

RESTRICTED

INTERROGATION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL  
JOSEF FOLTMANN

Interrogation of Lieutenant General Josef FOLTMANN  
on 17 February 1947 by Major RAPP  
Stenographers: Trudi WALSHER

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1. Qu. Are you the Lieutenant General Josef FOLTMANN whom I interrogated on 15 February?
- A. Yes, I am.
2. Qu. General FOLTMANN, I have had another look at this list. Where is General DANKELMANN?
- A. General DANKELMANN retired and I, personally, met him once more in January 1945 in Oppeln where he visited his sister. That is the last thing I heard. I do not know whether he was, General of the Air Force DANKELMANN or Lieutenant General. But I think he was a general.
3. Qu. General FOLTMANN, to-day I should like to talk with you about the time when you were in command of the 164th Division in Greece.
- A. Yes.
4. Qu. How many months, approximately, had the 164th Division already been in Greece before it went to Crete?
- A. Under my command, for 6 months. From 1 June until shortly before the end of the year. I think I left by plane towards the end of December.
5. Qu. But it is right that two regiments of this Division were used to occupy the islands?
- A. Yes.
6. Qu. And one regiment remained in Greece?
- A. One regiment remained in Greece.
7. Qu. With the division's staff?
- A. Yes. And in addition to this regiment I was given command of a fourth regiment, a regular one. This regiment had the number 125 and on the day of mobilization it did not form part of a division. It was a border regiment and was stationed in Saarbrücken. It did not belong to any division or other unit and was always attached to a division for certain tasks only if conditions required it. What happened previously, does not concern us. I was then making use of Regiment 125 as an independent combat unit - we had broken through the Metaxas line and I headed for Xanti

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a famous pass there. I found this regiment installed there, when I occupied the Macedonian area.

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8. Qu. This pass was not that of Thermopylae?  
 A. No, no, it was much further south. But I cannot remember the name just now.
9. Qu. What was the number of the regiment?  
 A. 125.
10. Qu. What were the numbers of the two regiments on the islands?  
 A. 382 and 440.
11. Qu. And where were your divisional Headquarters in Greece?  
 A. I first had my divisional Headquarters - I am talking of old-Greece - in Ianti, then in Cavalla and then in Salonika.
12. Qu. To which corps were you attached?  
 A. During the attack I was attached to the 30th Corps under General of the Infantry OTT.
13. Qu. And afterwards?  
 A. After Greece had been conquered the 18th Mountain Corps under General of the Mountain Troops BOSHMÉ took over. There was only a loose connection between Athens and Salonika. The highest authority was the Army Supreme Command XII.
14. Qu. And was the 18th Mountain Corps moved to Serbia before you left Greece?  
 A. No. This is what happened to the 18th Mountain Corps.
15. Qu. Make it short, please.  
 A. Yes, but this is important for the division. In August, at the moment when the Serbian insurrection started, numerous troop movements took place and troop units were moved to Belgrade leaving my area of command. I then lost Regiment 125 which had been stationed in and around Salonika. It was moved as well as the reconnaissance battalion of my division and an artillery battalion. These two left the division altogether, were put on a train and sent off. However, for administrative purposes, furlough etc. they remained under my command.
16. Qu. Whereto was the 125th Regiment moved?

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- A. To some place near Belgrade.
17. Qu. How long did it stay there?

