanding Officer, Oberleutnant Muller, made this statement.

Further information from PW indicated that on the mission mentioned above the bombers were escorted by 8-12 fighters.

In PW's opinion, Russian fighters are superior to the FW-190 F-8 and the Me-109, but the bombers of the Russians are not up to scratch in their formations. Some of the pilot replacements for this unit had been obtained from SG 151, which was located in the vicinity of Nurnburg.

James C. Kessling, Jr.
Major, Air Corps, Group S-2.