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INTERROGATION OF REICH MARSHAL HERMANN GOERING

RITTER SCHULE, AUGSBURG
1700 to 1900 hours
10 May 1945

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(Because General Patch is personally responsible for the safe custody of the prisoner, it was necessary for General Spaatz' party to go from Headquarters Ninth Air Force to Headquarters Seventh U. S. Army).

Reich Marshal Goering was standing in a small office of the school wearing grayish wool, no medals but epaulets of a Field Marshal; (that is, a large eagle, a small Swastika, and crossed batons.) He had a silver ring on the third finger of his right hand. Blue eyes, ruddy not unpleasant face, big thighs, tan boots.

Interpreter provided by the Seventh Army.

Those present were:

Reich Marshal Hermann Goering
General Spaatz, CG, USSTAF
Lt Gen Patch (part of the time) CG, 7th Army
Lt Gen Vandenberg, CG, Ninth Air Force
Brig Gen E.P. Curtis, C/S, USSTAF
Brig Gen Paul Barcus
Major Alexander De Seversky, Special Consultant to Secretary of War.
Dr. Bruce Hopper, Historian, USSTAF.

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SPAATZ: Would you tell us something of the organization of the Luftwaffe and the plans, especially the factors which went into the non-fulfillment of those plans?

GOERING: In the early years when I had supreme command of the Luftwaffe, I had definite plans, but in 1940 Hitler began to interfere, taking air fleets away from our planned operations. That was the beginning of the breakdown of the Luftwaffe efficiency.

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SPAATZ: In the Battle of Britain why [redacted] you maintain such rigid formations of Fighters and bombers?

GOERING: It was necessary to cover the bombers because thier fire power was low (not like your bombers). It was also necessary for our fighters to closely cover each other. You see, it was a question of equipment.

SPAATZ: Was the JU 88 designed for the Battle of Britian?

GOERING: The JU88 was primarily a commerical airplane which had to be adapted for the Battle of Britian along with the HE 111 because we had nothing else. I was not in favor of engaging in the Battle of Britian at that Time. It was too early. The HE 177 Was late in development. The HE 177 was a development from the original Stuka with two propellers on four motors. It was a failure; it wasted two years. That is why we had no large bombers in the Battle of Britain.

SPAATZ: When did you know that the Luftwaffe was losing control of the air?

GOERING: When the American long range fighters were able to escort the bombers as far as Hanover, and it was not long until they got to Berlin. We then knew we must develop the jet planes. Our plan for the early development of the jet was unsuccessful only because of your bombing attacks.

SPAATZ: Did our attacks effect your training program?

GOERING: Yes, for instance the attacks on oil retarded the training because our new pilots could not get sufficient training before they were put in the air where they were no match for your flyers.

PATCH: Did the Luftwaffe have a priority in the distribution of man- Power?

[redacted]

GOERING: Yes, the Luftwaffe had first priority and thus had the cream of Germany, the U-boats were second, and the panzers third. Even at the end the best of German youth went into the Luftwaffe. Only the Waffen SS sometimes held back personnel. All other organizations surrendered personnel to the Luftwaffe on application.

SPAATZ: Did the jet airplane really have a chance to win against us?

GOERING: Yes, I am still convinced, if we only had four to five months more time. Our underground installations were practically all ready. The factory at Karla (?) had a capacity of 1000 to 1200 jet airplanes a month. Now with 5000 to 6000 jets the outcome would have been different.

VANDENBERG: But could you train sufficient jet pilots, considering your shortage of oil?

GOERING: Yes, we would have had underground factories for oil, producing a sufficient quantity for the jets. The transition to jets was very easy in training. The jet pilot output was always ahead of the jet aircraft production.

SPAATZ: Could Germany have been defeated by air power alone, using England as a base, without invasion?

GOERING: No, because German industry was going underground, and our

counter measures could have kept pace with your bombing. But the point is, that if Germany were attacked in her weakened condition as now, then the air could do it alone. That is, the land invasion meant that so many workers had to be withdrawn from factories' production and even from the Luftwaffe.

PATCH: Was that also true of England?

GOERING: To me, this is a difficult question. Germany was prepared for war and England wasn't I was forced by Hitler to divert air forces to the East (which I always opposed). Only the diversion of the Luftwaffe to the Russian front saved England. She was unable to save herself and unable to bomb Germany.

SPAATZ: When you conquered France in 1940, why didn't you go on through to Spain and Gibraltar?

GOERING: Germany had saved Spain from the Bolsheviks. Spain was in the German Camp. I insisted on going to Spain but to no avail, We could have bottled the British Fleet in the Mediterranean, but no- the Fuehrer wanted to go to Russia. My idea was to close both ends of he Mediterranean, "Und dann die sache ist in ordnung". I am positive we could have taken Gibraltar. The Luftwaffe was ready and we had two divisions of parachutists ready and trained, but Mussolini objected. Part of our pain - the Italians. Also there was the complication of the relations between France and Spain.

SPAATZ: Did you know anything of our movement to Africa as to time and place?

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[redacted]

GOERING: Well, I presumed it, but if the Germans had only held Morocco, and the Canaries as I wanted, the going would have been difficult for you.

SPAATZ: Your best attack on us was at Poltave, at the airfield. Why was that so successful?

GOERING: Those were wonderful times. We had an observation ship flying with you. You didn ot know it. It was a 177 which fortunately developed motor trouble and indicated it couldn't land on the field with only one motor. So it was able to return to give the information on your landing at Poltave. As we had an attack planned on a railway nearby we merely diverted it to your airfield.

VANDENBERG: Will you tell me why you bombed cities in England instead of concentrating on aircraft and engine factories.

