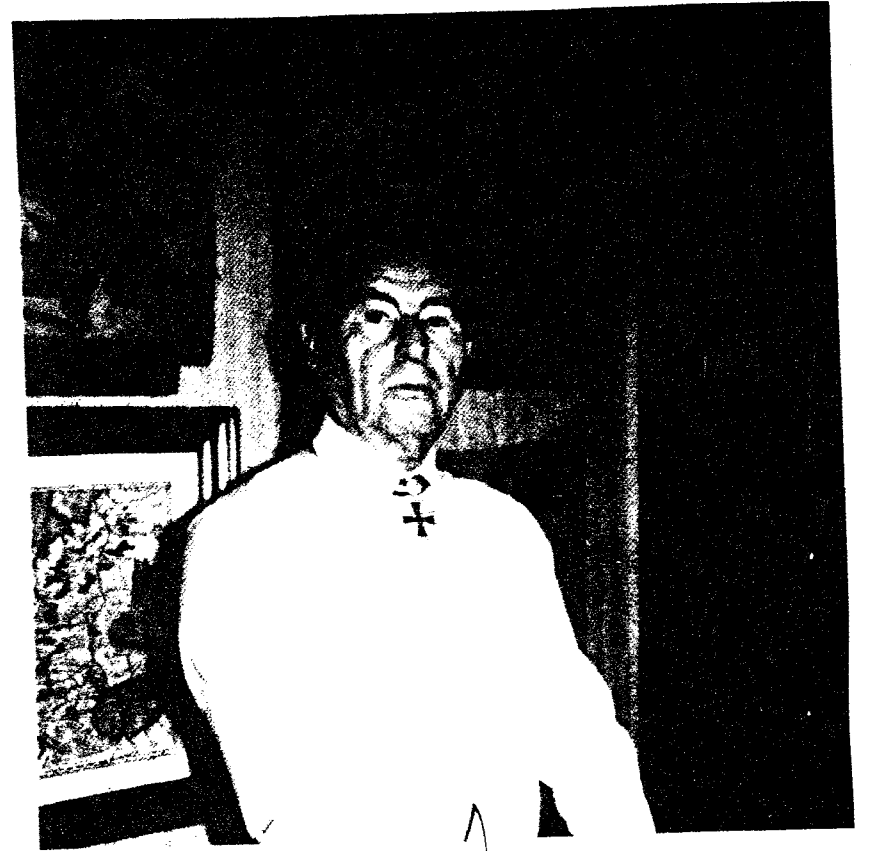


# Siegrunen



A mon grand ami Richard Landwehr,  
en souvenir de sa sympathie

*[Handwritten signature]*

11873

## THE UNKNOWN STORMTROOPER



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This issue is decated with deep respect to Leon Degrelle,  
the greatest living political and military leader  
of the 20th century.

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Cover picture: SS-Standartenfuehrer Leon Degrelle  
as he appears today.

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It is certainly difficult to alter perceptions that have been deeply engrained through decades of clever media manipulation. For instance the foreign volunteers of the Waffen-SS are still seen as some sort of malign traitors, while their counterparts who may have provided service to the "Allies" continue to be regarded as patriots of a high order. This is the simplistic view that is still propagated by the "establishment" tools whenever possible. However a little keener analysis is needed and it is something we have tried to provide with regularity in the pages of *Siegrunen*.

The concoction of the word "Allies" in the first place was a little propaganda coup by the press-masters. It provides a nice positive image of a somewhat sordid reality. Who really was a part of the "Allied" camp? It was somewhat of a mythical concept drawing its strength from the combined influences of the United States and Britain along with their imperialist conquests and colonies. Other European nations were included in the term, although their primary contributions to the "Allied" side were motley collections of international terrorists and criminals and some puppet forces culled from the merchant marine and assorted overseas communities. The Soviets and Titoists never quite qualified in the press definition of "Allies," although they received the lion's share of free assistance from the two main partners in this alliance.

Just how legitimate were the "continental" European "Allied" elements? Not very if the truth be known. In the first place their countries of origin had all signed peace accords with Germany, thus rendering them non-combatant. Unfortunately many of the cowardly government officials from these countries had fled abroad with as much of their national treasuries as they could get their hands on, thus forcing the Germans to impose some sort of governing authority on some of the surrendered countries. In all instances, local officials were utilized wherever possible in the infrastructure of the rebuilt civil administrations.

In every case the proper and legal governing administrations of each European country gave their sanction or approval to the recruiting and service of volunteers from their nations in

the Waffen-SS! And this includes countries like Denmark and Vichy France where "democratic" governments remained intact throughout much of the war. The dregs and odds-and-ends recruited as part of the "Allied" forces had no legal sanction whatsoever and in fact usually violated a wide range of international laws and agreements when they were employed in "action."

The "Allies" in effect created true international terrorism, by aiding and abetting assorted Marxist and other leftist elements, along with organized criminal elements (Remember the "Mafia" fought on the "Allied" side as well!), and other disgruntled types and helping them conduct an immoral war of sabotage and murder. The so-called "resistance" forces were artificial and totally illegal entities that operated sans any scruples or morals. While misguided idealism was certainly a large part of the motivation for some "resistance" members, it was the old-time, corrupt politicians and outright criminals who cynically ran the show and reaped the benefits. When Europe was "liberated" by the "Allies" the terrorist murderers and criminals swiftly seized power in each country, without the benefit of the "democratic processes" that they were supposedly fighting for. Afterwards, once they had full control, the terrorists were able to manipulate a "democratic"-type system to keep them and the old plutocrat-Bolshevik coalition firmly in power.

So what happened to the legally recruited Waffen-SS veterans when the "underworld" swept to the top in their homelands? Why all of the laws and decrees that had earlier authorized their services were swept away in a frenzy of ex post facto "justice"! As a result it became possible to declare the Waffen-SS vets "traitors," and simply removed them from the realm of human society. Thus they could be thrown into the most vile sort of concentration camps imaginable, forced into slave labor, stripped of all civil rights, murdered, imprisoned or deported. This despite the fact that they had comported themselves with magnificent courage and steadfastness in a struggle against the true enemies of civilization. By virtue of ending up on the losing side they were made to pay a price that we can barely conceive of today. The malicious brutality of the "democrats" who were placed in control of the European states was almost unprecedented.

What was the legacy of these "Allies"? Well it is certainly

quite clear. The very veneer of civilization is vanishing rapidly in all of their countries as near total decadence, crime, drugs and illegal immigration have become all pervasive. To top it off we are still plagued by the offspring of the old international terrorism that the "Allies" first bestowed en masse upon the world. Of course the descendants of the "Allies" are now quite disturbed by "terrorism," displaying the hypocrisy of their own thought processes. Such actions can only be condoned when they serve one's *own* purposes!

It can be stated unequivocally that the international soldiery of the Waffen-SS never contributed to the immorality of terrorism. Quite the contrary. Throughout their brief tenure of service they clearly held the high ground!

\* \* \*

#### WARNING!

All readers of this publication and Waffen-SS veterans in particular should *beware* of the following individual:

Mark C. Yerger  
846 Pleasure Road  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17601

After using his guise of a self-styled "historian" to obtain the confidence of many people, (myself and many veterans included), this person began providing aid and assistance to the government "Nazi Hunters" in the OSI and FBI. He totally betrayed my trust and I absolutely repudiate him and his tactics.

RL

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

## CONSTRAST IN PERSPECTIVE!

The following report along with a photo of SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Theodor Eicke appeared in the "Bulletin" of the veterans of the SS "Totenkopf" Division. We think it deserves reprinting here:

TOTENKOPF MELDER  
February 1978  
HE WAS OURS!

Thirty-five years ago on 26 February 1943, the first commander of our division, SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Theodor Eicke, died a hero's death. His spirit, stature and his personality lived on in the deeds and chronicles of his old "Deathsheaders," and in the regiment that bore his name for all those in the division; (a division) which he had built up from the most modest beginnings.

His name is synonomous with the deeds of the division and is linked to the name of the Demyansk Fortress.

Now read the comments of self-styled "historian" Mark C. Yerger concerning Obruf. Eicke and indeed all of the surviving soldiers of the SS-"T" Division who still hold him in very high esteem:

February 1989: "If you mentality finds Eicke a positive individual you are *not sane* in the historical sense."

No further comment is necessary!

## SS-STURMBANN "N" (NUREMBERG) 1936-1939

SS-Sturmbann "N" was a unique formation of the pre-war armed SS due to the fact that it was possibly the only SS unit formed strictly with ceremonial duties in mind. Of course it would also be fully equipped and trained for combat but that was secondary to its primary mission which was to provide dress contingents for N.S. Party functions in and around Nuremberg, particularly for the massive annual Party Day rallies.

The core personnel for SS-Sturmbann "N" were assembled at the Prittlbach Training Camp in August/September 1936 following the relocation of II./SS-Standarte "Deutschland" from Prittlbach to the regimental barracks at Munich-Freimann. The officers and NCOs for the new detachment came principally from the "Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler" and the SS-Standarte "Deutschland." On 1 October 1936, SS-Sturmbann "N" was officially established. The unit was to be organized as a horse-drawn infantry battalion consisting of the following initial components:

## Staff

Signals Platoon

1. Company (Rifle)

2. Company (Rifle)

3. Company (Rifle)

4. Company (Machine-gun)

Battalion Transport Company

The letter "N" designation for the Sturmbann stood for the city of Nuremberg where the unit was to serve as city's special SS guard detachment. New barracks were constructed for the battalion in Nuremberg, but until their completion the Sturmbann was assigned to the Prittlbach Training Camp. As things turned out, SS-Sturmbann "N" never actually moved into its new barracks.

SS-"N" was an independent battalion, directly subordinated to the SS-Verfuegungstruppe Inspectorate in Berlin. Day-to-day duties and formation activities were supervised through the SS Command District VII Munich and by SS-Standartenfuehrer Felix Steiner's "Deutschland" SS Regiment. The commander of SS-"N" was SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Ernst Deutsch, later



Extremely rare photo of the SS-“N” collarpatch actually being worn. The photo shows three SS men at a convalescent facility engaged in polishing and maintaining some of their accouterments. The man in the middle wears the “N” collarpatch. On the left is a soldier from the 10th Hundertschaft of 1.SS-Totenkopf Stardarte “Oberbayern” (or “Obby” as it was referred to by its members!).

Photo courtesy D.S.

to serve as a regimental commander in the 7th SS Mountain Division “Prinz Eugene.” As of 1 October 1936, the nucleus of the battalion was intact but only 2nd and 4th Companies had enough recruits to attain full strength. By the end of the year, the battalion as a whole was still about 40% short of reaching its manpower objectives.

The troops of SS-“N” spent most of 1937 engaged in military exercises and weapons training, although honor guards were sent to the Party Day festivities and to greet visiting dignitaries to Nuremberg. During the course of the year, the Sturmabteilung was fully outfitted with modern weaponry and equipment along with horses and motorized vehicles. On 12 March 1938, the soldiers of SS-“N” were distributed between the different units of the SS-Standarte “Deutschland” to help bring that regiment up to battle strength for the march into Austria. After returning from Austria, the “commandeered” troops were returned to SS-Sturmabteilung “N.” Also, in April 1938, the battalion was reinforced by some new volunteers from Austria.

On 2 October 1938, SS-“N” was mobilized for the advance into the Czech-occupied Sudetenland. At this time the battalion was subordinated to an Army artillery detachment under

the orders of VII Army Corps. SS-“N” was given the task of occupying the Neuern/Nyrsko area and securing the demarcation line. On 1 November 1938, SS-Sturmabteilung “N” was redesignated a Kradschuetzen (motorcycle) Battalion and was removed from the supervisory jurisdiction of SS-Standarte “Deutschland.” It was then placed at the disposal of the new SS “Special Use” Regiment being formed under the direction of SS-Standartenfuehrer Walter Krueger.

SS-Sturmabteilung “N”’s first three rifle companies were now supposed to be transformed into motorcycle companies, with the 4th Machine-Gun Company being upgraded into a broader “Heavy Weapons” company. Reconnaissance, mortar and anti-tank platoons were also supposed to have been added to the battalion’s table of organization. But how much of this actually transpired is open to question. Before much of the planned transformation had gotten underway, SS-“N” was utilized for the crossing into Bohemia-Moravia in March 1939, and at that time it was still under its old infantry battalion designation.

With the clouds of war clearly gathering on the horizon it was apparent that the future for purely “ceremonial” units



Members of SS-Sturmabteilung “N” in parade dress to greet the leader of Hungary, Admiral Horthy, in Nuremberg, circa 1938.



2nd Company/SS-“N” in field training uniforms. This platoon is being led by SS-Untersturmfuehrer Christian Tychsen on the left. He later became the commander of SS Panzer Regiment 2 of the “Das Reich” Division.

would be somewhat dim, so on 10 July 1939 SS-Sturmbann “N” was disbanded and its troops were used to form the II. Abteilung of the SS-VT Anti-tank Formation (not quite a regiment, but more than a battalion). This later became the nucleus of SS-Panzerjaeger Abteilung of the SS-“V” Division and the SS-Panzerjaeger Abteilung 2 of the “Das Reich” Division. The traditions and battalion colors from SS-Sturmbann “N” were carried over into these units.

Unit Insignia: The soldiers of SS-Sturmbann “N” were issued a unique collarpatch bearing the SS runes along with the gothic letter “N.” A plain black cuffband, outlined in silver thread was also issued to the battalion.

## THE STRANGE CASE OF UNTERSTURMFUEHRER F.R.

Untersturmfuehrer F.R. joined the Waffen-SS in April 1940. Born in the Austrian Steiermark, he had an extensive record as an activist in the pre-war NSDAP movement in Austria. He had organized Party units in Austria during the time in which it was illegal to do so. He founded the local NSDAP branch in Wettmannstetten and set-up the first SA-Trupp (platoon) and SA-Sturm (company) in the town, serving as the leader of both up until the annexation of Austria to the Reich. Following this he became the town Party leader and Mayor, positions which he held until enlisting in the Waffen-SS in 1940.

F.R. had had an exemplary career and he continued it during his service in the Waffen-SS. At the beginning of the Russian Campaign he was on duty with the SS “Wiking” Division and participated in all of its early combat missions with distinction. Within the year he had been awarded the Iron Cross, 2nd Class, the War Service Medal 2nd Class with Swords, the East Front Medal and the Wound Badge in Black. In August 1942 he was transferred to the newly forming 7th SS Mountain Division “Prinz Eugen” in the Balkans.