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- A. That I can tell you exactly. It must have been in September that the regiment was moved. It returned in December and was the fourth Regiment put under my command and for the first time added to my war-establishment. Herewith the independent existence of this regiment came to an end and it was the first regiment of the division to be moved to Crete.
18. Qu. Who was in command of the regiment?
- A. A colonel PETERSEN was in command of the regiment. Then a change took place, he was moved and when the regiment was moved to Crete a first lieutenant ... - PETERSEN had then joined the Luftwaffe - was in command of it.
19. Qu. Matthias PETERSEN?
- A. No. Oh, you want to know if his first name was Matthias. I do not know. But I do not know that he was in command of Regiment 125 in Saarbrücken at the outbreak of the war.
20. Qu. What rank did he hold at the end of the war?
- A. General of the Air Forces (General der Flieger). He was transferred to the Luftwaffe. He was wounded several times and, like all the gentlemen who joined the Luftwaffe, he was very quickly promoted.
21. Qu. Did you ever see him as a prisoner of war?
- A. <sup>But</sup> No, I saw him once more during the war. You asked for the name of the commander of Regiment 125. That was PETERSEN and then the regiment was moved to Crete; the commander was ALLMERS.
22. Qu. The next question is: While the regiment was in Serbia was it still under your command or under that of General BOENKE?
- A. No, it was no longer under my command. But I do not know the name of the commander in Serbia.
23. Qu. Was it attached to a division?
- A. No, they were all collected into groups which, probably, the commander had under his own command.
24. Qu. And when was the campaign in Greece finished?
- A. Oh, as soon as it had started. After three or four days. We attacked on 6 April and about 4 or 5 days later Salonika surrendered.

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because of a blow of the armored troops aimed at Salonika. Herewith the whole of Thrace was cut off and the army opposite us capitulated. This meant practically the end of the war in

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Tracia for us. We had taken the only fortress situated in the section which we had attacked. It surrendered together with others. Then we went on towards Xanti.

25. Qu. Who was BOENNE's predecessor in the 18th Mountain Corps?
- A. General of Mountain Troops BEYER (?) who fell seriously ill during the Western Campaign, went home and died in Salzburg. In the meantime - when he fell ill - General Ritter von SPECK was in command of the Mountain Corps.
26. Qu. General FELMY was never in command of this corps?
- A. No. I met General FELMY only later. When I was transferred to Crete he was commander of southern Greece, at least I think that this was the title.
27. Qu. Were you fighting under General ANDRSE (?) in Greece?
- A. Yes, he was my commander in Crete.
28. Qu. Well, during the time you were in Greece how did the population of the islands occupied by your regiments behave as compared to the population on the main land?
- A. The population on the islands never caused the division any difficulties. First of all higher headquarters had ordered us to keep up friendly relations with the population in all parts of Greece and, the division was also especially interested in the maintenance of peace and order. The commanders did whatever they could and we never had any difficulties on the islands.
29. Qu. And how about the behavior of the population on the main land?
- A. Until I left we never had any considerable trouble with the population in any part of Greece. In Tracia as well as in Macedonia we worked in perfect unison with the Greeks, our authorities with theirs, and police with constabulary, and we had achieved - if I may say so - harmonious relations. I may add that we came to Greece open-minded. Germans are somewhat romantic. Many of us had read about Greece. I, for instance, the commander of a division, had attended a humanistic school, where Latin and Greek was taught. It was a great experience for us to see Greece. We were shocked to see in what poor circumstances

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- not only in a few villages or Salonika and its slums, which were awful, - people were living there. But we were able to help a great deal. Of course, my superior authorities and Fieldmarshal General LIST, who was our commander-in-chief, were under the same impression and

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had always approached the population with an open mind and had given orders to help the population in their very difficult situation. And in quite a number of cases this help actually materialised.

ad 1) After the end of hostilities - you will perhaps know about that - an order was issued that all Greek prisoners of war <sup>were</sup> to be released at once. This resulted in a real flow of pilgrims on the roads. Officers only had to be retained for the time being. We took care of the returning soldiers. As there were no trains they all hitch-hiked hundreds of kilometers so that we had every opportunity to help. I myself cared for the officers so that they got decent billets at least and were finally dismissed. This as the first example.

ad 2) There was also the general poverty of the country; the land had not been cultivated because of the war and consequently, the harvest was rather poor. Because of that Fieldmarshal General LIST had issued orders that the population should be generously treated and supported by field-kitchens a.s.o.

ad 3) At the last hearing I said already that when I moved into Thracia the Bulgarians followed my tracks and occupied the country. This meant a catastrophe for the Greek population of Thracia. I should like to describe the situation as follows: Thracia had been turned over to the Bulgarians for administration not for occupation. Just as Silesia has now been turned over to the Poles for administration but not for occupation. Nowadays, Polish administration means evacuation for all Germans who were and are still being deported from Poland; the same applied then to Thracia and the refugee-trains which moved in over the frontier river, were a shocking sight. This gave us an opportunity to help. I had one battalion stationed at the road forming the frontier north of Salonika where the commander got the order to establish a kind of refugee-camp to receive these people and to create some order.