GOERING: My intention at first was to attack only military targets and factories, but after the British attacked Hamburg the people were angry and I was ordered to attack indiscriminately.

SPAATZ: Which had the more effect in the defeat of Germany, the area bombing or the precision bombing?

GOERING: The precision bombing, because it was decisive. Destroyed cities could be evacuated but destroyed industry was difficult to replace.

SPAATZ: Did the Germans realize that the American Air Forces by intention did only precision bombing ?

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GOERING: Yes. I planned to do only precision bombing myself at the beginning. I wanted to build a wall of contact mines around Britain and close the ports but again I was forced to do otherwise by political Diktat.

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CURTIS: Was our selection of targets good, particularly oil?

GOERING: Yes, excellent. As soon as we started to repair an oil installation you always bombed it again before we could produce one ton.

VANDENBERG: Why didn't you attemptto cut us off in africa and send the Luftwaffe, which was then superior in the air, against our shipping and the concentration of our airplanes at Gibraltar.

GOERING: We had too few laong range airplanes and then, later, when you got to Algiers the airfields in Italy were inadequate. You have no idea what a bad time we had in Italy, If they had only been our enemies instead of our Allies we might have won the war.

SPAATZ: Why did you use your bombers to haul gas to Rommel instead of bombing the line of communications from Algiers to Constantine to Tunisia?

GOERING: Higher Hq. orders.

VANDENBERG: Why did you attack our airdromes on January 1, 1945?

GOERING: Because every airdrome was loaded with airplanes.

VANDENBERG: Well, why didn't you come back?

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GOERING: Orders from higher headquarters. Hitler said it was no good to bomb American planes because more of them would come like bees.

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VANDENBERG: But why did you concentrate on RAF airfields more than on ours

GOERING: Because the RAF airfields were closer and otherwise more inviting targets. We used 2300 planes for that attack; what we did not allow for was the intense concentration of AA guns placed there against the V-1

VANDENBERG: Would you contrast the Air Forces of the Allies.

GOERING: Well, the Russians are no good, except on undefended targets. You need only three or four Luftwaffe airplanes to drive off a twenty plane Russian attack. The Americans are superior technically and in production. As for the personnel, the English, German and American are equal as fighters in the air.

SPAATZ: Have you any knowledge of a proximity fuse?

GOERING: Yes, in three or four months there would have been production.

SPAATZ: Has Japan the designs of this fuse?

GOERING: I do not think so because it was not yet in production and we never gave them anything unless it was in production. The

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Japanese have had the designs of the ME 262 for some time.

Goering then talked for several minutes, the gist of which emphasized our successful use of radar and counter radar measures to which he attributes much of the success of our operations.

SPAATZ: If you had to design the Luftwaffe again, what would be the first airplane you would develop?

GOERING: The jet fighter and then the jet bomber. The problem of speed has been solved. It is now a question of fuel. The jet fighter takes too much. The jet bomber, ME 264, designed to go to America and back, awaited only the final solution of the fuel consumption problem, I might add that according to my view the future airplane is one without fuselage (flying wing) equipped with turbine in combination with the jet and propeller.

SEVERSKY: In view of your diminishing manufacturing resources, who made the decision to divert a large portion of your national effort to manufacture of V-1 and V-2 weapons instead of building up the Luftwaffe?

GOERING: Well, there was great confusion of though in Germany. Prior to the invation the V-1 would have been effective. After the invation our effort should have been concentrated on the ME 262 (jet). The decision on the V-2 project was made at higher headquarters.

VANDENBERG: In the tactical operations of our Air Force, what attacks on what targets were most damaging to you?

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GOERING: Before D-Day it was the attacks in Northern France which hurt the most because we were not able to rebuild in France as quickly as in Germany. The attacks on marshalling yards were most effective, next came the low level attacks on troops and then the attacks on bridges. The low flying airplanes had a terror effect and caused great damage to our communications. Also demoralizing were the unbrella fighters which after escorting the bombers would swoop down and hit everything including the jet planes in process of landing.

SPAATZ: Did you have a three-inch gun for the jet?

GOERING: The 5.5 centimeter maching gun, only now going into production, would have made a great difference in the jet. While waiting for that we used the 5.5 centimeter rocket. You might find around Germany some jet airplanes equipped with anti-tank guns. Don't blame me for such monstrosities. This was done on the explicit orders of the Fuehrer. Hitler knew nothing about the air. He may have known something about the Army or Navy, but absolutely nothing about air. He even considered the ME 262 to be a bomber; and insisted it should be called a bomber.

SEVERSKY: I know that four-engine Focke-Wulf planes were in production in 1939. When you found out after the Battle of Britian that your planes did not have sufficient fire power and bombing power why didn't you concentrate on these four-engine planes as a heavy bomber?

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GOERING: Instead of that, we were developing the HE 177 and tried to devlop the ME 264 which was designed to go to America and return. We did use the Focke-Wulf against shipping from Norway. Because our production capacity was not so great as that of America we could not produce quickly everything we needed. Moreover, Our plants were subject to constant bombing so that it was difficult to carry out our plans for heavy bomber production.

SEVERSKY: The reason why I asked the previous question was because I wanted to establish wether you failed to build big bombers because you did not believe in strategic air power or because your productive capacity was restricted to the production of tactical aircraft for the Russian campaign.

GOERING: No, I always believed in strategic use of air power. I built the Luftwaffe as the finest bomber fleet, only to see it wasted on Stalingrad. My beautiful bomber fleet was used up in transporting munitions and supplies to the army 200,000 at Stalingrad. I always was against the Russian campaign.

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