On 9 November 1943, the unthinkable happened. A radio message from the Waffen-SS Main Office to the “Prinz Eugen” headquarters staff ordered Ustuf. F.R. recalled from duty and expelled from the Waffen-SS despite his superior service record! It seems that procedural genealogical research into F.R.’s family antecedents had turned up the fact (quite unknown to F.R.!) that he had a Jewish grandfather. This made a 2nd Grade “Mischling” (i.e. two generations removed from the source of the alien presence in his bloodline). While 2nd Grade Mischlings had been permitted to serve in the German Army they were certainly not allowed in the Waffen-SS officers’ corps. German Waffen-SS officers were supposed to be “elite” in all aspects of their being and that included their genetic bloodlines, which had to be purely Aryan/Germanic for a traceable period of time dating back to at least the mid-18th century. The reasons for this, I think, were quite valid, as German SS officers were intended to be the truest manifestations of the German people in every sense.

At any rate, that was of no solace to the now unemployed former Ustuf. F.R. who was certainly upset by the chain of events. He chose to present his case to the acting Gauleiter of his native Steiermark region, SS-Oberfuehrer Dr. Tobias Protschy, who appears to have been acquainted with him, probably due to their pre-war NSDAP activities in Austria. On 5 February 1944, Oberfhr. Dr. Protschy sent a personal telegram to Reichsfuehrer-SS Himmler urging that F.R. be reinstated in the Waffen-SS on the basis of his record and due to the fact that 2nd Grade Mischlings were permitted to serve in the Wehrmacht.

Himmler replied through his staff officer, SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Brandt on 14 February 1944. It was noted that there was no alternative to the expulsion of SS-Ustuf. F.R. from the Waffen-SS, but the Reichsfuehrer, "without hesitation," determined that F.R. could and should be allowed to serve in the "Prinz Eugen" Division with his old rank of Untersturmfuehrer. The only proviso was that F.R. would now serve as a Waffen-Untersturmfuehrer der SS, and use only that rank designation. This indicated that he was (1) of non-Germanic ancestry and (2) not to be considered a full-fledged member of the Waffen-SS. But other than that he enjoyed all of the same privileges accorded German SS men. So the ending of the "Strange Case of Ustuf. F.R." was more-or-less a happy compromise. It had been verified from other family members that Ustuf. F.R. was not aware of the origins of his grandfather. What happened in the months and years to follow is not known; but the fate of the "Prinz Eugen" Division in which Waffen-Ustuf. F.R. continued to serve was anything but a happy one with a majority of its members being slaughtered in post-war captivity by Tito's Red bandits with the full support and knowledge of the other "Allied" powers!

**COMMAND ROSTER  
OF THE 14. WAFFEN-GRENADIER DIVISION DER SS  
("GALIZIEN"/UKRAINE NR. 1)**

At the time of the original publication of the book *Fighting for Freedom: The Ukrainian Volunteer Division of the Waffen-SS* there was simply not enough information readily available to compile a decent command roster for the Division. This has now been rectified largely due to the publication in recent years of *Dienstaltersliste* of the Waffen-SS (i.e. officer duty rosters). So this is an effort to list the unit commanders (where known) who served with the 14th SS Division.

**German Unit Commanders  
Divisional Commanders**

SS-Gruppenfuehrer Walter Schimana (photo) (born 12 March 1898/died 1948), SS-Nr. 337,753/Party Nr. 49,042. In command: July-August 1943. SS-Brigadefuehrer Fritz Freitag (born 28 April 1894/died May 1944), SS-Nr. 393,266/Party Nr. 3,052,501. Holder of the Knight's Cross, both grades of the Iron Cross, the German Cross in Gold and the Wound Badge in Silver and Gold. In command: August 1943-April 1945.

**Staff Officers**

1st General Staff Office (1a) Wolf-Dietrich Heike. Position held from July 1943 to May 1945.

SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Heinz Berendt (born 20 July 1904). SS Nr. 243,666. No other information known.

SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Johann Burkhart (born 18 August 1901). SS-Nr. 1704. MIA in the battle of Brody, July-August 1944.

SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Otto Sulzbach (born 18 May 1909), SS-Nr. 1,364/Party Nr. 61,317. Division Maintenance Officer (Support services and repairs).

SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Dr. Max Spech (born 8 November 1898), SS-Nr. 118,403/Party Nr. 2,725,210. Chief Divisional Medical Officer/Divisional Surgeon.



SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Dr. Gerhard Stridde (born 26 December 1893), SS-Nr. 187,591/Party Nr. 4,206,368. Medical officer.

SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Dr. Helmut Schmitt (born 19 May 1910), SS-Nr. 28,967/Party Nr. 661,338. Medical officer, holder of the Iron Cross, 2nd Class. Formerly Medical officer with an SS Combat Engineer School.

#### Commander SS Training and Replacement Regiment 14

SS-Obersturmfuehrer Carl Marks (also spelled Marx in some sources), (born 17 September 1903), SS-Nr. 257,785/Party Nr. 3,601,899. Holder of the Iron Cross, 1st Class, awarded in the field. Formerly the first commander of the 24th Waffen-Gebirgs (Karstjaeger) Division der SS.

SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Johannes Georgi (born 17 August 1912), SS-Nr. 236,323/Not a Party member. Transferred to command SS Training and Replacement Bn. 35.

#### Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 29

Commanders: SS-Standartenfuehrer Friedrich Dern (born 5 March 1896), SS-Nr. 38,707/Party Nr. 1,202,729. Holder of both classes of the Iron Cross. Later permanent commander WGRdSS 30.

SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Hans Forstreuter (born 11 September 1911), SS-Nr. 422, 180/Party Nr. 3,777,324. Holder of the German Cross in Gold and the Iron Cross, 1st Class. Regimental commander after the battle of Brody.

I./WGRdSS 29 Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Bryguider. SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Heinz Kurzback (see I.WGR 31).

II./WGRdSS 29 Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Wilhelm Allerkamp (born 21 September 1913), SS-Nr. 367,155/Party Nr. not known. Missing-in-action after the battle of Brody, August 1944.

III./WGRdSS 29 Commander: SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Karl Wildner (transferred into the Division from the Slovak Army).

#### WAFFEN-GRENADIER-REGIMENT DER SS 30

Commander: SS-Standartenfuehrer Friedrich Dern (see above). In command of the reformed WGRdSS 30 after the battle of Brody. Battalion commanders are not known.



SS-Gruppenfuehrer Walter Schimana, first commander of the 14th SS Division.

#### WAFFEN-GRENADIER-REGIMENT DER SS 31

Commanders: SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Paul Herms (born 29 September 1903), SS-Nr. 129,135/Party Nr. 5,274,317. Holder of the Iron Cross, 1st Class. Killed in action in the battle of Brody. SS-Standartenfuehrer Rudolf Pannier (born 10 July 1897), SS-Nr. 465,891/Not a Party member. Former officer in the SS-Polizei Division and commander of the SS-Sturmjaeger Regiment "Bobruisk." Holder of both classes of the Iron Cross and the Knight's Cross. Took charge of WGRdSS 31 after the battle of Brody and led it until the end of the war.

I./WGRdSS 31 Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Heinz Kurzback (born 2 April 1916), SS-Nr. 422,150/Party Nr. unknown. Former commander of I./WGRdSS 29.

II./WGRdSS 31 Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Friedrich Wittenmayer (born 19 April 1914). SS-Nr. 422,184/Party Nr. unknown.

**WAFFEN-ARTILLERIE-REGIMENT DER SS 14**

Commander: SS-Standartenfuehrer Friedrich Beyersdorff (born 9 August 1892), SS-Nr. 405,820/Party Nr. 1,738,054. Holder of both classes of the Iron Cross and the WWI Clasp to the Iron Cross, 1st Class.

I./Waf.Art.Rgt.d.SS 14 Commander: Unknown.

II./Waf.Art.Rgt.d.SS 14 Commander: SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Alfred Schuetzenhofer (born 16 July 1898), SS-Nr. 58,056/Party Nr. 1,451,051. Holder of Iron Cross, 1st Class and WWI Clasp to the Iron Cross, 1st Class. MIA at the battle of Brody, summer 1944.

III./Waf.Art.Rgt.d.SS 14 Commanders: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Hans Wagner (born 5 August 1916), SS-Nr. 422,126/Party Nr. unknown. Killed-in-action on 9 July 1944. SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Guenter Sparsam (born 27 May 1916), SS-Nr. 351,371/Party Nr. unknown. No further information.

IV./Waf.Art.Rgt.d.SS 14 Commander: Waffen-Sturmbannfuehrer Mykola Palienko (Ukrainian), KIA in the battle of Brody.

**COMMANDER DIVISIONAL SUPPLY TROOPS**

SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Franz Magill (born 22 August 1900). SS-Nr. 132,620/Party Nr. 4,137,171. Holder of the Iron Cross, 2nd Class.

**WAFFEN-PIONIER-BATAILLON DER SS 14 (Engineers)**

Commanders: SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Josef Remberger (born 9 June 1903), SS-Nr. 267,977/Party Nr. 1,929,332. Holder of the Iron Cross, 1st Class. SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Karl Bristot (born 12 September 1915), SS-Nr. 202,908. No further information available.

**WAFFEN-FUSILIER-ABTEILUNG DER SS 14  
(Reconnaissance)**

Commanders: SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Sepp Syr (born 18 October 1903), SS-Nr. 283,029/ not a Party member. Holder of the Iron Cross, 1st Class. Later a recon detachment and regimental commander in both 23rd WGDdSS "Kama" and 31st SS Vol.

Div. ("Batschka"). Waffen-Sturmbannfuehrer Pobihushchyi (Ukrainian).

**WAFFEN-NACHRICHTEN-ABTEILUNG DER SS 14  
(Signals)**

Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Wolfgang Wuttig (born 22 October 1915), SS-Nr. 423,132. MIA in the battle of Brody, summer 1944.

**WAFFEN-PANZERJAEGER-ABTEILUNG DER SS 14  
(Anti-tank)**

Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Hermann Kaschner (born 7 November 1914), SS-Nr. 317,675. No further information available.

**WAFFEN-FELDERSATZ-BATAILLON DER SS 14  
(Field Replacement)**

Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Johannes Kleinow (born 10 February 1901), SS-Nr. 28,740. No further information available.

**Ukrainian Unit Commanders**

Divisional Commanders: (as 1st Ukrainian Division), Gen. M. Krat (late April-early May 1945).

Battalion Commanders: Waffen-Hauptsturmfuehrer Kuchta, Waffen-Hauptsturmfuehrer Padlesch (both KIA in Austria, April 1945).

IV./Waf.Art.Rgt.14 Commander: Waffen-Sturmbannfuehrer Mykola Palienko (KIA).

Waffen-Fusilier-Abteilung der SS 14 Commander: Waffen-Stubaf. Pobihushchyi.

Divisional Maintenance and Repair Company Commander: Waffen-Hstuf. Leopid Martyniuk.

**Ukrainian Staff Officers:**

Waffen-Hstuf. Palijiw (Liaison) KIA at Brody.

Waffen-Hstuf. Wrublenski (Liaison).

Waffen-Ostuf. Yuriy-Tys Krokhmaliuk (assistant to the Ukrainian Liaison Officer).

Waffen-Hstuf. Honcharenko (position unspecified).  
 Chaplain, WGR29: Waffen-Untersturmfuehrer Levynets  
 Company Commanders: 6./WGR 29 — Waffen-Obersturmfuehrer Witoshynsky.  
 7./WGR 29 — Waffen-Ostuf. Danylyshyn (KIA at Brody).  
 Waffen-Hstuf. P. Sylenko  
 Waffen-Hstuf. Dmytro Ferkuniak  
 Waffen-Ostuf. Lishchynskyi

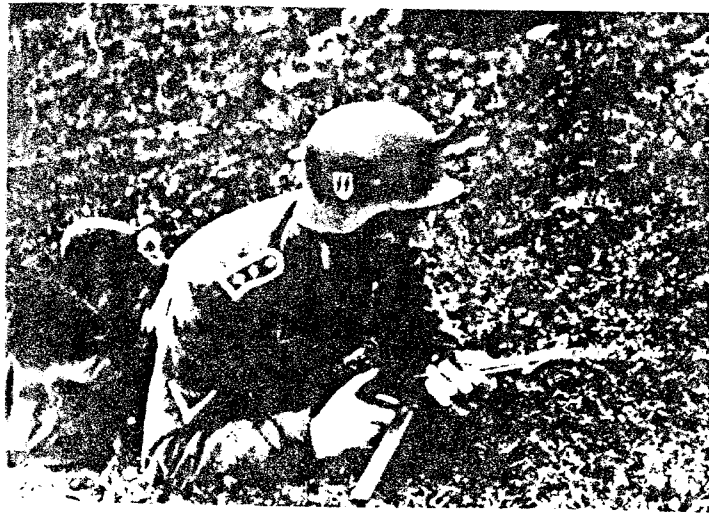
Addenda — German Unit Commanders  
 WAFFEN-FLAK-ABTEILUNG DER SS 14

Commander: SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Serge von Kuester (born 12 December 1896), SS-Nr. 314,013/Party Nr. unknown. MIA at Brody, summer 1944.

\* \* \*

Other command officer names will be added to this list as they come to light!

\* \* \*



Rare shot of an SS Security Service trooper in the field during an anti-partisan operation.

## HUNGARIAN WAFFEN-SS COMMANDERS

The following article contains a listing of some of the more prominent Hungarian Waffen-SS commanders along with further details about their careers were known. Biographies of the Hungarian SS generals appeared in *Hungarian Volunteers of the Waffen-SS* (henceforth referred to as *Hungarian Volunteers*) by Richard Landwehr.

\* \* \*

### Command List

SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Ferenc *Fekethalmy-Czeydner* (Franz Zeidner).

Commander Waffen-Armee der SS "Ungarn," (details in *Hungarian Volunteers*).

SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Jeno *Ruszkay* (Eugen Ranzenberger). Commander XVII. Waffen-Armee Korps der SS ("Ungarn"), (details in *Hungarian Volunteers*).

Waffen-Generalleutnant der SS Josef *Grassy*. Commander of the 25. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS "Hunyadi" along with later the 26. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS "Hungaria," (details in *Hungarian Volunteers*).

