

Conference between Major General Coulter, Brigadier General Willems, Lt General Von Graffen, 76th Fz Corps CG, Col Keller-Kraus, Chief of Staff, Lt Col Claussen, Operations, and Lt Col Baron Reum, CG of 289th Regt. Conference started 031120Z May 1946 at 337 Inf Regt CP. Questions through interpreters.

General Coulter - Ask the General if they are proceeding according to our discussions last night.

General Von Graffen - Yes.

General Coulter - Will you please tell the General that the troops will be brought into the area selected last night to be assembled there and then it is the plan to move them by unit, under your chain of command, to an area to the SE of Bassano where it is less severe and where we can readily supply them. We will supply transport in so far as we have it.

General Von Graffen - We have horses and cows that we would like to take along.

General Coulter - We want to have your organic transportation to with you in order that you may use it for your own supply in your area.

General Von Graffen - When are the troops to move into the region of Bassano.

General Coulter - As rapidly as we can provide transportation and arrange for the march of your organics. Your arms are to be deposited in this area as planned in the vicinity of Mas. Your officers will retain their pistols until they get to the other area.

General Von Graffen - We have been told to keep our rifles until we get new orders from our Army and as long as the Italian bandits have their arms.

General Coulter - From this area we will provide protection for you.

General Von Graffen - Our Army gave us this arrangement and probably with your Army's permission.

General Willems - The terms are very clear that you will surrender your arms and it is a concession that your officers keep their arms.

General Von Graffen - We will put the arms together in this area.

General Willems - I am sure that General Keyes will allow a certain few in each unit to retain their rifles as a guard.

Colonel Hughes - I should say not more than 30 per Div or Corps Hqs.

General Von Graffen - That is agreeable. We must first ask our Army to give us our new orders. That will be today.

General Willems - How many Divs are represented here?

General Von Graffen - Five Divs are represented here.

General Willems - We will allow you 160 rifles, not automatic. Corps Comdr will be allowed 30 making a total of 190.

General Willems - What Divs are in your Corps?

General Von Graffen - 42, 362, 98, 162, 278, 29, 26, and 155 Divs. We do not know how many men - we only know how many men were in our valley. There are probably 30,000 to 40,000 men. One of our troops are up in the mountains to the left of here. That makes 8 and the Corps Staff 9 so we should get 270 rifles.

General Coulter - The troops that we have here will be turned over to you at the other area to be turned over to their unit.

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General Von Graffen - We ask that all our field kitchens be moved.

General Coulter - Yes, all your organics will go with you.

General Von Graffen - We have 2,000 men who left our group as soon as your tanks began to shoot and they are PW's at Agordo by the partisans.

General Willems - We have contact with the partisans through Arroy and we can arrange to get these PW's.

General Von Graffen - Some of our Service Corps troops are in the region of Cortina di Ampezzo and we would like you to bring them down. One bridge in that town is blown.

General Willems - We can send our Engrs to work on this road. Will your Engrs help open the road?

General Von Graffen - We only have a few but they will help.

General Willems - We will open the road and bring down these troops and put them in your Corps area. The Corps Engrs are working on the routes now. We would like to have yours start at once. You know what demolitions you have made.

General Von Graffen - Yesterday there was only one bridge destroyed. Will you give us notice to send the few Engrs we have?

Colonel Hughes - We had better refer that to the Div Engrs.

General Von Graffen - Each Div will have about 10 to 20 men. We have no Corps Engrs.

General Willems - How many Corps troops are located up there?

General Von Graffen - We do not know the number.

General Willems - What would your guess be?

General Von Graffen - We do not know what came back, maybe 1,000.

General Willems - Any horse elements there?

General Von Graffen - I do not believe so.

General Willems to Colonel Hughes - When they get into the other area they will pass to Corps control.

General Von Graffen - As soon as we receive an order from our Army to pass over our arms we will collect them at Mas.

General Willems - That is for the troops in this area but troops over here (indicating on map) are in the 88th Div sector and they will deposit their arms in an area designated by the 88th Div. After you are moved to Bassano you are to pass to the control of II Corps. Is it clearly understood that your Supreme Commander has surrendered unconditionally.

General Von Graffen - Yes, that is understood.

General Willems - We plan on moving the elms of General Von Graffen's corps under unit control, that is by Div, down to this area southeast of Bassano. We plan on Corps Hqs being established somewhere outside Bassano. The Div area is here (pointed out on map) and each Comdr will have control of the troops in his area. We will let you have all your organic equipment for your housekeeping and we will provide our own guards around the Div area.

