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By ED NARA Date 5-25-11

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HEADQUARTERS AAF INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

GAF OFFICER REVIEWS GERMAN AIR STRATEGY AND TACTICS 1939 TO 1945

A ranking German Air Force officer, commander of a fighter wing at the time of his recent capture, has made a brilliant analysis of the receding fortunes of the Luftwaffe throughout the war. Whatever his personal motives may really have been for producing this document, the officer is well qualified. He is one of the few remaining fighter pilots whose assignments and contacts with higher echelon personnel date to the beginning of the war. For this reason, his analysis of overall strategy, his explanations of cause and effect, and his criticism of German policy, are of very great significance. Allied intelligence tends to bear out the officer's veracity and knowledge on nearly every point.

An edited condensation of this report is given below, the officer's opinions being presented without comment.

Poland to Dunkirk. The conduct of the GAF throughout the Polish, Norwegian, and French campaigns was admirable. The importance of air power was brought home to every German officer, and it is no exaggeration to say that the main factor which allowed Germany to crush France and drive the British Expeditionary Force into the sea at Dunkirk was the GAF.

Battle of Britain. After the French campaign was over, all GAF officers agreed "that the thing to do would be for all of us to take a torpedo on board and try to cut England's life line—her shipping." Instead of that, the battle of London started and the GAF got its first nasty surprise. The German General Staff had promised that the attacks would be opposed by 300 inferior (except for some Spitfires) fighters, flown mostly by young and very inexperienced pilots. It turned out that there were not just 300. The British had just as many, if not more, than the Luftwaffe could bring against England. Furthermore, the British had the advantage of bailing out over their own territory and reappearing the following day in new planes. The result was the first definite defeat of the Luftwaffe. Both air forces reached exhaustion at the same time (only the Germans didn't fully realize the extent to which the RAF was depleted), and the GAF, being the attacker, had to give up.

How did this defeat come about? The British were smarter than the Germans. During the lull between Dunkirk and the first assaults, the RAF concentrated on production of fighter planes and pilots. All available pilots were re-trained in fighters for the emergency. The GAF was not so foresighted. Its leaders never foresaw the possibility of running out of planes because they had underestimated the British effort.

After this daylight defeat, the Germans switched over to night attacks. They were highly successful until the British developed night fighting to an extent that made the attacks very costly. But coincident with the

mounting efficiency of RAF night fighting came another setback which stopped forever any serious thought that England could be "brought to terms" solely by air attack. Germany became seriously committed to Mussolini's African venture. A year later Hitler went to war with Russia, and the GAF was then fighting on three major fronts. The British took the maximum advantage of this diversion. They brought their fighter arm up to strength and started to build a strategic bombing force which, by the end of 1941, was turning out four-engine night bombers in effective numbers.

Germany Under Night Attack. The GAF for the first time experienced the shock of being on the defensive and it was badly prepared. Night fighting technique was in its infancy. The Me 110, which had been designed as a long-range fighter-bomber, was the only available aircraft that was at all suitable. Proper instruments had to be manufactured and tested. Some even had to be invented.

The GAF tried several night-fighting techniques. The first was an attempt to belt the enemy approach lanes with searchlights which would illuminate the bombers for the night fighters. "It was a fairly exciting but not very successful enterprise." Then, a "dark-night-fighting" technique was developed which comprised a belt of radio beacons stretching all the way from Jutland to Brest. Whenever aircraft approached, a night fighter circled the beacon and was directed by ground control to the enemy. It had many disadvantages. The instruments employed had a serviceable radius of 12 miles only. Within this radius, ground control had to direct the fighter to visual contact with the enemy.

A battle of wits developed between the opposing air forces. The GAF shot down 15, 20, or 25 bombers a night, so the RAF countered by the technique of gaining great altitude and diving through the beacon belts. The GAF then developed new instruments with a serviceable radius of about 25 miles. Next, the RAF started the "plane stream" technique whereby it attempted to saturate the German defenses and confuse the ground control. This was successful until the Germans came up with AI (airborne night interception). "We used to shoot down an average of 40, 50, 60, sometimes even 70 a night, and one could reckon on their having to give up these tactics sooner or later."

AAF Starts Operating. However, there was another shock in store for the Germans—the American Air Force in England. While the British night assaults were reaching their peak, the Americans were making their preparations, and suddenly, the GAF had another momentous force with which to contend. Daylight

*Oberstleutnant Johannes Kogler
Kommodore, JGG, shot down 1/4/45.*

attacks by well-armed, four-engine AAF bombers, that flew in beautiful protective formation, were launched against the occupied countries. The GAF could do very little about this menace. From Helgoland to Biarritz there were approximately 100 fighters. Mostly these planes were the improved model Me 109s, armed with two 7.9mm MG and one 13mm MG. Also, there were some FW 190s equipped with two 13mm MG and two 20mm cannon. They were no match for 80 bombers escorted by 150 Spitfires, especially since only 15 to 20 fighters could be brought to bear against any single formation. The GAF took disproportionate losses and tried varying techniques. Finally the fighters resorted to a hit-and-run diving attack, but they still suffered losses and had little to show for it. In desperation, pleas went out for fighter replacements which would ease the burden. The answer came back that there were none available since the GAF was tied up in Russia and Africa.