Waffen-Oberfuehrer der SS Zoltan *von Pisky*. Commander of the 26. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS "Hungaria"; killed-in-action.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS Lorant *Bodolay v. Bodola*. Commander: Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 62 "Hunyadi" Division.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS Dezso *Magyar*. Commander: Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 63 "Hunyadi" Division.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS Jeno *Temesvari v. Galgoc*. Commander: Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 61 "Hunyadi" Division.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer Adalbert *Peinlich* Edler von Immenburg. Commander: Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 62 "Hunyadi" Division and later Waffen-Alarm Regiment der SS "Ungarn."

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer Odon (Edmund) *Magyar*. Com-

mander: Waffen-Artillerie-Regiment der SS 25/“Hunyadi” Division.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS Josef *Vecsey*. Commander: Waffen-Ausbildungs und Ersatz Regiment der SS 25/“Hunyadi” Division.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS Eugen *Brenner*. Commander: Waffen-Artillerie Regiment der SS 26/“Hungaria” Division.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS Andor *Podhradzky* v. Nemespodgragy. Commander: Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 64/“Hungaria” Division.

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### HUNGARIAN WAFFEN-SS COMMANDERS

#### Laslo von Deak

Laslo von Deak was born in Eger, Hungary on 7 January 1891 and early in life decided on a career as a soldier. On 1 September 1912 he was commissioned a Leutnant (2nd Lt.) in the Royal Honved Landwehr Infantry Regiment 19, stationed in Pecs (Fuenfkirchen). Von Deak served with this regiment throughout World War I, being promoted to Oberleutnant (1st Lt.) on 1 August 1914 and to Haputmann (Captain) on 1 November 1917. Among other decorations he received the Military Service Cross and the Iron Cross III Class.

Once the Nolshevik government of post-war Hungary was overthrown, von Deak resumed his Army career, becoming an Oberstleutant (Lt. Col.) on 1 May 1934 and an Oberst (Col.) on 1 May 1939. Records of his career are sketchy at best, but he apparently took part in the Hungarian occupation of parts of Slovakia and Yugoslavia. He also served with the 5th Honved Army Corps during the successful effort to curb intrusions by Tito's Red terrorists into the Batschka region of southern Hungary that had been annexed from Yugoslavia. Unfortunately in the course of this campaign which took place in January 1942, a number of pro-Tito civilians were also killed, but the communist threat to the region had been nullified. However all of the higher Hungarian officers who participated in this action were targeted by “Allied” intelligence for liquidation, preferably through their agents who operated within the Hungarian government.

Oberst von Deak left the Hungarian Armed Services in September 1942 and for his long service he was decorated with the Great Golden Medal with Crown. He had earlier received both the Hungarian Officer's and Knight's Crosses. In December 1943, at the request of the Western “Allies,” Oberst Laslo von Deak was brought before a secret military tribunal and accused of committing atrocities in the course of a raid on a terrorist encampment in the vicinity of Ujvidek (Neusatz or Novisad) in January 1942. He was condemned at this procedure along with his superior officers, Generals Zeidner and Grassy. Through the help of patriotic Hungarians, all three of these men were able to flee to Germany in late January 1944.

But their troubles were far from over. Although the men requested political sanctuary it was not automatically granted, and von Deak and the others were locked up for a month by the SS Security Service (SD). A thorough investigation into the charges brought against the Hungarian officers was then conducted and it was determined that all three had been the victims of an “Allied” orchestrated frame-up. Their only crime had been to crush the Red terrorists that the Western “Democracies” were backing to the hilt. As a result, von Deak and the others were released from captivity in late February 1944.

On 1 March 1944, Laslo von Deak was offered a commission in the Waffen-SS with the rank of Standartenfuehrer, which he accepted. He also received a personal apology from Reichsfuehrer-SS Himmler for his detention. In July 1944, Waffen-Staf. von Deak was assigned to the staff of the Waffen-SS commander-in-chief for Hungary and he used his position to recruit for the Waffen-SS from the ranks of Hungarian Honved Eastern Front veterans. By early autumn he had been able to assemble and equip a force of about 1,000 former Hungarian soldiers. It would appear that they may have been subordinated to or intended for use with the 22nd SS Cavalry Division “Maria Theresia,” but they operated directly under the control of the Waffen-SS C-in-C “Ungarn.”

In October 1944 this force was deployed for combat duty in the Batschka region of southern Hungary under the title of SS-Kampfgruppe “Deak.” A month later the battlegroup was incorporated intact into the newly authorized 25. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS “Hunyadi” (Hungarian Nr. 1). SS-KGr. “Deak” seems to have served as the nucleus for Waffen-Gr.

Rgt.der SS 61 within the 25th Division and von Deak became the first commander of this regiment. SS-KGr. "Deak" bore a very close similarity to SS-KGr. "Ney," which was also recruited from Honved veterans and intended for incorporation into the 22nd SS Division, but due to the isolation of that formation in Budapest, it ended up fighting independently on the Eastern Front in 1945.

Von Deak was promoted to Waffen-Oberfuehrer der SS (Senior Col.) on 9 November 1944. When the Hungarian XVII. SS Corps was authorized in early January 1945, Waf.Oberfhr. von Deak was appointed its First General Staff Officer (Ia), technically a "chief-of-staff" position. He simultaneously served as Ia with the Inspectorate of the Hungarian Waffen-SS. He was replaced as regimental commander of WGRdSS 61 by Waffen-Staf. Jenő Temesvári von Galgóc. Waf.-Oberfuehrer von Deak's ultimate fate is still not clear. There are three versions of his final ending as follows: 1) He killed himself on or around 3 May 1945; 2) He was killed in captivity by the Americans; 3) He was executed in Budapest in 1946 by the communist-backed Hungarian regime.

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#### Waffen-Oberfuehrer der SS Zoltan von Pisky

Zoltan von Pisky was born in Budapest on 11 November 1893. He joined the Army in 1912 and by 1 January 1914 was serving as a reserve officer candidate with the 101st Hungarian Infantry Regiment (title: "Feldzeugmeister Freiherr Drathschmidt von Bruckheim"). He was made a Leutnant (2nd Lt.) on 1 May 1915 and an Oberleutnant (1st Lt.) on 1 October 1916. Von Pisky proved himself to be a tough and able commander. At the battle against the Russians for Chyrow (Poland) that raged from 15 to 18 October 1914, he stayed in the field with his troops despite being badly wounded and helped engineer victories near Lubenske and Vilag. This later brought him the award of the Hungarian Silver Medal for Bravery.

In the course of 1916 and 1917 he also received the Bronze and Silver Military Service Medals. On 3 October 1917 he was decorated with the Wartime Military Service Medal, 3rd Class with Swords for having accomplished two more combat feats. He was first cited for leading a crossing of the Czeremosz River

under heavy enemy artillery fire on 29 July 1917 and then was additionally cited for having led his company in a difficult but successful attack on Komarestie Slobodzie on 2 October 1917.

On 3 October 1918, Oberleutnant von Pisky entered the Red Cross Hospital at Korymca with a heart problem which fortunately did not prove to be serious. After the war and the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he was able to continue serving in the Hungarian Armed Forces. He slowly worked his way up through the officer ranks and by 1934 was serving as the military aviation adjutant (or aide) to the Hungarian Minister-President Gyula Gombos. In the first years of World War II, von Pisky was back in the field as an Army battalion commander with the rank of Oberstleutnant (Lt. Col.).

Von Pisky received the rank of Oberst (Col.) on 29 September 1942 while serving as a regimental commander. In 1943 he was placed in charge of a brigade. At the beginning of September 1944, Oberst von Pisky was in charge of the 67th Frontier Jaeger Group in the threatened Siebenbuergen region. In the course of heavy defensive street fighting in the town of Marosvasarhely (Neumarkt), von Pisky was wounded in the back. After recovering in December 1944, he was assigned by the Hungarian Defense Minister Beregfy to take charge of the 26. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS "Hungaria" (Hungarian Nr. 2). On the same day he took charge of the division, 23 December 1944, von Pisky was given the rank of Waffen-Oberfuehrer der SS (Senior Colonel). At this time the division was undergoing formation and training at the Neuhammer SS Training Camp in Silesia.

In late January 1945, Waffen-Oberfuehrer von Pisky organized his combat ready troops into a battlegroup to meet the Soviet advance on Neuhammer. On 23 January 1945, von Pisky led a portion of his staff on a horseback scouting mission towards Kalisch. The small force ran right into a Soviet armored column near Jarotschin and was wiped out in a brief, bloody clash. A few eyewitnesses survived to carry back the story of von Pisky's demise to the divisional HQ. However, since his body was never located and his death ever confirmed, he was officially carried as an MIA for the remainder of the war. Somewhat ironically, von Pisky's division soon adopted the name of his one-time "boss," Gombos, as its title.

Waffen-Oberfuehrer der SS Zoltan von Pisky's WWII decora-

tions included the Hungarian Knight's Cross, the German Iron Cross, 1st and 2nd Class, the German Eagle Order and the Italian Order Della Corona.

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#### Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS

Lorant Bodolay v. Bodola

Lorant Bodolay was born on 6 April 1896 in Kaschav (Kassa), Hungary. He enlisted in the Royal Hungarian Landwehr on 15 May 1915, becoming a Leutnant on 1 November 1916. After the war he remained on duty with the Hungarian Armed Forces and eventually rose to the rank of Oberst (Col.) in 1944. On 18 November 1944 he transferred into the Waffen-SS and received the rank of Waffen-Standartenfuehrer. Bodolay succeeded Waffen-Standartenfuehrer Adalbert Peinlich as commander of Waffen-Grenadier Regiment 62 of the 25th SS "Hunyadi" Division. His post-war fate is unknown.

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#### Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS

Dezso Magyar

Dezso Magyar was born in Zombor, Hungary on 27 January 1898. He became a Leutnant in the Hungarian Landwehr on 1 September 1916. After the war, Dezso Magyar remained an officer in the Hungarian Army (Honved) becoming a Hauptmann (Captain) in 1927 and an Oberst (Col.) in 1944. He transferred into the Waffen-SS on 20 November 1944 and took command of the Waffen-Grenadier Rgt. de SS 63 of the 25th SS "Hunyadi" Division with the rank of Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS.

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#### Waffen-Standartenfuehrer

Jeno Temesvari v. Galgoc

Jeno Temesvari was born in Tiszaluc, Hungary on 17 March 1894. He grew up in the town of Zemplen and was a member of the Swiss Reformed Church. Temesvari entered the Austro-Hungarian Army on 10 September 1914 and served throughout World War I, becoming a Leutnant on 5 March 1915. Temesvari was promoted to Oberleutnant on 18 August 1918. After the

war, he continued to serve in the Hungarian Army, becoming a "Colonel of the Infantry" on 1 October 1942. On 18 November 1944 he became a Waffen-Standartenfuehrer in the Waffen-SS and assumed command of Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 61 of the "Hunyadi" Division, when its commander, Waffen-Oberfuehrer von Deak was transferred to the staff of XVII. Waffen-Armee Korps der SS.

Waffen-Standartenfuehrer Jeno Temesvari escaped deportation to Hungary after the war and eventually resettled in the United States. He died on 4 March 1981, before the perfidious agents of the OSI could get their hands on him!

#### Waffen-Standartenfuehrer

Adalbert Peinlich Edler von Immenburg

Adalbert Peinlich was born in Bratislava, Slovakia on 10 July 1897, the son of a government accountant. At the outbreak of World War I he joined the Austro-Hungarian Army, becoming an acting cadet officer on 15 March 1915. By the end of the war he had attained the rank of Oberleutnant with the 39th Infantry Regiment and had been awarded the Silver Medal for Bravery, 1st Class.

After the war, Peinlich seems to have served briefly in the new Czechoslovakian Army before joining the forces of General Baron von Lehar (the brother of world famous composer, Franz Lehar), in western Hungary. In October 1921, Baron von Lehar launched a coup attempt against the Hungarian government in an attempt to place the King back on the Hungarian throne. The putsch attempt failed, but the rebels, including Adalbert Peinlich, were apparently not treated harshly.

Peinlich managed to continue to serve in the Hungarian Army and gradually rose through the ranks, becoming a Colonel in the Honved Motorized Infantry in 1943. On 20 November 1944 he joined the Waffen-SS, receiving the rank of Waffen-Standartenfuehrer. His first command was the Waffen-Grenadier Regiment 62 of the "Hunyadi" Division. In February 1945, Waf.-Staf. Peinlich was placed in charge of the Hungarian Waffen-Alarm Regiment der SS, which was formed on an emergency basis from two battalions each from the "Hunyadi" and "Hungaria" Divisions at the Neuhammer, Silesia SS Training Camp. The Regiment fought brilliantly in the defense of Neuhammer and was arguably the premier fighting unit of the Hungarian Waffen-SS.

At the end of the war, Adalbert Peinlich became the only

higher ranking Hungarian officer to return to Hungary of his own volition. There he was subjected to the standard show trial for treason and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. After spending 15 years in prison he was finally pardoned. For the rest of his life, up to his death at the age of 81 in 1978, the former Waffen-Standartenfuehrer Adalbert Peinlich scratched out a meager existence working as a night watchman!

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**Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS**  
Odon (Edmund) Magyar

Odon Magyar was born in Hungary on 1 October 1896. He became a Leutnant in the Austro-Hungarian Army on 18 August 1916. In 1918 he was serving with the Fortress Artillery Battalion 15 and was decorated with the Silver Medal for Bravery, 1st Class. He continued to serve in the Hungarian Armed Forces after the conclusion of World War I.

On 2 December 1944, Odon Magyar transferred into the Waffen-SS, receiving the rank of Waffen-Standartenfuehrer.

A career artillery officer, he was placed in command of the Waffen-Artillerie Rgt. 25 of the "Hunyadi" Division, a position which he held until the end of the war. Further facts about his life and career are lacking.

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**Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS**  
Josef Vecsey

Josef Vecsey was born in Temesvar (Temeschburg) on 23 June 1897, the descendant of a family that had originated in Wittenberg, Germany. On 15 October 1914 he reached the status of officer cadet in the Royal Hungarian Landwehr and was later promoted to Leutnant on 1 May 1915 and Oberleutnant on 1 May 1917. Following the war he continued in the service of the Hungarian Army and was eventually promoted to Oberst (Colonel) on 1 May 1943.