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These were the three cases in which - as I should like to say - we could help the population, and where complete harmony was effected. The Greek authorities, too, tried to help, if a country is occupied, the occupying power must participate in the activities there. In villages and towns the officials visited each other. By the way I had no part in it as I held no leading position. They saw each other, they discussed the situation and what they could do by combined efforts, and until the end, until we were transferred to Crete, the attitude of the

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troops towards the population remained like this and, therefore, on the whole we had no difficulties with the population. They even took notice of the commanders' birthdays. I remember the birthday of the commander of a regiment. When I came to see him I found quite a number of people there who had called on him wishing, to shake his hand and thank him for the good care he had taken of them.

I assume that your next question will probably be concerned with certain signs of rebellion.

30. Q. Were there no partisans in your district?

A. No partisans. Things were like this: When we moved in in June and until the beginning of September, the regiment was then returning from the Aegean Islands, everything was perfectly quiet and perfectly peaceful. Gradually word got round that things had become less quiet. And mind you these were no regular partisans, what one generally calls partisans, but ordinary bandits as one finds on the Balkans, bands of robbers who made life unsafe there.

31. Q. Why do you call them bands?

A. They were no military organizations. And above all I call them bandits because they were not only a nuisance but a scourge to friend and enemy. At first we had to suffer least of all from them; it was the Greek population who suffered most. In spite of their common racial background they attacked and robbed the people and requisitioned all their provisions. They were a decided scourge.

32. Q. What did you do against the bandits?

A. We undertook the following against the bandits:  
May I add the following ...

33. Q. Not so many tactical details, please, make it short.

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A. No, I was just remembering another incident. Greek government authorities informed us of the fact that they had suffered from this nuisance before the war already and that during the first time it was nipped in the bud by the occupation forces, but, all at once, it appeared again. Now we did as follows. We marched our troop long distances.

34. Q. All right, but no tactical details, please. Did you take hostages, in connection with these bandits?

A. No.

34. Q. Why not?

A. It was not necessary, for, according to my opinion, the population could not be blamed for the activity of these bandits. No hostages were taken.

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15. Qu. What were your orders from XII. Army Headquarters?

A. At first, there were no orders at all.

16. Qu. And later on?

A. We got other orders later on.

17. Qu. What did they concern?

A. They concerned - please allow me to give some explanations, as the reasons may possibly be important. At first we made military hikes through the neighbourhood against these bands, in order to make the troops turn up frequently which, ought to have had a soothing influence. But this did not really work and, all at once, the bandits did not only trouble the Greek population and police stations, but directed their activities against the troops too, and we suffered casualties. Motor cars were shot at, and we could not move freely any longer. Convey traffic had to be introduced on certain sections of the roads. These incidents did not diminish, but occurred more and more frequently and then we had orders from high quarters to take measures against the bandits, according to a strictly worked out plan.

18. Qu. All right. Without regard to all the tactical and strategic measures, in which I have but little interest, how did you treat these so-called captured "bandits", when they were found carrying arms?

A. They were shot. Most of them were killed in action. We suffered casualties too in these struggles, and on the whole, the bandits' actions deteriorated in such a way that, if we came to a place, where bandits were reported, they were no longer there.

19. Qu. And if you took prisoners, were they shot?

A. No, they were killed in action. He who was found carrying arms

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was immediately shot in the course of the fight.

20. Qu. How can you call it a fight, if somebody is suddenly found carrying arms, and shot?

A. If you would only know the country! The fights took place at a very close range, within the distance of two or three feet.