The Allies realized the impotence of the GAF fighter interception and their bomber formations started coming over without escort. The Germans tried to stop them and failed. Available fighters were no match for them and word went around that it was impossible to shoot down B-17s. "That was the first blow at morale that German fighter pilots had."

GAF Counter Measures. The explosive armament of the Me 109 was quadrupled. The FW 190 was armed with four 20mm cannon and two 13mm MG. This helped, but by no means countered, the terrific fire power of the mutually supported bombers. Attack from the rear was still a lethal experiment and German fighters switched to the safer but less effective frontal assault.

Defense of the Reich. Later in 1943, when the Eighth Air Force started the strategic bombing of Germany proper, the GAF instigated the "Defense of the Reich." At first it was a pathetic counteraction. There was a fighter Gruppe of about 30 aircraft, about 20 of them operational, in Holland. In addition to these, a small number of fighter school instructor pilots and some industrial test pilots were available. "That was the fighting force which was the foundation of the Defense of the Reich." They took huge losses and had little success. The German High Command realized that the situation was desperate. "We started denuding our front lines of fighter formations." What the GAF gained in numbers it lacked in experience. Combating huge, coordinated, well-armed formations presented a problem far different from the usual front line tactical assault by a relatively few planes.

Laboriously, the GAF worked out a reliable ground control system. This went into effect as soon as the enemy was apprehended by radar, while he was still in the process of forming over England. Gradually the Germans perfected the technique of getting interceptors into the air at the proper time and in the proper

place, and eventually the fighter pilots became skilled at large-scale coordinated attacks. The results were favorable and at Schweinfurt in August 1943, the Defense of the Reich came to flood tide.

Why weren't the German successes even greater? There were several reasons. There simply were not enough fighters—perhaps 250 operational planes was the average. Fighter pilots had to learn a brand new technique, and bomber pilots who had been re-trained had to acquire the fighter instinct. Also the GAF took losses which were no encouragement to close-in tactics.

The daylight missions continued and the damage they inflicted was increasingly alarming, so much so, in fact, that Reichsmarschall Goering issued an order stating that fighter attacks should be made from the rear, and anyone who failed to obey would be court-martialed. Results, however, were disastrous. "It was dreadful to see 50, 60, 70 percent or even a greater percentage of GAF fighters shot down."

Long-Range Allied Fighters. The next development was one the Germans could scarcely believe. P-47s and P-51s escorted Allied bombers, first to the Rhine, then deeper into Germany. "It's impossible to fly that far," said the Commander of GAF Fighters and the Reichsmarschall (Goering), but the Fighter Commander found out soon enough by having himself chased all the way to Berlin by four P-51s. Orders were given to leave the Allied fighters alone and concentrate on the bombers. This command led to a vicious spiral of disaster. The GAF concentrated on bombers and were shot down by Allied fighters. The fighters learned that they were safe against attack and became bolder and more effective. The GAF headed for bomber formations which supposedly were not escorted, "but you ran into fighters anyway and in the end they were all over the place." The GAF developed an inferiority complex which got worse each day, but the high command would not relax the order.

Disasters came thick and fast to the GAF. Allied formations concentrated on the aircraft industry with deadly effect. When the industry dispersed its concentration and continued handicapped production, the Allies switched to the fuel industry.

Appearance of Jet Fighters. "During these awful times we fliers had one ray of hope, the Me 262." Great things were hoped for from this aircraft which had stupendous performance and was armed with four 30mm cannon. It went into production and various units started to re-train with it. Then the blow fell. Orders were issued that it was to be used not as a fighter, but as a bomber. "A fierce struggle went on between General Galland, the Reichsmarschall, and the Fuhrer, but they stuck to it at the time." As a bomber the Me 262 was a failure, but it took too long to find that out.

Simultaneously the Me 163 rocket plane came out. It was impractical, had a tendency to blow up, and was

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a constant headache to the pilots. It had little success in combat.

Beginning of the End. About this time, the high command came to the startling realization that the great trouble was that there were not enough fighters. The "fighter program" was set in motion and all other plane production stopped. Considering the number produced, the program was a huge success and in November 1944, 4,000 (?) fighters a month were coming off the line. But of course there was a catch. The dispersion of production had resulted in a host of mechanical imperfections. "During the retraining, my gruppen lost six excellent pilots, a large number wounded, and between 40 and 50 aircraft." Fighter pilot morale went down a few more notches.

The crowning blow fell on the GAF soon after the invasion of Normandy. Allied Tactical Air Forces started to raise hell with German communications. As the lines approached the Reich, the Ruhr became a target, and German production was threatened with total collapse. The GAF was faced with a dilemma which it was helpless to solve—whether to concentrate on the strategic or tactical air force. The desperate situation culminated in an order to the GAF to attack anything that flew. "With 15 planes I attacked a formation of 60. Of these 15 planes, not one returned. Next day, I took off with eight planes we had raked together and I was the only one to return."