Josef Vecsey became a Waffen-Standartenfuehrer of the Waffen-SS on 19 November 1944 and assumed command of the Waffen-Ausbildungs und Ersatz Regiment (Training and Replacement Regiment) 25 of the "Hunyadi" SS Division. His further fate is unknown.

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**Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS**  
Andor Podhradzky v. Nemespodhrazy

Andor Podhradzky was born into an aristocratic Hungarian family on 6 November 1896 in Facset, Hungary. He became an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army on 18 August 1915 and was heavily decorated for his actions in World War I. Podhradzky continued serving in the Hungarian Army after the break-up of the Empire, becoming a Captain in 1925. He spent the next several years serving as a staff officer. He then transferred into the Hungarian Air Force and it was while serving in the Air Force that he received his promotion to Colonel on 29 October 1942.

Podhradzky transferred into the Waffen-SS on 23 December 1944 with the rank of Waffen-Standartenfuehrer. He became the commander of Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 64 of the "Hungaria" Division. After the war, Waf.-Staf. Podhradzky managed to escape deportation back to Hungary and he emigrated to England. He died in London in 1962.

**Waffen-Standartenfuehrer der SS**  
Eugen Brenner

Eugen Brenner was born on 17 August 1898 in Pecs (Fuenfkirchen), Hungary. He attained the rank of Leutnant in the Hungarian Landwehr on 1 September 1916. After World War I he continued serving in the Hungarian Army as an artillery and later air defense officer. He eventually reached the rank of "Oberst der Flak" (Colonel of the Air Defense Artillery). Brenner transferred into the Waffen-SS on 23 December 1944, becoming a Waffen-Standartenfuehrer and the commander of the Waffen-Artillerie Regiment der SS 26 of the "Hungaria" Division on the same day. He held this post until the end of the war. His further fate is not known.

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SUPPORT FREEDOM OF SPEECH!

The heroic Canadian publisher Ernst Zundel has now twice been placed on trial at enormous expense by the Canadian government for the 'crime' of having distributed the booklet *Did Six Million Really Die*. Despite the fact that the number one authority on the WWII era, David Irving, attested to the validity of the booklet along with a wide range of defense witnesses, Zundel has now been convicted twice of this 'crime.' He faces a complete loss of civil rights, imprisonment, fines and possible deportation in addition to staggering legal expenses. Anyone who supports the concept of free speech and the right to historical truth and justice is urged to contribute directly to Ernest Zundel at the following address:

Ernst Zundel  
206 Carlton Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
CANADA M5A 2L1

If you send a donation you will then be kept fully informed of all future developments. State censorship is a reality in 'free' Canada, but it can happen here in the U.S. as well. You won't hear the "establishment" writers and publishers bemoaning this situation — it is up to all of us "little people" to fight back and the best way to do that at the moment is by showing solidarity and support for Ernst Zundel in his courageous efforts!

\* \* \*

Nordic man would like to correspond with Nordic type people who believe in SS, National Socialist ideals (very confidential).  
C.H., P.O. Box 173, Vancouver, Washington 98666

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PARACHUTE BATTALION:  
THE HISTORY OF  
SS-FALLSCHIRMJAEGER-BATAILLON 500/600

Part III

by Antonio J. Munoz, R.T.R.

Following the return of the SS paras, Milius again reorganized his battalion and continued its training. Towards the end of January, 1945 some 40-50 parachute trained officers and men were put on standby alert for a drop on the Silesian capital of Breslau (Wroclaw). Gaudieter Hanke, now Reich Defense Commissioner, was the supreme authority in the encircled German city. He was planning on flying into Breslau two battalions of crack paratroopers. He mentioned in his call to SS-Reichsfuehrer Himmler that he wanted to turn Breslau into a "Cassino on the Oder." It was thus that the SS Parachute Battalion 600 had been alerted, although 40-50 men was a far cry from two battalions. Eventually, Hanke got his two battalions from some other branch (the Luftwaffe). The I./Fallschirmjagerretiment 26 under the command of Hauptmann Trotz arrived on February 25, 1945. The other battalion, II./Fallschirmjaegerregiment z.b.V. Schact, under Hauptmann Skau arrived on 5 March 1945. The operation had been cancelled due to the re-assignment of Milius's battalion to Otto Skorzeny's "Sonderverband Skorzeny," now being hastily formed at Schwedt-an-der-Oder. The Soviet mechanized and armored spearheads were now reaching the Oder River, Germany's last major water barrier before Berlin. Himmler had been entrusted by Hitler to form a new unit, Army Group Vistula. Himmler promised Hitler that "the miracle of Frederick the Great" would occur again. He would stop the Red hordes that were now threatening the very heart of Germany (Berlin). Himmler also boasted that he would throw the Bolsheviks back all the way across Poland and over the Vistula River. What he needed now above anything else was time. Time in order for Germany to gather her last available reserves, and time to train and organize them. Skorzeny was to hold up the massed Soviet armored armies single-handedly! In



this way, he would be buying time for Himmler's Army Group and the life of Germany.

It was in this way, and for this reason that in the last week of January 1945, Lieutenant Colonel Otto Skorzeny received a phone call from Hitler's chief policeman. Skorzeny listened to the Reichsfuehrer with apprehension, but it didn't take Himmler long to make himself clear: "Skorzeny, I am giving you command of the defenses at Schwedt. You will take every soldier you can scrape up and move there at once." A front line command thought Skorzeny. So Germany no longer had any need for specialized troops. The end was very near indeed, he thought to himself.

Himmler continued: "I want you to establish a bridgehead there at once, in anticipation of our great counterattack." Skorzeny was dumbfounded. Did he say counterattack? With what he wandered? "I want you to move out no later than this afternoon, the situation is very critical right now." Well, thought Skorzeny sardonically, the "Reich's heini"<sup>1</sup> knew that much!

Skorzeny did not have much time. From 5:00 p.m. that afternoon the phone at Skorzeny's headquarters began to ring incessantly. Always it was Himmler's headquarters: "Have you started yet?" "Why haven't you left yet?" and so on and so on. Skorzeny called in his aide-de-camp, von Foelkersam and informed him to prepare the men of SS-Jagdverband "Nord-west" to move out immediately in full battle gear. He then called newly promoted SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Siegfried Milius at Neustrelitz and relayed similar orders.

Siegfried Milius, a man of action, wasted no time either. He notified his company commanders and prepared to move his motorized SS para battalion to Schwedt-an-der-Oder. Skorzeny sent out the following day, leaving at around 5:00 a.m. in the morning. His four companies consisted of a mixed batch of Europeans — Danes, Dutchmen, Belgians, Norwegians, and even some Swedes. Heading out, his small force drove east in the direction of the rising sun.

On his way to Schwedt, Skorzeny learned that the Soviets were still some miles east of the town. Upon arrival he managed

<sup>1</sup>) Reich's Heini — a derogatory term used to ridicule Himmler. Very widely used (and despised by the Reichsfuehrer).

to find the town commandant. Skorzeny now asked about what troops were situated in the town, and their fighting abilities. To Skorzeny's horror, the commandant related that apart from about 150 or so NCOs and Officer Cadets undergoing an engineer course, he only had a battalion of local town Volksturm. In all, about 500 aging men, and youngsters too small to fit into their uniforms. There were no defenses at all, none whatsoever.

Berlin was working with phantom troops, he thought to himself. Himmler had given him command of troops which didn't exist. "I'm sure that on a wall in the Fuehrer Bunker, hanging beautifully, is a map with the words Fortress Schwedt carefully inscribed on it" Skorzeny told von Foelkersam. It was a good thing indeed that he had brought with him at least one battalion of seasoned troops. But one or two battalions (counting the 600th para) were not enough to stop the Red menace.

Skorzeny contemplated his situation very carefully. It then dawned on him that a veritable endless supply of manpower was available. Skorzeny sat down and began to count the number of stragglers that were now making their way to the West. In less than a minute he had counted almost forty men. Here



SS-Ostufaf. Skorzeny as commander of the "Division Schwedt" in the Oder Bridgehead positions, February 1945.

was his source of manpower! Skorzeny wasted no time. He sent a platoon of Milius's paratroopers, and a platoon of his commandos to a predetermined perimeter on the eastern side of the Oder River by Schwedt. These men were to let the stream of desperate and bewildered refugees pass, while detaining every able-bodied man, in uniform or civilian clothes, which attempted to get through to Schwedt. Skorzeny knew that many of these men in civilian clothes would be true non-combatants — farmers, craftsmen and the like who had their farms and towns destroyed by the rape and loot happy drunkards in Red Army uniforms. Unspeakable horrors had occurred and continue to occur in the eastern territories of Germany. Even so, he needed every able-bodied man. He just couldn't let even one straggler through disguised as the head of a family who, for lack of a murdered husband or son, were now "adopting" these men as the only source of comfort and protection from an ever violent world. The women, children and old men (the ones that managed to miraculously get that far) would fare alright without a husband or father once they crossed the Oder River. The time had come for supreme efforts to be made by all. There was no other way.

In this way, Skorzeny began collecting his rag-tag army and making some sense of "Fortress Schwedt." His able officers and NCOs began to train his ever growing rabble into a viable fighting force. The local town Party Chief was roused up from bed that very day and ordered to get every available man into the Volkssturm (which he, as town Party Boss, was supposed to command). Skorzeny also instructed the overweight hump to get all of the able-bodied women and elderly together in order to start digging earthenworks with which to defend his town. When asked how he should accomplish this, Skorzeny replied in an irritated voice: "Go out with a pick and shovel yourself and the people will follow you!" The discomfited Nazi Party chief muttered an acceptance of his command and hurried his podgy little body down the street. The best of Germany had met the worst. It was exasperating.

Within three days, Skorzeny had managed to scrape up the equivalent of two complete battalions for defending the "inner ring" defenses which was forming in Skorzeny's mind, and was becoming a reality through the efforts of his men and the townspeople. Skorzeny's request for artillery from Himmler was denied. The excuse was that none could be had, and the

few pieces available were already earmarked for the newly forming divisions of Army Group Vistula. Skorzeny was never the type of man to take a "no" as final word on matters. On his own initiative he sent patrols out into the surrounding countryside. He found a large number of 75mm anti-tank guns (fifteen of them!) in a factory some 30 miles south of Schwedt. The German Army High Command had written this factory off because it was now within range of Soviet artillery! Skorzeny also acquired several 88mm Flak guns which he ingeniously mounted on 8-ton semi-tracked vehicles. In an Army dump near Frankfurt-an-Oder his men got as many of "Hitler's Sagen" (i.e., MG-42s) as they could carry.

Now that his force was becoming strong enough, and the Soviets more aggressive, he ordered Sturmbannfuehrer Milius to launch aggressive night patrols to the east of Schwedt. The SS paras sallied forth from their positions in Konigsberg-Neumark, bringing in nightly numerous Red prisoners (many who were too drunk to stand). It was in this way that Skorzeny was able to gain much needed information on the Soviet build-up that had been occurring ever since his arrival at Schwedt. Milius had set up his headquarters in Grabow, just northwest of Konigsberg-Neumark. His 3rd Company, under the able command of Obersturmfuehrer Markus, was the principal defense unit of the Schwedt Bridgehead. It was entrenched in a half semi-circle around Konigsberg-Neumark. The Soviets also knew that this town was the linch-pin of the outer German defenses at Schwedt. Accordingly, they were to give the men of 3rd Company "special treatment" in the coming days to come. The battalion's 2nd Company was under the command of Obersturmfuehrer Scheu, and formed part of the second ring of defenses, which were situated between Grabow and Konigsberg-Neumark. Obersturmfuehrer Leifheit's 1st Company formed the right flank of 2nd Company. Leifheit's line of defenses stretched all the way down to the east bank of the Oder River, just one mile south of Niedersaaten.

Skorzeny's "Sonderverband" was now augmented by a Volkssturm battalion from Hamburg and one raised in Konigsberg, some eight miles to the southeast. Skorzeny would comment in his memoirs that one of these battalions (the one from Hamburg) was composed of "former communist dockworkers" who he said "would later fight like devils against the Soviet troops." Hermann Goering, the Luftwaffe's chief, now



SS-Stubaf. Siegfried Milius (here a Hstuf.)  
CO, SS Fallschirmjaeger Btl. 500 600

got into the act. He phoned Skorzeny and asked: "How's it going?" "I could do with some more troops" replied Skorzeny. The next day 600 men of a newly formed battalion of the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Grenadier Division (No. 2) arrived at Schwedt. To the dismay of its youthful commander, Skorzeny disbanded the Luftwaffe unit, opting instead to use its men to fill in the gaps in other units. In no time at all, these former Luftwaffe pilots and ground crews became first class fighters!

Himmler's meddling had not ceased when Skorzeny had left Friedenthal. A steady stream of impossible orders had been arriving daily at Schwedt. When Skorzeny ordered a tactical withdrawal from one of the outlying villages, Himmler called to ask if the commander in question was arrested or had already been shot. Skorzeny, who had not been at his headquarters when the call arrived, failed to answer Himmler by phone until late that evening. Enraged, Himmler ordered Skorzeny to his headquarters immediately. Himmler's "Vistula" Headquarters was located in Himmler's lavishly furnished train.

Before Himmler could get a second wind after beginning his initial denunciation of Skorzeny's "lack of discipline for not submitting to higher authority," Skorzeny cut in. Skorzeny complained bitterly that since his arrival at Schwedt, a stream of outrageous orders had come down from Army Group Vistula. In return for which he had received no troops and damn little supplies. Himmler's mood now changed. "Tell me about your situation at Schwedt," he asked Skorzeny. Between the dessert and usual brandy after dinner. Skorzeny had won his first real reinforcement: an assault-gun brigade. This unit was actually of battalion strength.

It seems that Hitler had thought fit to call battalions brigades, and two-battalion regiments, brigades. Assault gun batteries were called battalions, and so it went. It was Hitler's plan to confuse and deceive the enemy into thinking that his forces were stronger than what they really were. They deceived no one, except maybe the poor bastards who needed first line, full strength units, and were getting crumbs where a mouthful was needed.