General Von Graffen - We have these Divs together in 4 Comd Grps so there would only be 4.

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General Willems - I think that we shall have to set up a sorting area and sort them there and put them into a Div area. We will set up 7 Div areas if you think that is necessary. I think it would be well if there is only small elms of a Div to attach them to a larger Div. We would set up a Corps Hqs to control this area. You will have your own hospitals so you will be completely self sustaining. We will provide you gasoline for your motor troops. We have not completely reconnoitered the area yet. You will send a small billeting party, 3 or 4 officers from each Div. Exact areas are not yet picked. Men will be made today but we do not know just how many troops you have.

General Von Graffen - When should we send these billeting parties?

General Willems - We will communicate that information through General Coulter's Hqs.

General Von Graffen - Could it be possible to have movement into the new area on the 6th so that the men could get rid of their arms?

General Willems - Some elms could start tomorrow if you can decide on what Div.

Gen Von Graffen - Will they be motorized or on foot?

General Coulter - I have 50 trucks. May I hold the 30 trucks I have from Corps?

General Willems - They should be held for this movement.

Colonel Hughes - If we stay in this area we can turn over our AT and Cn Co trucks.

General Willems - You will also have your own transportation. Have you enough gas to take all your vehicles to this new area?

General Von Graffen - No.

General Willems - Will you find out how much gas you will need and notify Colonel Hughes? He will arrange to get this gas. We will set up a dump here and will work that out. Tomorrow at noon the first elms will start moving to this new area.

General Von Graffen - The 29th Div could move tomorrow at noon.

General Coulter - What is their approximate strength?

General Von Graffen - We will move them with our own motors. There is about 2,000 men. We have motors to move them.

General Coulter to Colonel Hughes - You will provide some kind of guard for protection.

General Von Graffen - We will need about 8,000 gallons of gas for all out units. The 29th Div is ready with their own transport.

General Willems - Could they start earlier than noon?

General Von Graffen - No.

General Willems - We must expedite these PW's to the rear even at the cost of orderliness as we must clear your Corps from this area. Tomorrow the 29th and Corps troops can start at noon. How many trucks will you need for the Corps troops.

General Von Graffen - They have 100 trucks, we will only need gas. The men have their arms and we cannot collect them in those two villages.

General Willems - You have 4,000 men down here in our area. We can transport them to the new area and they will start moving tomorrow morning at 0800 and noon for the 29th Div. How many vehicles will you have in the 29th Div.

General Von Graffen - About 150 trucks.

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General Willems - How many men with Corps troops?

General Von Graffen - About 100 men and 100 vehicles. (This figure then changed to 29th Div has about 2,000 men and 150 vehicles. There are about 100 men and 25 vehicles at 26th Panzer Div.)

General Willems - Can we get a tentative schedule for movement of the rest? Colonel Hughes, you can get that information later after this clears up some. Will you move your horse cins tomorrow?

General Von Graffen - No. Our field kitchens will have to be put on your motors.

General Willems - Your Corps and Div Comdrs will report tomorrow at 0800 to the building where you were yesterday and bring your billeting party for the 29th Div and a minimum party from the other units.

General Willems to Colonel Hughes - You will bring the 4,000 men down and put them in the new area under guard.

General Willems - Will you send the officers to go with the 4,000 men down so they can go with them. We will first sort out the 29th Div men and send them over to join their Div. I will arrange to pick these officers up at your Hqs at 0700. There is not tentage for all your troops in the new area. The Corps Comdr will not dispossess civilians from their houses.

Colonel Hughes - I want the same arrangement in this area too.

General Willems - You must also provide for sanitary measures.

General Von Graffen - Do we keep bayonets?

General Willems - No offensive weapons will be kept but you may keep one bayonet per squad for opening cans, etc.

General Coulter to Colonel Hughes - I will have a TC and a G-4 officer here with you.

Colonel Hughes - I would like to have one point clear about this assembly area. It is quite large and between 2000 and 0600 there will be a curfew. This will apply to partisans, civilians, and soldiers alike.

General Von Graffen - What about doctors and messengers?

Colonel Hughes - We can establish a system of guides at Mas and any messenger who wants to get out can go to them. Doctors with a red cross are free to travel.

General Von Graffen - Curfew from 2000 to 0600. Doctors with red cross are free and messengers with headlights to Mas and you can guide them on. It may be difficult to get this started tonight but we will do what we can.