21. Qu. That is all very well. But, occasionally, you must have taken prisoners?

A. We neither caught these bandits, nor did we ever succeed in doing so. They simply disappeared. Then the XII. Army Headquarters decided on taking special measures against the bandits.

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42. Qu. You said, you never took partisan prisoners?
- A. Anyhow, I do not remember. I may perhaps be mistaken, perhaps we did take some prisoners.
43. Qu. Why then did you not shoot the prisoners you had taken? For, according to international law one may .....
- A. So, these bandits - I now remember more distinctly -, the trouble was that we could neither attack, nor even find them. The police stations and our patrols always reported quite exactly, a group of partisans is in motion from A to X. At once a few lorries with soldiers were sent there. Away! Disappeared!
44. Qu. It is interesting to hear a statement like this from a German officer, that somebody, who defends himself with arms against intruders, is a bandit, but, on the other hand, every German doing the same is a champion of liberty. Is there, for instance, any difference between Leo SCHLAGETER and any Greek fighting for the freedom of his country?
- A. I certainly think so. There is a considerable difference. After all, we tried to help the Greek.
45. Qu. You mean to say, you came there as liberators?
- A. No, we did not come as liberators.
46. Qu. In other words: The German Wehrmacht did not want anything from the Greeks.
- A. Certainly not.
47. Qu. And what about the inflation which resulted from NEH- TACHER's measures?
- A. I dare say, these economic consequences appeared a long time afterwards. I was not there any more at that time.

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48. Qu. In other words: You would not accord those people the right to call themselves "fighters for liberty"?
- A. Those people? No. I would not do that because they could not prove that they were members of a national resistance-movement as for instance those in France.
49. Qu. You do not recognize that the Greek population rose against a government of traitors, who made so-called Quisling-bargains, with the Germans?
- A. That did not matter at that time. This had not yet happened, then.

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50. Qu. That means, the Greeks at first greeted the Germans as their liberators?
- A. One cannot put it this way, I must object to this. We personally had nothing against the Greeks.
51. Qu. It is of no importance whether you personally had anything against the Greeks or not. But you were an officer of an army that invaded Greece and occupied the country. You were sworn in to HITLER. In other words: it does not matter, whether or not you liked the Greeks.
- A. It would be saying too much that nobody wanted anything from the Greeks.
52. Qu. Why did you go there?
- A. As far as I was informed afterwards, we went there, because otherwise the Italians would have been thrown out of Albania. Therefore, I assume, the attack against Greece had to be made. After all the Italians were still our allies, then.
53. Qu. Supposing that it would actually be like that, you could sit there and hold such a position, and believe that the German Wehrmacht was welcome to the Greeks.
- A. I have never said so. I must definitely reject this.
54. Qu. If you did not say so, you must notice, though, what an impression you have given us. In other words, if you tell me little stories of birthday-celebrations, etc., and that the Greek government had asked you to liberate them from the partisans, one can only assume that you were under the impression that Greece was some sort of an ally.
- A. I must point out that I did not say so of my own accord, but you clearly asked me, on which terms the troops and the population lived with each other, and thereupon I said what I did.

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55. Qu. And from your own point of view, you describe the matter in such a way, that one gets the impression that the population lived peacefully together with the troops, until the partisans came. But I am of the opinion that it cannot be presented as a historical fact, because you, then, perhaps looked at it in such a way.
- A. If I had been requested by the division, which often kept historical records, to state the facts, I would have expressed myself similarly. May I formulate it as follows:

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Considering the conditions at that time, within the limits of human power the best, was done to keep on good terms with the population, and, this was also the desire of the soldiers themselves, for they preferred living in peace, to war. And secondly, I should like to stress the fact that LIST, the Chief Commander of the Army, had expressed his wish to "spare the poor country", as the people could not be blamed for it. They fought against us in a splendid manner. The Greeks fought splendidly in this campaign.