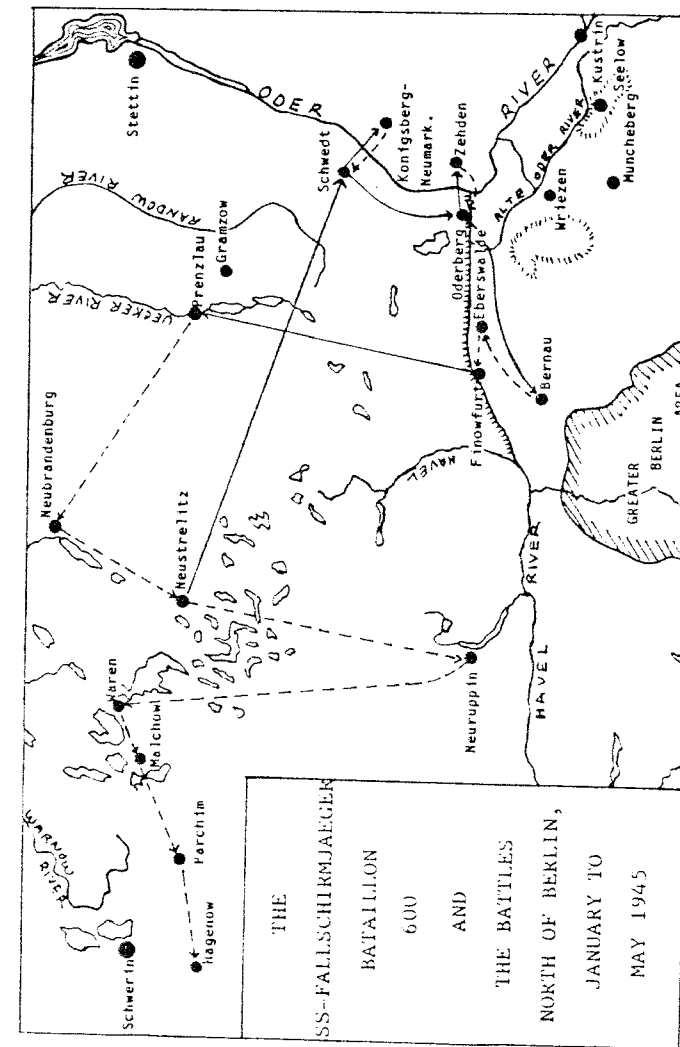
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Major Langel and his Sturmgeschutz Brigade 210 had left Stettin in February 1st, 1945. Now after nearly two days, he and his gun-less "brigade" were situated at Angermunde awaiting the arrival of ten promised armor which was to re-outfit his command. He didn't have to wait very long. Thirty-one brand new SIG-IVs (Sturmgeschutz IV) assault gun made their appearance, fresh from the factories.

Now fully out-fitted (for 1945 standards) Major Langel received his orders. 3rd Panzer Army Headquarters directed him to proceed to Schwedt and join "Sonderverband Skorzeny" which was holding a bridgehead there over the Oder River. The date was February 6th, 1945. Within a week after arriving at Schwedt, Skorzeny had amassed a force of some 15,000 men. This included two new units which had just been added to his command: an entire cavalry troop, and a 3,000-man Rumanian SS-Regiment (the 1st).

In addition, Skorzeny also had a number of men from Turkistan under his control. With the arrival of this assault-gun brigade, Skorzeny was able to give Milius some much needed armored support. Arriving at Schwedt on February 8th, the Sturmgeschutz Brigade 210 was immediately sent across the Oder River and distributed amongst the SS parachute companies. During its first engagement, the 3rd Battery of the 210th Brigade (under Hauptmann Vincon), supported by the SS paras of 2. SS Fallschirmjager-Bataillon 600, managed to stop a Soviet armored attack in their sector. The main weight of the Soviet attack centered on the villages of Grabow and Hausberg.

Working in conjunction with the tank-hunter teams from 2nd Company, the two batteries of assault-guns (under Lieutenants Kohler and Naumann) managed to destroy 13 Soviet tanks before the enemy withdrew. The same day that the 210th Brigade arrived, Skorzeny ordered an attack on the village of Johannisgrund. The Soviets had concentrated several heavy artillery units there, and were raising hell with them by shelling the positions of Milius's battalion. Milius's headquarters in Grabow had also come under very heavy fire. 2. SS-Fallschirmjager-Bataillon 600 not only threw back the Soviet armored thrust, but went over to counterattack. Supported by a company of SS commandos (led by Skorzeny himself), the SS paras launched themselves against the massed enemy artillery batteries in Johannisgrund. In spite of serious losses, the paras



and commandos moved forward. The village was reached with the help of Major Langel's assault guns firing as mobile artillery pieces. In the melee that now ensued, the Soviet batteries retreated in complete disarray. One Soviet battery attempted to make a stand of it at Gutshof. Night had already arrived for the winter days were very short. In a well coordinated assault, the Soviet battery and her accompanying infantry was destroyed. Night had worked against the Soviet gunners. After this engagement, the Soviets never again moved their artillery units so close to the front in order to avoid a repetition of these events.

The following day (February 9th), the Soviets attempted to break through to Grabow once again. This time they attacked from the southwest. Their main effort was concentrated against Height 63, the cornerstone holding Scheu's 2nd and Leifheit's 1st Company. Again the assault guns of Brigade 210 came to the aid of the beleaguered SS paratroopers. Fierce fighting raged all day, with the enemy losing heavily in tanks and infantrymen. The SS paratroopers and Langel's men paid a heavy price though — especially in platoon and company officers. So fierce was the fighting now raging at the Schwedt Bridgehead that on February 10th, just two days after their arrival, the 210th Assault Gun Brigade had to be withdrawn before it was completely destroyed. Such was the price to pay for putting small units, vulnerable to depletion rather quickly, into the thick of a heavy fight.

Their withdrawal did not mean a pause for rest though. They were urgently needed elsewhere against an ever widening Soviet bridgehead on the west bank of the Oder River by Kustrin. The positions held at Schwedt, but at a terrible cost in lives. Königsberg-Neumark had also been getting its share of the fighting, though the enemy now seemed to be trying to outflank this position, concentrating his main weight on Grabow, some 3½ miles to the northwest.

Around the second week of February, Skorzeny received a picked company of SS commandos, led by SS-Untersturmführer Schwerdt. Schwerdt had taken part in the Mussolini rescue mission, as had most of this company. Skorzeny was so glad to see them that he welcomed every man to his command. War builds a special bond between men that during peacetime is very hard to understand.

On February 17th, the Reds once again attacked the Schwedt Bridgehead. They launched a typical tank and infantry assault

on the village of Nipperwiese, the northern-most defense position of the bridgehead. This position was held by a large proportion of men from the disbanded Luftwaffe battalion which Goering had sent Skorzeny. In addition, a large portion of the SS-Jagdverband "Nordwest" held this village and surrounding area. For six days, these men held off the Soviet tanks and infantrymen. When Skorzeny (fearing that these units would be totally annihilated) finally ordered a withdrawal from the village, the whole surrounding area was left littered with the burning hulks of dozens of Soviet tanks!

One day in late February, a reconnaissance group from Obersturmführer Markus's 3./SS Parachute Battalion 600 sallied forth from Königsberg-Neumark and headed for Bad Schonfliess, a small watering place just beyond the town. The squad was ambushed and lost two men killed. That same afternoon the squad of paratroopers returned to give their report, Markus requested Skorzeny to meet him at his headquarters at Königsberg-Neumark. An appreciation of the squad's clash was obtained. Skorzeny and Markus both agreed on the need for another reconnaissance to be made, this time with a much larger force. For days the enemy had been making attacks all over Skorzeny's bridgehead, feeling out its defenses. Both men realized that soon the bridgehead would be hit with a much heavier and much firmer attack than had yet been experienced.

Both officers decided to go themselves with a platoon of SS paras. Leaving their vehicles just at the outskirts of Bad Schonfliess, they managed to creep into the village without being seen. They found that the houses on the edge of the village were completely empty of its occupants. On their way towards the train station on the other side of town, they encountered three civilians. The women seemed to be in a state of shock from two days of continuous rapings. It seems that the Soviets had arrived in strength about that time and had not left. The male civilian had been dulled into apathy, but he did manage to tell Skorzeny and Markus that more Soviet troops were arriving by the hour. The first Soviet troops had destroyed and looted anything of value in the village, the women included. The old folks and children who had not hidden had been "gotten rid of," the man continued. He had only been spared because he worked at the train station.

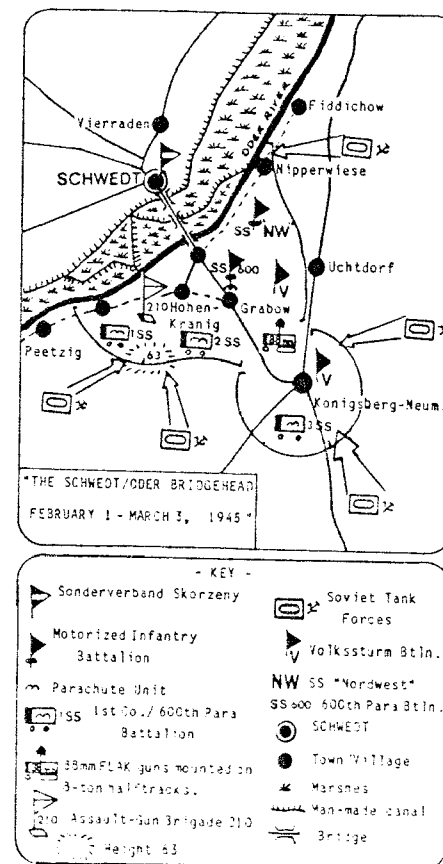
Skorzeny, Markus and his paras slowly crept up to the railroad station. From a distance they could see the Reds. Forty

to fifty T-34/85's stood by the side of the railroad platform in rows. No time could be wasted. They managed to creep back away from the station and prepared to leave. The bridgehead had to be warned of the impending attack. Obersturmführer Markus requested permission from Skorzeny to scour the village for any remaining women and children before leaving, knowing full well that time was of the essence. "I would not have left this God forsaken village without them" was Skorzeny's reply. After scouring the village for the few remaining civilians, the SS group left in much haste. Skorzeny and his men mounted the civilians on their vehicles and left the dead village to its fate. They arrived at Königsberg-Neumark with their eyes full of hate.

Skorzeny and Markus had time to prepare a welcoming committee for the Soviets when about forty tanks and three-four infantry battalions fell upon Königsberg-Neumark. The men of 3. SS Parachute Battalion 600 opened up with small arms fire, the MG-42's cutting deep into the earth-brown ranks of the Soviet infantry. The Soviets, oblivious to the fire and mostly very heavily intoxicated, moved forward irregardless of the casualties they were sustaining. Like a pack of hungry wolves they attacked, always with the same battle-cry: "Urrah!", "Urrah Pobeida!". Their shouts were again and again drowned by the clatter of "Hitler's Saws," mowing them down by the droves.

Now the Soviet tanks came into action, their guns barking angrily at the success the out-numbered German defenders. Panzerfausts began to fly, and tanks began to explode and burn. In spite of it all, the lines of 3. Company were pierced at several places. The Soviets were attacking with too many men and tanks. Markus's men just couldn't hold the tidal wave of death singlehandedly. Skorzeny ordered a withdrawal to the western-half of the town. The battle was concluded when he ordered Markus to withdrawal what was left of his command to Grabow before it was cut-off and completely destroyed. The SS paratroopers withdrew in order, taking with them what also remained of the Königsberg-Neumark Volksturm. Ten Soviet tanks now smouldered in and around the town.

Upon his return to SS para battalion headquarters in Grabow, Skorzeny found Milius and ordered him to prepare for a major enemy assault. Milius interjected briefly by indicating that he (Skorzeny) had a very anxious visitor waiting for him. Skorzeny



tuned and saw a man in Party uniform standing at rigid attention. "I've been waiting here all night Colonel. I've come to report that all is lost in Konigsberg." "I know," came the icy reply. "I was there with your men, where were you?" As head of the Nazi Party in Konigsberg, this man was to have led the town Volkssturm in its defense. Instead, he had fled his command. Skorzeny had him tried and shot.

Now the German bridgehead felt the full fury of a very frustrated enemy. Not less than one full-strength Soviet tank corps, and as many infantrymen threw themselves at the German defenders. The Reds even placed Sovietized Rumanian troops into the fight, apparently knowing that a Rumanian SS regiment was in the bridgehead. Only through sheer determination on the part of Skorzeny's men was the bridgehead held. The cost was as high as before. The SS Parachute Batalion would soon depart from Schwedt minus countless men who had paid for its defense with their lives, in particular platoon and company officers. Milius's SS paras and Skorzeny's commandos held out on the eastern bank of the Oder River until the last moment. This allowed the civilian population still on the "wrong" side of the River Oder to escape.

An order from O.K.W. Headquarters via Army Group Vistula was received, much to the relief of Skorzeny who, as the situation worsened for his men, seriously contemplated withdrawing without orders. There was no further use for the Schwedt Bridgehead. All that it was doing now was draining much needed manpower. Apparently someone else had seen this and convinced the "decision makers" of this fact. The order to withdraw was received and immediately passed on to all of the units in the bridgehead. Looking back at the events of the previous few weeks, Skorzeny could hardly believe he had actually pulled it off. The cost had been high, however. For over a month Skorzeny had held out against ever increasing odds. Between February 1st and March 3rd 1945, the Soviets had been halted. Army Group Vistula had been given a "grace period" in which to form. His "European Division" as Skorzeny was later to write, had formed a bulwark of defense, temporarily blocking the Red Army's advance in the area around Schwedt.