General Coulter - I have 20,000 rations on the way up now for your troops to be deposited in your assembly area.

Colonel Hughes - Ration and gas dump will be located in assembly area at Mas. Will check up with you on transportation for distribution to your troops.

General Willems - 1st Para Div is on your right. Are they under General Von Graffen?

General Von Graffen - We have some of them but they belong to the Para Corps.

General Willems - You understand that there are to be no demolitions on rds, vehicles and weapons are not to be destroyed.

General Von Graffen - Yes.

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Colonel Hughes - How long do you expect to stay at your Corps CP?

General Von Graffen - Until day after tomorrow.

Colonel Hughes - I will have a telephone put in so you can get in touch with us at any time.

General Willems - It is necessary for our troops to advance. Can General Von Graffen arrange so that there will be no further combat with your Corps further up the road?

General Von Graffen - The only troops we have no communication with are in this area (pointed out on map).

General Willems - Could we send a Ln airplane to drop them a message?

General Von Graffen - We do not know exactly where they are.

General Willems - We could send one of your officers in a plane and land on the highway and find them.

General Von Graffen - We could send a wireless to our Army and ask them to collect these troops and send them on.

General Willems - Are you willing to reveal where your Army Hqs are?

General Von Graffen - Yesterday they were in Cortina. That is the 10th Army.

General Willems - When is the Army Comdr coming down?

General Von Graffen - He wants to come down tomorrow. We could ask by radio when he will come and tell Colonel Hughes.

General Willems - When he comes in he should be brought in to our Hqs and we will send him to Army Hqs.

Colonel Hughes - Let me know when you expect him to arrive and I will furnish an escort.

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N-O-T-E-S

Comdrs meeting held at 1450

1st Bn will est guard around area into which outfits will move in. These outfits will move in and occupy area by Div. This will take all of 1st Bn troops. PWs will be moved down to an area around Bassano. Group of PW's in cage now will be moved out tomorrow. Hope to be able to assemble 100 trks. 1st Bn to be used as escort guard for each march unit. Guard will consist of sqd of HMGs and trk load of infmen. March unit to consist of 25 vehs. One jeep at head of column and one jeep at rear to control. When PWs reach Bassano they will be turned over to a guard established by Corps. There will be an officer with each march unit. PW cage should be cleaned out tomorrow. Separate horses, carts, vehs this afternoon so that they can move and join Corps, to move out as a part of Corps train to be assembled at Mas. Will be moved out tomorrow or next day whenever they get orders. There will be a certain number of German officers to accompany troops. Offs to segregate prisoners to be picked up at Corps CP at 0700 (2nd Bn to furnish transportation to pick up officers and turn over to 3d Bn). Capt Wheeler to take care of loading of PWs. Should be able to load from 40-55 men to a truck, according to amount of equipment. Off in--charge of area in which Corps is moving is General Hendricks of II Corps. Must contact him 24 hours in advance to let him know what is coming down. The plan is to go to German Corps Headquarters at 0800 and work out a plan for the following day to work out troops, transportation. Movement tomorrow afternoon of 29th FG Div and Corps troops. There will be 250 vehs. 1st Bn to take charge of organization of convoy with guides. Details of IP, route, later. 2nd Bn to Agordo where there is about 2000 German troops in hands of Partisans. One Co to be sent up there tomorrow morning. Pick up troops and bring them down with their arms. Bring Partisans on with them if they want to come along. Send them by truck as far as you can (Co from 2nd Bn) then on foot the rest of the way to pick up PWs. Gasoline dump to be established at Mas. They will use their own vehs to draw gasoline. 2/3 of ration to be issued daily. Rations to be delivered to PW cage. All troops to stay out of Mas, Sedice, and Belluno. (except 1st Bn) Trps are to assemble arms in two places one at Mas and at town below Mas. To be assembled in buildings if possible. Guard to be put over bldg of arms. Each sqd allowed to keep one bayonet per sqd. Curfew in area to be from 2000 to 0600. This is to be for Italians, Partisans and soldiers. Only ambulances, msgrs and doctors allowed to move around area (German). Check vehs to see if they are kraut vehs running around. German outfits are not to be in the towns or bldgs with the Italians. They are not to disposses them. Offs are to retain there arms. Each Div and Corps CP authorized 30 rifles for protection of their CP. Div in or moving into area - 98th - Gen Reinhardt, 29th - Gen Pollack - 278th - Gen Hoppe - 361st - Gen Reinwald, 76th Corps - Gen Von Graffen.

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Meeting Notes IMAG0432