

SURRENDER OF SIXTH GERMAN ARMY.....

The following, submitted by FRED R. BODKIN (D-702 Tank Bn) is the conversation between Maj Gen HORACE L. McBRIDE, CG 80th Inf Div, and General der Panzer Truppe (US Lt Gen) BALCK, CG Sixth German Army at 1945 hours in KIRCHDORF, Austria.

G. Balck - I wish to introduce myself, I am Gen der Pz Truppe BALCK, Commander of the Sixth German Army.

G. McBride - Does the General wish to communicate with me and if so what are his questions?

Balck - I wish to pay you a visit as well as ask you several questions?

McBride - Go ahead.

Balck - I wish to surrender the troops under my command to the American General but I am afraid the Russians will interfere.

McBride - All German troops which are North and West of the ENNS River will be considered American PWs, however, the agreement made between the Allied and German Governments prohibit troops from moving after 090001 May 1945.

Balck - It is my understanding that I may move troops across the ENNS River, since I ~~WAK~~ want to make sure that they will become American PWs.

McBride - Yes, but all movement will have to cease at mid-night tonight.

Balck - But my troops will not be in American lines when they are at LIEZEN?

McBride - As long as your troops are across the ENNS Riber, they will be in American lines; moreover, you may move your troops along the LIEZEN-SPITAL Road as far North as the Pyhrner Pass, otherwise as far North and West of the ENNS River as shown on map (McBRide outlines boundary on map).

Balck - How shall I behave towards the Russians who will arrive tomorrow?

McBride - All I know is that Russian troops will not cross the ENNS River.

Balck - Thank you very much; please understand that this was the main reason for my visit as General SOETH'S instructions were not entirely clear to me.

McBride - I have accepted General SOETH'S surrender and all German troops North of the ENNS River will be considered as American PWs.

Balck - I have taken over command of this sector and will follow all your orders, and I shall place somebody else in command of German troops South of the ENNS.

McBride - I shall have a small detachment of troops South of the PASS.

Balck - I can then use all road space South of the PASS?

McBride - Certainly; moreover you are free to move as well as to come and go as you wish. How many rations do you have?

Balck - I have four days rations on hand for all troops under my command.

McBRide - Go slowly on them as food presents a very difficult problem.

Balck - Certainly, the entire Army has had orders to have eight days rations in their possession of a man. The reason I estimated only four days is, that so many additional troops have straggled into my lines. By the way, my men wonder what will happen to them, when they will be discharged, and when they can go home.

McBride - I do not know but I assume that they will be demobilized and returned to their homes, but that is not official.

Balck - Please understand that I am out of communications with my troops coming in from the East (1st & 9th Mtn Divisions) and, moreover, I have no control over the troops further North which come under the Sixth SS Panzer Army. (Points out on map boundary between Sixth German and Sixth Panzer Armies). My main reason for my visit was to get as many of my troops as possible into the American lines before the deadline. My troops might do anything if they were threatened to become Russian PWs.

McBride - Do you have any Air Corps personnel under your command?

Balck - Yes, quite a lot, however they are all FLACK or Air Corps ground personnel. One of my Panzer Grenadier Regiments consists completely of Air Corps Pers.

McBride - No flying personnel, then?

Balck - No flying personnel except a few cub planes. Those, however, have been grounded because of lack of fuel.

McBride - How far are the Russians?

Balck - I am not sure. My front lines were approx. there (pointing to the map). Moreover, the Russians showed no intentions to attack, and the bulk of my troops was racing West.

McBride - How many troops are under your command?

Balck - I cannot give you an exact figure since there are a great many small units such as brigades and CTs. I have seven Divisions under my command.

McBride - Which divisions?

Balck - 1st and 3rd Panzer Divs, 1st and 9th Mtn Divs, 5th SS PZ Div, "VIKING", and the UKRAINIAN Div.

McBride - Are all these divisions going to cross the ENNS before midnight?

Balck - I don't believe so, the UKRAINIAN Div is in KAVRNTEN. I couldn't use those men against the Russians; also only a few elements of the VIKING division may be able to cross as they are still pretty far South.

McBride - By the way, did you ever command Army Group "G".

Balck - Yes, ~~in~~ I did, last winter.

McBride - Then I guess we met before at the SEILLE River and at ST AVOLD. Do you have any other questions?

Balck - No, thank you, but could I call General SOETH over the 'phone?

McBride - Certainly.

Telephone conversation between General BALCK and General SOETH.

Balck - Hello, General SOETH, this is General BALCK. I have just surrendered the Sixth Army to the American General. Now get this please.....Contact immediately General BRETT; you know where his Hq is, don't you?

SOETH - Yes Sir, I know.

Balck - Tell General BRETT to immediately start moving all our troops across the ENNS River. Hurry please. All troops must be across the River by midnight, tonight. Everybody who is North and West of the ENNS River by midnight will be American PWs. The American General says the Russians will not cross the ENNS River. Better tell that also to your troops in LIEZEN. But get in contact with General BRETT first. Any questions?

Soeth - No Sir.

Balck - O.K. I am leaving here at once.

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By Command of Major General McBRIDE

S.P. WALKER
Col, Cavalry
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

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