Sturmbannfuehrer Siegfried Milius was standing on the west bank of the Oder by the Schwedt Bridge. Scanning the eastern half, he could see the rear guard troops fighting off the advance



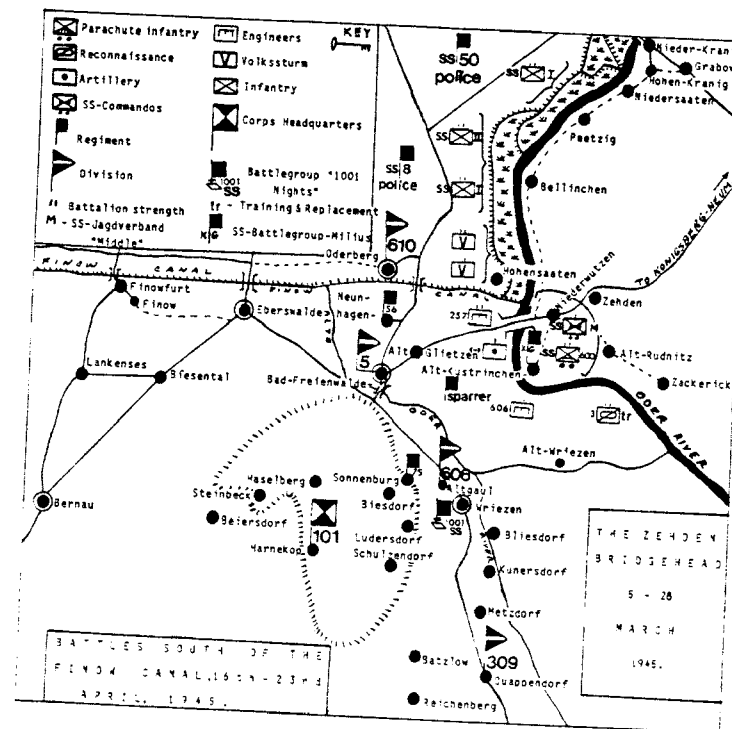
SS paratroopers being congratulated after a successful action in early 1945.

guard of a large Soviet force. He himself had only crossed five minutes before, taking personal charge of the bridge demolition teams. The anxiety of getting his rear guard across in time was running through his temple. Though a cold and merciless wind was blowing full blast, he was sweating and felt hot. Exhaustion was quickly overtaking him. He knew his men were no better off. Now the last platoon was running across the bridge, the men turning every few seconds to let off a couple of rounds of rifle or submachine-gun fire. Many did not make it across the whole expanse of the bridge. No sooner had the last man gotten clear of the steel and concrete structure, that Milius ordered the sappers to detonate the charges. In a series of ever thundering explosions, the last bridge at Schwedt blew up, sending death-dealing shrapnel in all directions. It was all over. Another bloody battle had come to its conclusion.

The war was not over however. No sooner had Milius collected his troops that an order came, requesting 40 parachute trained men to be dispatched to Berlin for its defense. The men were loaded on a lorry from the battalion's baggage train and off they went. This platoon under the command of Obersturmfuehrer Schuermann was first ordered to Friedenthal. Whatever became of this force is not known, even to Sturmbannfuehrer Milius, the last commander of the SS parachute battalion. Though the battalion's motorized allotment of vehicles was ample enough to carry over 1,000 men, too many trucks left Schwedt empty. Milius sat with his men in the rear of one of the trucks. He wondered if after all they had been through, it was possible to go through worse. It was.

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The SS-Fallschirmjager-Bataillon 600 was now moved to an area east of Oderberg for a much needed rest. It was there that the battalion would be reinforced before its next major engagement. They took over positions by the banks of the Oder River. Immediately below the right flank of the battalion, the Finow Canal ran in an east-west direction. This canal connected the Oder River with the Havel River to the west. The battalion now came under the control of Division 610 z.b.V. (Division for special employment 610). This unit was hastily formed from whatever was available. It was a hodge-podge of police, reserve, and Volkssturm units. The 610th Division was commanded



The above situation map describes the positions of the German forces between March 5th and April 16th, 1945. By April 23rd, all German units shown herein were pushed back across the Finow Canal, or south and west of this area. The 610th Division z.b.V. was transferred to the Stettin area to the north during the first week in April. By April 16th, the Germans had brought up the 1st Marine Division to cover the positions vacated by Division 610 z.b.V.



by Lieutenant-General Lendle (the former commander of the 213th Security Division).

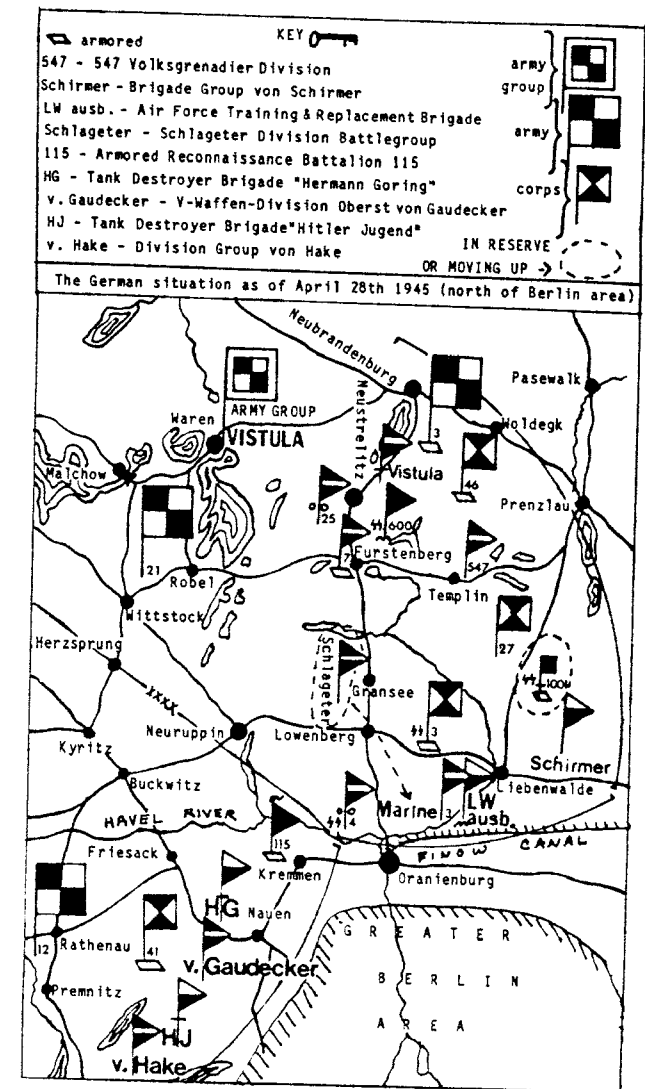
It wasn't long after Milius's battalion relieved the naval infantry regiment holding that area, that a message was received, ordering the transfer of his battalion across the Oder River. The paras were to form part of a battlegroup which was to defend the towns of Niederwutzen, and Alt Kustrinchen on the eastern bank of the Oder, just below the Finow Canal. This bridgehead would become known as the Zehden Bridgehead, named after the town of Zehden, just northeast of Niederwutzen.

One of Skorzeny's commando units (SS-Jagdverband "Mitte"), under the command of SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Fucker was also ordered to the bridgehead. Milius was now given control of this commando unit, and his command was elevated to the status of an SS "kampfgruppen." At this time Milius could count on 800 men from his SS para battalion, plus an equal number of men from SS Jagdverband "Mittle." His force was further augmented by the addition of two 150 mm howitzers from a reserve infantry gun company.<sup>2</sup> This small battery was now commanded by SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Reiche. For armored cars from the Wehrmacht Armored Car Training and Replacement Battalion No. 3. This platoon was handed over to SS-Obersturmfuehrer Schwerdt, who had commanded an SS commando company at Schwedt. The SS battlegroup was topped off by four Panzerkampfwagen IV tanks which happened to be in the area.

It wasn't long after the battlegroup was in position, that the Soviets decided to test out the German defenses. On March 7th the Reds attacked the bridgehead in regimental strength. Despite repeated assaults, the combined SS and Wehrmacht units easily repulsed the Soviet attacks. The Red Army thereafter resorted to artillery bombardments, and local attacks of battalion strength in order to give the Germans no rest while they prepared a full-strength assault on the bridgehead. The Germans were not about to wait for the Soviets to make their move, and instead opted to launch a limited attack themselves.

Under orders to expand the Zehden Bridgehead, the SS para battalion was sent on the offensive. On Saturday March

(2) The Remaining four guns of this company stayed on the west bank of the Oder River.



10th, they moved out from their positions and attacked the enemy units surrounding the southeast perimeter of the bridgehead. Supported by a few PzKpfW IV's, Milius's men pounced on the surprised Soviet defenders. The battalion managed to gain some ground despite stiff Soviet opposition, but failed to reach their objective — the village of Alt-Rudnitz. The Reds were just too numerous and too well supported! The attack did manage to put the Soviets "in their place." Enemy activity thereafter quieted down, the Reds resorting to heavy artillery barrages and infrequent, local attacks.

It took the Soviets less than a week to begin their assault on the Zehden Bridgehead. By Friday March 16th, the Reds were ready to strike. That day the SS troops of SS-Jagdverband "Mitte" got the full brunt of the Soviet attack. In very heavy and costly fighting, the Reds managed to gain 5-6 kilometers but the SS commandos halted any further attempts. The enemy drive was stopped just before reaching Niederwutzen. Milius ordered an immediate counterattack which managed to gain some of the lost ground, but not all of it.

Once again, the German bridgehead was subjected to a very heavy and indiscriminate artillery barrage. It seemed that the Soviets suffered no shortage of supplies for their artillery ammunition was inexhaustable. Enemy attacks continued in frequency and size, causing a slow if steady drain on "Kampfgruppe Milius." By far the biggest cause of casualties on the German side continued to be the Soviet artillery, for which the few German guns could not respond in kind (due to a severe shortage of rounds).

On Sunday March 25th the Soviets launched another major assault. No less than one cavalry division, two infantry brigades, and an armored brigade were brought to bear on the bridgehead. It was at this critical stage in the fighting that fate stepped in to favor the enemy. It seems that through the neglect of the officer in charge of the bridge connecting Milius's battlegroup on the eastern bank of the Oder with the western bank, the demolitions had been left dangerously exposed. When the Soviets opened up with their artillery it wasn't long before a lucky round landed on the explosives, sending the only possible escape route for "Kampfgruppe Milius" flying sky high. For his neglect, the officer (who was a member of the 257th Engineer Battalion) was court-martialed and stripped of rank.

Using over 500 pieces of artillery and supported by scores of

fighter and bomber planes, the Soviets made significant headway, pushing the German defenders ever so tighter between themselves and the bank of the Oder River. Sturmabfuhrer Siegfried Milius described the three-day battle from March 25-27 as the worst fighting his battalion had seen yet. His ever shrinking bridgehead was potted by thousands of craters created by the massive artillery barrage that the Soviets were continuing to lay. "The whole area," Milius was to later write, "was like a cratered Lunar landscape." With ammunition running dangerously low, the SS commando and parachute companies could not hold out much longer. Already they had taken more than 50% casualties. The Soviet attacks became harder and harder to repulse. On March 26th the Soviets reached the outskirts of Alt Kustrinchen. Soviet katyushas flew by the hundreds into the air, terrifying both attackers and defenders. Not a building in the village remained unscathed. Milius's battlegroup headquarters was located in the basement of the local church. His para Headquarters was also located there. Though it was unwise to house such two important command centers together, there wasn't another structure in the village which could resist a direct hit.

The scene in the basement was topped by the rows upon rows of wounded paras, unable to be evacuated because the only bridge across the Oder had been destroyed. Dust and stench from infected wounds ruled. The operating table used by Obersturmfuehrer Dr. Herrman was a much used wooden table, supported by four rickety legs. More than once, the table had to be steadier for fear it might fall to the floor. Above, the depleted SS companies were now nearing exhaustion. The enemy had not given them a rest since the start of their attack the previous day. Milius's defenses at Alt Kustrinchen included his much tested 2. Company, while the remaining SS parachute companies were strung out on either flank of the village.

Obersturmfuehrer Markus had survived the fighting at Schwedt. He was still in charge of 3./SS-Fallschirmjager-Bataillon 600. He had been luckier. His depleted company was holding the left flank of the para battalion at the bridgehead. As such, his line of communications with SS-Jagdverband "Mitte" was the shortest but was constantly being cut by Soviet armored units. Only by costly and difficult counterattacks were his men able to hold a line connecting both battalions. It was 1:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Markus's 3rd Company

had already thrown back four heavy assaults led by tanks. Their supply of panzerfausts were all but exhausted. At the rate they were going, another attack would completely use up the remaining anti-tank weapons. The thought ran through his mind: what would he use against the Red armor then?

The Soviets didn't give him a chance to solve that problem. From his foxhole, he could see the silhouette of a dozen T-34/85s coming over the ridge 500 yards away. Already the Reds were firing their katyushas and heavy 122mm artillery into his positions. Moments later he saw the long rows of brown-earth uniforms heralding the arrival of two full strength Soviet battalions following close behind the 35-ton monsters. Markus ordered his men to hold off firing their panzerfausts until the enemy was within half the required distance necessary for the anti-tank weapons to be effective. This meant that his men would have to wait till the steel giants were almost upon them. In spite of the mental strain this caused, no one left their trenches. Most knew it was better to have the wide tracks of a T-34 run over your foxhold than get caught in the open. You couldn't outrun a T-34, and its crews took special pleasure in crushing any hapless German who tried it.

Small arms fire had already begun; the SS machine gunners aiming between the enemy tanks at the advancing infantrymen. It was useless to fire at the tanks. It would only catch the attention of the tank crews who would thereupon run over your trench, stop, reverse gear, run over the trench again, stop, then rotate the armored fortress until anyone inside it was buried or crushed. Panzerfausts now began to fire, hitting the tanks with such force that some were pulled from the ground by the sheer impact. Turrets blew off like giant fire-crackers, killing their four-man crews and the brave paratrooper who had fired so close. Many of Markus's men died in this manner.

Half a dozen burning wrecks littered the battlefield, but the remaining Soviet tanks got through. There was nothing Markus could do but radio Milius of the penetration. The Soviet infantry men were already swarming over the trenches of 3rd Company. Hand-to-hand fighting now broke out. Markus's Company was cut to pieces. What remained retreated southwest, only to be caught in the open by the enemy tanks which had overrun them earlier. At his headquarters, Milius knew it was time to withdraw from Alt Kustrinchen.

The seriously wounded were sure to die if they were moved, yet death was almost as certain if they remained. The order was passed on to every platoon. Makeshift stretchers were produced. A platoon under Obersturmfuehrer Wabersich volunteered to cover the retreat, almost a death sentence for his men. Milius moved out as quickly as possible. His command depended on it. He had already notified the SS commandos of Jagdverband "Mitte." They still held Niederwutzen, though their positions there were precarious to say the least.

This was the situation facing "Kampfgruppe Milius" on March 26th. That Monday, at the height of this fierce defensive fighting, Dr. Joseph Goebbels (Hitler's Minister of Propaganda) was to write the following: "Enemy *reconnaissance* activity against our bridgeheads at Zehden and Politz increased." It was a good thing that the men of the SS Para Battalion and the SS commandos never found out about Goebels's comment. It would have been the final humiliation, mocking every sacrifice they had and were making. On March 27th Milius's command was dangerously close to being overrun. The SS commandos were finally pushed out of Niederwutzen that day. Time was running out.