96. Q. How many days did it last?

A. In my section about 6 to 10 days, perhaps a little longer in other sections.

97. Q. It was something like a "cat and mouse" game, was it not?

A. It did not last long, but the Greeks fought gallantly.

98. Q. Give us a description of Field-Marshal LIST, as far as you can.

A. I have known Field-Marshal LIST for a long time. When I was in charge of the Department of Army training schools of the infantry, cavalry, and artillery, LIST was a Colonel and Commander of the infantry training school at Dresden, we, therefore, had a lot to do with each other. LIST was, as regards his whole style, distinguished and a person to be respected. I had the opportunity to watch his activity for three years. Afterwards, when I became commander of a regiment at Bautzen, I happened to join the Corps commanded by him. He was my commanding general from 1935 until shortly after the invasion of Austria - about 1938 -, in which we did not take part.

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A very strict superior, who paid close attention to everything, a man of extraordinary military knowledge, his subordinates could derive extraordinary profit from his criticisms and speeches. His attitude was beyond reproach and he was a personality in whom, by chance, several good qualities were combined: distinction, decency and those which make a good soldier. A combination like this was rare. He exercised decisive influence on the education of his officers Corps. He was an ideal in every respect. And then I happened to meet General LIST once more by mere chance.

99. Q. If asked your opinion of General LIST would you, eventually, call him an ideal man?

A. Yes, I would do so.

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60. Qa. Would you imagine General LISSAK to be a man who would sign inhuman, or illegal orders?
- A. No. Every order issued by him was thought over very carefully, as to its pro's and con's.
61. Qa. But that does not mean, that he would not issue such an order, after careful consideration? I asked you, whether you are of the opinion that General LISSAK issued any inhuman or illegal orders?
- A. Anything illegal is quite out of the question. - But every soldier is obliged to order something inhuman now and then.
62. Qa. Even if it is ethically and morally contrary to his own conviction?
- A. No, LISSAK would rather have resigned than do something for which he was not prepared to shoulder responsibility.
63. Qa. And you are of the opinion that General LISSAK did not issue any orders in Greece to hang or shoot hostages, etc.?
- A. I should like to say that; I personally do not know of any orders concerning hanging or shooting of hostages.
64. Qa. Would you attribute that to LISSAK?
- A. If somebody told me, LISSAK had shot 100 hostages, I should not have thought him capable of it.
65. Qa. I ask you precisely: I presume, you call Field-Marshal LISSAK a good Christian, would you say that you do not think him capable of doing anything ethically or morally wrong?

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- A. No, I would not think him capable of that.
66. Qa. Well, supposing General LISSAK would be proved to be different from what you imagined him to be, this would, of course, not alter your opinion of him, you would not believe it?
- A. I would not say that. Sometimes you learn how to look at a man from a new angle.
67. Qa. Well, then I will show you an order of General LISSAK. It is an order given in Serbia. If a man is a good Christian, as you said LISSAK was, he would not issue such an order.

(Extracts of the order are read)

- A. I find it hard to believe that Field-Marshal LISSAK did this. And if it was really like that I should ask myself what his reason might have been for making him take such measures. It must have been a very serious and important reason.

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68. Qa. Without regard to the reasons for it, the fact remains that such an order was given, and that a man gave this order who according to your description was incapable of doing anything unethical, immoral, or illegal.  
A. This has been my opinion until now, and I shall have to sustain it, until I am convinced of the contrary.

69. Qa. If General LIST really was the good Santa Claus, described by you .....  
A. He never was. He often was quite cross. Sometimes he get quite furious.

70. Qa. I could now give you certain proof of all this shooting of hostages, executions, burning down of houses, etc. But, you see, all this proves only that everything has two different aspects, and that any information one can give must be very subjective and not sufficient to present a complete picture, and that, sometimes there might be quite a different aspect of it.  
A. Yes, therefore, I have the feeling, that it must have been something quite out of the ordinary that induced him to act as he did.

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSLATION

13 March 1947.

I, Vera SOLANDER, Civ.No. S-30 765, hereby certify that I am thoroughly conversant with the English and German languages and that the above is a true and correct translation of the original document.

Vera SOLANDER  
Civ.No. S-30 765