The high command decided on a final effort to eradicate the tactical air forces on the continent. The futile

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attempt to accomplish this was made on New Year's Day, 1945.

Conclusions. Why this "utter failure of the GAF?"

1. *German leaders made two preposterous blunders.* They reckoned that Russia was finished in 1942, and they did not reckon at all with the American Air Force. Consequently they did not switch to the defense soon enough. They delayed their all-out fighter production and re-training of bomber pilots until it was too late. If they had started in 1942, they could have quadrupled their fighter production in one year, put 4,000 fighters into the air by the middle of 1943, and stopped the strategic attacks in their infancy.

2. When, finally, the fighter program got going, and the time had arrived to launch an all-out blow, "the air leaders lost their nerve. The planning was wonderful but the attack never came off. I could have guaranteed that we would have shot down 300 or 400 planes and that would have been the shock the enemy needed." Instead, the GAF resorted to piecemeal tactics and was decimated.

3. The German command lacked the adaptability that the British demonstrated in 1940. "It's a tragic failure in German history that whatever we did was *too soon or too late*," and this failure became so pronounced that "one felt almost ashamed to go out in a GAF uniform."

4. Finally, "I have to admit that *the war* which Germany is now waging *has been lost by the GAF* because we lacked foresighted planning."

RECENT ME 262 TACTICS

Since the appearance in Headquarters AAF Intelligence Summary 45-7, 15 April 1945, of the over-all study of the "Development of Me 262 Tactics," several additional reports have been received which throw new light on the tactics of this GAF jet fighter:

Defense of Western Front. According to PW reports, the defense of Western Germany has been allotted to the Me 262. This information has been partially confirmed by reports received from the Allied Strategic Air Forces in Europe. During March, very few conventional fighters opposed Eighth Air Force heavy bombers flying over Germany.

Auxiliary Wing Tanks. The first report of Me 262s carrying auxiliary wing tanks occurred 4 April in the Perleberg and Parchim areas. The 262s were observed to jettison auxiliary wing tanks before they attacked the leading B-24 formation.

Aggressive High Attacks on Bombers. Me 262s were reported as being very aggressive against bomber formations, and only in two recent instances were flights of P-47s which had become separated from their formation attacked. Most of the attacks appear to have

been made from five to seven o'clock high, although several jets made attacks from six o'clock low. This marks a departure from previous reports in which the majority of the attacks were made from six o'clock low.

Frontal Fly-Through Attacks. Recently returned Eighth Air Force heavy-bomber gunners reported that their formations were attacked from twelve o'clock level. The jets flew well ahead of the bomber formation, turned into the bomber flight path, applied power and flew directly through the formation. Several men reported that this particular type of attack had been employed by Me 262s when operating in conjunction with the conventional fighters, FW 190s and Me 109s. The returnees feel that due to the tremendous rate of closure, the jets were not trying to score hits on the bombers but were attempting to break up the formations for the conventional fighters. One returnee stated that two jets using these tactics had broken up his formation and kept it fairly loose for a period of twenty minutes, during which time attacks were pressed on the bombers by conventional fighters.

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GERMAN AIR FORCE

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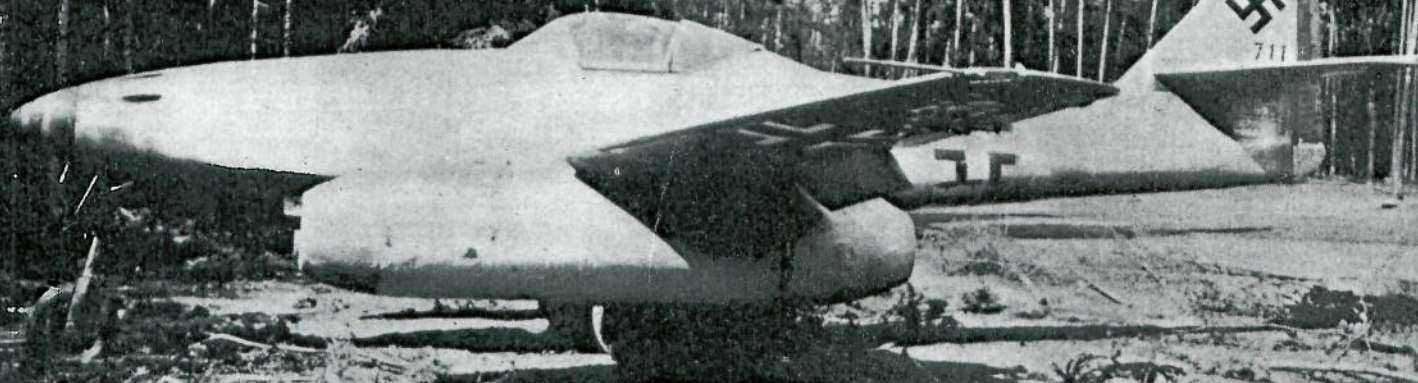
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CAPTURED ME 262

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