On March 27th the new commander of Army Group Vistula, General Gotthard Heinrici, made a final attempt to relieve the trapped German defenders at Kustrin. Again, it failed. That same afternoon, General Heinz Guderian passed on the failed attempt report to Fuehrer Headquarters. Hitler flew into a fury, lashing out at his Army commanders. A special conference was ordered for the following day in order to find the "culprits" of this new failure. Isolated from their own lines and apparently forgotten by their leaders in Berlin, the men of "Kampfgruppe Milius" continued to die by the droves. The time had come to save as many of them as possible.

By the evening of March 27th the Zehden Bridgehead had shrunk considerably. The average depth was now a mere 1,000 yards from the bank of the river Oder. The wounded were already lying by the river, the bank acting as cover from small-arms fire. Against the massive artillery barrages there was no defense however. A Soviet 155mm shell could land with such force that after killing anything within 100 feet, it would bury them with the pounds of dirt it would kick up. Having done everything humanly possible to hold up the Soviets, Milius was sure the moment had come to try and evacuate the bridgehead

(a death-trap was much closer to the truth by then). With no official word from 3rd Panzer Army Headquarters, his withdrawal would be tantamount to desertion in the eyes of the leaders in Berlin. The problem which faced Skorzeny at Schwedt was now the problem Milius faced at the Zehden Bridgehead. The choice was clear, he would evacuate his men. He would carry the wounded across the river if he had to, but he would save some of them.

During the night of March 27th-28th Milius ordered a retreat across the river. Using every imaginable thing which would float, the remnants of his SS Kampfgruppe attempted to cross the icy waters of the Oder. A select number of volunteers remained behind to cover the retreat. Just as in Alt Kustrinchen, this mission was a veritable death sentence to the brave men who chose to stay. Their chances of escaping were nil, but still many came forward and selflessly volunteered. If Milius's body could have had the energy to produce tears, it would have done so, but so exhausted was he that he just could barely voice his thanks. The rest of the battlegroup was just as weary. Truly the spirit of comradeship and sacrifice was still very much alive by the banks of the Oder River.

There was a full moon that Tuesday night of March 27th, 1945. It was to work against the retreating Germans. From their positions, the Soviet tankers and machine-gunners had an unobstructed view of the withdrawal. Exposed as they were, Milius's men suffered heavy losses while crossing the river. A total of eighty men died attempting to cross the river. Many had just been too weak to negotiate the treacherous currents and had drowned. Others had been blown from the water by the 85mm tank shells of the T-34s.

Sturmbannfuehrer Siegfried Milius was one of the last to cross the river. His efforts had not ceased upon reaching the relative safety of the west bank. He had been attending to the wounded during those early hours of March 28th. Milius counted 500 wounded, many of whom were men from his own battalion. He stayed with them, making sure that they were moved to the rear as quickly as possible. The sudden quiet of the east bank caught his attention. He knew it was over for the rear-guard which had stayed behind. Now it was almost sunrise and he hadn't slept in days. The weariness and fatigue of several days of fierce fighting suddenly landed on him like a rock. He found it more and more difficult to gather his thoughts. He

stumbled a couple of times as though he were drunk. "No time to pass out," he thought to himself. There were still more things to be done.

He forced his body to conform to his will, knowing his men felt the same exhaustion. The vehicles which were to take his battalion to Oderberg for several days of much needed rest had by then arrived. He slowly gathered his men together for he seemed to be stuck in slow motion. Little by little, the SS paras fell into some type of order. It was at this time that a telegram arrived from Army Group Vistula, via 3rd Panzer Army. Milius casually opened the telegram and read it; all the while fighting a deep sleep which seemed to be overtaking him.

The message woke him out of his trance. His men even noticed the change on his face. "Men of the 600th Battalion, attention!" Like robots, the ranks of the SS paratroopers stiffened to the call. "I will read you a message from Colonel-General Heinrici, the commander of our Army Group." All ears and mental processes still functioning strained to hear what Milius was about to say:

To  
Sturmbannfuehrer Milius via Pz. A.O.K.3

The combat group commanded by Sturmbannfuehrer Milius showed great bravery in the Zehden Bridgehead and performed its mission unswervingly, in as much as the circumstances permitted this. I would like to express my special admiration of the bold officers and troops.

High Command Army  
Group Vistula  
Commander-in-Chief  
Signed Heinrici  
Colonel-General.

Milius looked across the ranks and noticed those tired and worn-out bodies now seemed to be standing straighter and more erect than ever before. He too had gotten renewed energy from the message. "So someone had not forgotten us after all," thought Milius. It was well and good, for his men deserved at least this much recognition. He folded the telegram and placed it in his pocket. With one command his troops moved off toward the waiting vehicles, all thirty-six of them. *Thirty-six*. With his men now on board, he signalled the driver forward. He

sank down to the floor of the truck between two SS paras who were by now fast asleep. He had opted to drive to Oderberg with his men instead of in his command car. Oblivious to the noise of the truck engine and the bumps on the road, Milius closed his eyes and was soon in a coma-like sleep.

One of Goebbels's entries for March 28th 1945 included this little piece of iniquitous information: "Strong enemy attacks on our bridgehead at Zehden failed apart from a minor break-in." What was so amazing about these written statements was that they were not meant for the German populace, but was written in his daily diary. Either he had been misinformed about the actual situation at the Zehden Bridgehead, or the great propagandist had fooled himself!

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Milius and the survivors of the battle at Zehden spent the first two weeks of April recuperating in Oderberg. The battalion had been shattered. Milius did not have much to work with. Even with the addition of the lightly wounded (who were beginning to rejoin his command), he would be hard-pressed to form the SS Parachute Battalion again. After a few days in Oderberg, Milius began to receive replacements for his virtually annihilated unit. A call for volunteers was sent to all of the SS training schools and academies. Many responded. This influx of trained and physically fit men was to be the one important factor which would bring the parachute battalion back to combat efficiency. These SS cadets and NCOs were not numerous enough to fill up the battalion's very badly depleted ranks, however. Men from the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine were now absorbed into Milius's companies. Very little time did Milius have in getting these raw recruits ready for the most essential of infantry training. In haste they learned their new trade. In time the Battalion reached a new strength of between 800-850 men. The unit was now virtually a new formation, possessing only a handful of parachute trained men.

On April 15th the final battles on the Oder River were about to begin. Army Group Vistula was aware that the Soviet storm would soon break over the horizon. Plans were quickly implemented so that each sector of the front would have a ready-reserve with which to throw back any enemy penetration. The problem was the lack of troops and arms which the Army Group was acutely short of. Experienced and seasoned troops

were rare commodities by 1945. One such emergency formation was Kampfgruppe "1001 Nachts" (Battlegroup "1001 Nights"). Sturmbannfuehrer Siegfried Milius was now obliged to give up one of his companies to this newly forming battlegroup. Reluctantly, Milius gave the order for one of his companies to join "1001 Nachts." With the new MP-43s and MP-44s slung over their shoulders, the men moved onto their trucks and left Oberberg for the South. For six days this Company would be separated from the Battalion. It would join its parent organization at Finowfurt for the defense of that town.

Kampfgruppe "1001 Nachts" was to be under the command of a Wehrmacht officer. Major Blanchois was a former officer from Infantry Regiment 5 in Stettin. He had seen service in France and Russia. He had commanded a battalion of the 12th Panzer Division and after being wounded in battle, had been awarded the Knight's Cross. After a period of convalescence he had been posted as Army Group Adjutant for Army Group Vistula.

Now he was to command this special formation of mixed Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS troops. It was obvious that he was being entrusted with such an important mission because of his past experience (and his Knight's Cross). The main components of Battlegroup "1001 Nachts" were as follows: SS-Jagdpanzer-Abteilung 560 z.b.V (SS-Tank Hunter Battalion 560 for Special Employment), Panzeraufklarrung-Abteilung "Speer." The SS parachute company finished the organization. The SS-Jagdpanzer-Abteilung 560 z.b.V had recently been at the disposal of the "Kommandostab Reichfuehrer-SS" before being posted to "1001 Nachts." Its armored strength comprised eight STG-III Sturmgeschutz (Assault guns), and forty-four Jagdpanzer 38-T "Hetzer" tank destroyers. On April 7th the 560th SS Tank Destroyer Battalion had the above named vehicles in various stages of combat readiness:

	Combat Ready	Short Repair	Medium Repair	Long Repair	Total
STG-III	6	—	2	—	8
Hetzer	37	1	6	—	44
Total	43	1	8	—	52

The Battalion was given the code name "Suleika." The first commander of this unit was Sturmbannfuehrer Wost, while the last was Hauptsturmfuehrer Markowz (taking over for Wost

who was killed-in-action). The battalion was split up as follows: a headquarters company, supply company, plus three Jagdpanzer and one assault gun company. The Battalion's headquarters company contained a few armored recovery vehicles. All in all, it was a very formidable and well constructed unit, led by experienced officers and men. Its one weakness lay in the relatively weak armor it had to work with. The Hetzers were very small and agile armored fighting vehicles, yet they were relatively slow (42 km/h). Its 75mm Pak 39 L/48 could match the Soviet's medium armored vehicles, but was no match for the T-34/85 or heavier tanks. Its thickest armored protection in the front was only 60mm (20mm on its sides and rear). As such, it was easily destroyed. The STG-IIIs had already been superceded by better assault guns, but they could hold their own against the T-34/85s (in the defense). Its frontal armor was thicker (30mm) than the Hetzer's, though the armament was the same. The speed was better than the Hetzers, but most Soviet tanks could still run rings around it. Speed was not so essential in the defensive role that they would be employed in.

Panzeraufklarrung-Abteilung "Speer" was formed from the militarized members of the Reich Arbeitsdienst (RAD), or National Labor Service. Until recently, this unit had been the personal escort of Albert Speer, the German Armaments Minister. It contained one motorcycle company (made up almost exclusively of the semi-tracked motorcycle — the kettenkrad), and an armored car company. The armored car company contained vehicles carrying the four-barelled 20mm Flak gun and 75mm anti-tank guns mounted on halftracks. The SS parachute company was designated to be the battlegroup's escort company, a place of trust and honor, signifying its elite status.

On April 16th 1945, Satan unleashed his demons on Army Group Vistula. Thousands of cannons of various calibers erupted into action. The whole first line German defenses were pulverized. Entire Katyusha rocket regiments screamed, sending their terrifying payloads unto the German hinterland. The noise was deafening and horrifying at the same time. "1001 Nachts" was quickly moved forward through Wriezen (37 km east-northeast of Berlin) and deployed, ready to counterattack the inevitable breakthrough that would occur. Now the Soviets were to move forward hoards of tanks and assault guns. Some

of these monsters carried 100mm and 122mm anti-tank guns. Not only was Kampfgruppe "1001 Nachts" out-numbered almost 6 to 1 in armor, it was also out-gunned.

During the evening of April 16th, "1001 Nachts" had received reports from front line units of Soviet armored penetrations that afternoon. Patrols were sent out through the Wriezen Highway via Thoringswerden and Alt-Lewin. As daylight faded and night arrived, the patrols encountered more and more enemy tanks and infantrymen. Untersturmfuehrer Tiso, a platoon commander, received orders to make a reconnaissance in force north of Wriezen. He was to be supported by the battlegroup's escort company of SS paratroopers. Tiso's recon mission turned into a full-fledged fire-fight. The Soviets had brought up four tank battalions (80 vehicles) plus supporting infantrymen. The paratroopers now hugged the ground and proceeded to give Tiso's tank destroyers infantry support. Panzerfausts were drawn and prepared to be fired. Protected by darkness, the Soviet units moved forward, only to be stopped in their tracks by the shells of Tiso's platoon firing from the forest on the right side of the highway north of Wriezen. The SS paras crept forward, well camouflaged by the grass and the cover darkness was providing. The Soviets were already blasting the forest to smithereens with the 122mm guns of their Joseph Stalin tanks when the first of the Panzerfausts scored a hit. The hollow-charged weapon pierced the 90mm of armor on the side of the JS-II, causing a bang inside the turret which was almost instantly followed by an explosion which blew the turret off the fifty-ton beast. Other paratroopers had similar results, sending the Soviet armor scurrying into the woods on the eastern side of the highway. Soviet infantry now moved forward. Against them, the SS parachute company held their own, but only with the aid of Tiso's tank destroyers. Precious rounds were used that night.

By now the entire SS-Jagdpanzer-Bataillon 560 z.b.V. had been alerted and were on their way. More Soviet armored units made their appearance and attempted to by-pass Wriezen. Kampfgruppe "1001 Nachts" held the Soviet armored units for three days. Heavily out-numbered, the German defenses soon broke. The battlegroup was forced to withdraw before it was encircled. Wriezen fell on the 19th of April. "1001 Nachts" now made a fighting retreat through Kunersdorf, Vevais, Ludersdorf, Biesdorf, and Haselberg. At Haselberg, Major

Blancois attempted to reorganize his command in order to try once again to stem the Soviet tidal wave.

1. Co./SS-Jagdpanzer-Bataillon 560 z.b.V. and the SS paras were ordered to stop the Soviet Juggernaut between Wriezen and Haselberg. A battery of Wehrmacht assault guns (from Sturmgeschutz-Brigade 111) which happened to be in the area, lent their support. The date was April 20th, Hitler's birthday. With the four remaining Hetzers of 1st Company and the Wehrmacht assault guns, the SS paras met the Soviet armor. Again the German tank crews were out-numbered and out-gunned. They met their fate fatalistically — "Graf, this is our last stand!", shouted Hstuf. Nicolai. Outside these future coffins, the SS paras were still in action, stalking the biggest monster tanks they could find. The heavier the tank you destroyed, the more guts you had. It was a game that many SS paratroopers died playing. With Panzerfausts, sachel charges and mere hand grenades the paras preyed on the enemy armor. Soviet infantrymen were given secondary importance.

Hauptscharfuehrer Nicolai's words proved prophetic, but not before his tank destroyer brewed up thirteen enemy armored vehicles. Nicolai's tank destroyer was finally knocked out by a lucky hit from a Soviet artillery piece. Eventually, the rest of SS Tank Destroyer Battalion 560 was committed to the fighting around Haselberg. The Battalion was effectively put out of action between Wriezen and Haselberg. Between April 17-19th, its 1st Co. had lost Obersturmfuehrer Link (the Company chief), plus all of its platoon leaders! The roster of the men killed in the other companies was as follows:

Obersturmfuehrer Dittmann, Company Chief, 2nd Co.;  
killed on April 18th.

Untersturmfuehrer Leier, Company Leader, 2nd Co.;  
killed on April 19th.

Obersturmfuehrer Sprenger, Company Chief, 3rd Co.;  
killed on April 19th.

Hauptsturmfuehrer Leihs, Company Chief, 4th Co.;  
killed on April 19th.

On April 20th while Kampfgruppe "1001 Nachts" fought it out near Haselberg, Sturmbannfuehrer Siegfried Milius received orders to move out from his reserve positions at Oderberg. His orders directed him to attempt a link-up with Kampfgruppe "1001 Nachts" and attack the flanks of the Red

armored units now nearing Bernau (about 20-21 km west-southwest of Haselberg). Luckily his battalion still possessed enough motor vehicles to carry his men. Meanwhile, "1001 Nachts" had been pushed back to the Haselberg-Steinbeck area after some very hard fighting. The battlegroup had gotten some much needed rest in the forest by Melchow. It was there that the last remaining Hetzers were refueled and ammunition distributed. Every round have to count, for there was no more available. Blancois quickly reorganized his command (what was left of it), and readied his battlegroup once again for action.

General chaos now overtook the German front. Soviet armored spearheads took Harnekop (the site of 101st Army Corps Headquarters) on April 19th. To the east and southeast, Schulzendorf, Metzdorf, Batzlow, and Reichenberg had already been overrun. This area had been held by the weak division Stab 606 z.b.V. and the 390th Infantry Division "Gross Berlin." Both of these units had now been shattered. Further north, the 5. Jaeger Division's right flank now became dangerously exposed. This unit was the southernmost division of the 101st Army Corps. The commander of the 5th Jaeger Division, General-Leutnant Thumm, ordered a withdrawal. With this order the fate of the German defense between the Finow Canal and as far south as Strausberg was sealed. In any case it was irrelevant because a gap had been made wide enough for the whole Soviet Army to get through. A bigger hole would make little difference.

The scene was now set for the closing chapter of the history of the SS-Fallschirmjager-Bataillon. With their attack at Bernau now over (it had produced high enemy tank losses, but had failed to stop the Red units), the parachute battalion and what was left of "1001 Nachts" retreated towards Eberswalde, to the northeast. Other units now pushed northwest towards Eberswalde included the 25th Panzergrenadier Division, Sturmgeschutz-Brigade 111 and 184, and SS Regiment "Solar" (actually SS-Panzergrenadier-Regiment 7). These units now attempted to cross the Finow Canal at Eberswalde. Milius's battalion suppressed its desire to withdraw across, and instead acted as one of the rear-guards for other German units. "1001 Nachts" aided them as best they could.

Not having enough time to cross the canal at Eberswalde, both units withdrew further west to Finowfurt. It was there that Milius was again ordered to counterattack the armored



thrusts the enemy had made nearby. Milius knew that it was impossible. His small force was just not capable of stopping the huge armored and infantry units the enemy had. He decided to save his battalion for a less insane order. Having never disobeyed an order before, Milius had a change in heart and prepared to go on the offensive. Luckily the Soviets launched an attack of their own against Finowfurt. The attack had to be postponed indefinitely (much to Milius's relief). Fighting as they withdrew, Milius's battalion made it across the Finow Canal before German sappers sent the bridge flying sky high.

The right flank of 3rd Panzer Army was now clearly in danger of being rolled-up. SS General Felix Steiner (who had been without troops of his own since April 17th) was ordered to the north banks of Finow by Eberswalde, and charged with the task of defending the canal, covering 3rd Panzer Army's right flank. At first his forces included Pioneer-Regiment-Stab 16 (Engineer Regimental Staff 16), Pioneer-Bataillon 630 (Engineer Battalion 630), and Panzer-Aufklarungs-Abteilung 115 (Armored Reconnaissance Battalion 115). Steiner's IIIrd (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps could now boast of having two battalions! Other reinforcements of more substance were on their way. The 4th SS-Polizei-Panzergrenadier-Division which had been virtually destroyed during the fighting around Danzig, was on its way after its cadre was evacuated by sea. Already one of its regiments (SS-Panzergrenadier-Regiment 7) had been fighting under 3rd Panzer Army as an independent unit (SS-Regiment "Solar"). Part of the 4th SS-Polizei-Division reached Gamzon where it was built-up with replacements from the SS-Ausbildungs-Brigade 103/(530?). The commander of this brigade was Obersturmbannfuhrer Lang. Another unit which eventually joined Steiner's SS Corps was Flak-Regiment "Goering."

On April 21st Steiner's command was redesignated an Armeekorps Abteilung (Army Detachment). Not only was he now to block the enemy's advance along the general line Spandau-Oranienburg-Finow-Finowfurt, but he was to prepare an attack from the Finowfurt area at the flanks of the advancing Red Army. The ultimate aim would be a drive all the way to the German capital, relieving the surrounded city. It was in incredible order since Steiner neither possessed the resources nor the men to carry it out.

Further units were allocated to Steiner though their grand-

ose sounding names never really described their actual size and inadequate condition. In this way, Panzer-Jagd-Division "Weichsel" (Vistula), Panzer-Jagd-Brigade "Kramnitz" Pioneer-Bataillon 968, and Fortress Machine-Gun Battalion 116 were added to Steiner's Armeekorps Abteilung. Later that day, Hitler gave Steiner three additional units: the long promised 4th SS Police Division, the 5. Jaeger Division, and the 25. Panzergrenadier Division. Again, while these forces looked very impressive, they did not really reflect their actual condition. Steiner did not attack across the Finow Canal as ordered. He either disobeyed or the enemy never gave him the chance to develop an attack. The two bridgeheads which he had across the canal (at Finowfurt and Eberswalde) were ordered evacuated on the 23rd. Milius's para battalion was the last unit to get across at Finowfurt after having acted as rear-guard for the withdrawing German forces.

On April 26th, a major enemy penetration at Prenzlau had occurred. The whole of 3rd Panzer Army was now threatened. For three days, Milius's battalion had been in reserve positions by the banks of the Finow Canal near Finowfurt. A major Soviet assault was anticipated there any day. Though the Finow Canal offered some type of natural water barrier against the enemy. It was not expected to hold the Soviets for long. Milius's battalion never got to see the enemy assault, for on the day that the Soviets broke through at Prenzlau his battalion was ordered north. It was around 50 kilometers between Eberswalde and Prenzlau, about the same distance that the SS parachute battalion had to move from their positions north of Finowfurt.

3rd Panzer Army was now obliged to shift the 25th Panzergrenadier Division and the newly arriving 7th Panzer Division to the Prenzlau area. Both units needed time in which to assemble and prepare a counterattack. In the meantime, the SS paratroopers were to provide a blocking force which would hopefully hold up the enemy advance long enough for the larger Wehrmacht units to attack. As usual, it was a desperate situation no one wanted. Had Milius known that one of the divisions earmarked for the counterattack (the 7th Panzer) had arrived without a single tank, he would have realized that the sacrifices his men were making were for nothing. The German counterattack would peter out just as soon as it was started.

One battalion, no matter how well motivated, could not



hold up the Soviet tank corps which were now making their way towards 3rd Panzer Army's rear. The SS para battalion fought stiff rear-guard actions as it withdrew north, towards Neubrandenburg. There it fought in the defense of the town in a battle which lasted all night. It then moved south and took part in the German counterattack at Neustrelitz. In this engagement the German XLVI Panzer Corps attempted to hold off the main brunt of the Soviet 2nd Byelorussian Front. The German divisions included the 7th Panzer, 25th Panzer-grenadier, Panzer-Jagd "Weichsel," 547th Volksgrenadier, and the 1st Marine Infantry Division. By far the strongest unit was the 12,000-man 1st Marine Division,<sup>3</sup> though it's ex-sailors were very inexperienced.

The attack was launched on April 28th, and as predicted, it failed. Organized resistance soon collapsed. The commander of the 3rd Panzer Army, General Hasso von Manteuffel, ordered a general retreat of all Army units towards the West. He hoped that his troops would be able to reach the American and British lines, thus sparing his men the fate that awaited them if they fell into Soviet captivity.

With this order in hand, Milius now attempted to reach the lines of the 12th German Army southwest of Neustrelitz. The Soviet forces were making quick headway in the face of no real organized defense. In this way Milius's command was cut-off and surrounded at Neuruppin (44 km south-southwest of Neustrelitz) by superior, mobile Soviet armed forces. No one there wanted to make a stand. Milius's request to defend the town was turned down by the Wehrmacht commanders who only thought of breaking out of the trap. In the end, the burden of defense fell on the SS para battalion whose morale was still holding up in spite of the chaos going on around it. Milius's parachute companies were still quite intact (having between 80-100 men apiece). The final agony of the SS Fallschirmjagers was about to begin.

On April 30th, the Soviets attacked Neuruppin with not less than two tank corps and an equal number of cavalry divisions.

(3) The head of the German Navy, Grand-Admiral Karl Doenitz had released 50,000 sailors for duty as ground combat troops in 1945. In this way, four Marine infantry divisions were formed (Nos. 1-4). All these men were physically fit, but their experience as infantrymen was nil. Many paid with their lives for this lack of training (among them was Vice-Admiral Scheurten, the commander of the 2nd Naval Division).

The Wehrmacht troops trapped in the town had no time to break out. They had to fight it out. The SS paras would get the brunt of the attack for the Wehrmacht units were no longer capable of holding the main line of defense. Armed only with panzerfausts, satchel charges, and small arms, the paratroopers held off the enemy advance during the whole day.

Again and again the Soviet tanks would lead off the attacks, only to be halted and repulsed by Milius's paras. In turn, Soviet cossack cavalry regiments would take the lead, hundreds of them swirling their sabres high above their heads. MG-42s spewed their deadly steel at the rows of cossacks, bringing dozens of whining horses and their masters down to the ground. Soon the field was littered with burning tanks and dead and dying horses, whose contorted bodies added to the grotesque scene. Now this mass of flesh, blood, and burning steel created an odor which rose up to the sky, nauseating both opponents.

By the end of the second attack, an entire battalion of Soviet tanks (about 20 vehicles) and hundreds of horses and men covered the battlefield. Milius had been following the events of the day's fighting in the trenches. The time was 1:30 in the afternoon. The second assault had used up all of the remaining panzerfausts. More could be had at Battalion Headquarters, though the supply was not inexhaustible. Milius quickly ordered runners to be sent from each company in order to bring back a fresh supply. In groups of two's they scurried off towards the rear. Not half an hour had passed when the enemy again launched an attack. This third assault would have to be dealt with only hand grenades and satchel charges.

Again the Soviet troops flung themselves at the paras. As in countless previous battles, the SS paratroopers allowed the Soviet tanks to overrun their positions. Quickly springing out of their one and two-man foxholes, the sappers went to work on the Soviet tanks. Grenades were taped together then flung at the tracks of a T-34, exploding with a loud boom, causing the tank tracks to be disengaged from the wheels of the steel monster. Others attempted to climb on board the rumbling beasts, only to be cut down by the guns of the Soviet infantry. Some lucky men managed to destroy tanks in this manner. By far the most dangerous but effective way was to run up to an advancing tank from its side, jump in front and fall to the ground. The tank tracks would hopefully pass on either side of

the para, who would attach a satchel charge to the tank's belly. Supposedly enough time was available for the paratrooper to escape being killed (though many times their trips beneath the armored monsters were their last). The lines were held against this third assault, but it cost the Battalion dearly.

At exactly 3:15 p.m. the Soviets launched their fourth attack of the day. Again as before, the terrifying noise of the Soviet Katyusha rockets were heard screaming overhead and slamming into the positions of Milius's very exhausted paratroopers. The wooden heath which had been protecting them all day glowed with the burning wood, scorching its occupants and polluting their lungs with a black, thick smoke. The Panzerfausts had again been distributed and the paras, tired and weary as they were, again stopped the enemy assault. By the time dusk had arrived, the SS-Fallschirmjager-Bataillon 600 had thrown back a total of nine major enemy armored assaults. The last of these attacks had broken the back of Milius's companies. No. 3 Company, which had begun the day with 84 effectives, could not only muster thirty men! The other rifle companies were in similar condition.

With the cover of darkness to blind their enemy, Milius ordered his companies to withdraw. Forming up his remaining men on a dark and deserted back road west of Neuruppin, Milius took count. Milius had started the day with around 400-440 men. 180 now remained, barely one full-strength company! Further resistance was now useless. He ordered his men grouped into assault platoons and moved off. By night they managed to escape the Soviet encircling units and reached Waren, some 64 kilometers to the north in a couple of days of force marching. From there his small force turned west and passed Malchow and Parchim. He then marched his men to Hagenau (southwest of Schwerin). There he surrendered his force to elements of the American 9th Army.

It was finally over. The German capital had fallen a few days earlier, Hitler had committed suicide (Germanic custom dictates that a chief of state should never fall into the hands of the enemy hands alive.). Fear of being turned over to the Soviets now engulfed Milius and his men. The Americans had made a practice of doing this with every German unit which had fought mainly in the Eastern Front. In particular, they took great pains to hand over SS units to the Soviets and their tender mercies. The 3rd SS-Totenkopf-Panzer-Division was one

such unit which naively surrendered to U.S. troops, only to be handed over to the Soviets who butchered the defenseless men en masse.

Fate stepped in to favor Milius however, and he and his men were transferred to an SS work camp. Though conditions in these camps verged on being brutal, they were glad they had escaped the war with the skin on their backs. A year had passed since that fateful day in May 1944, yet it seemed to Milius like they had been fighting for much longer than that. As peace slowly covered the countries of Europe, people turned their attention to the problem of rebuilding their lands and forgetting the worst war the world had ever seen. The SS parachute battalion faded away, long to be forgotten by victors and vanquished alike. Yet, the memories of the dead paras were not totally obliterated. They lived on in the hearts and in the minds of the few survivors of the SS paratroop force. To these dead comrades this story has been dedicated. You shall not be forgotten!

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#### Conclusions

It would be ridiculous to consider the military value of a single battalion on the outcome of the Second World War. In order for us to consider its real worth we have to first know the reasons behind its formation and then compare its objectives with its military successes. The SS-Fallschirmjager-Bataillon 500 was originally formed on Hitler's direct instructions. The Battalion was then placed at the direct disposal of the Fuehrer. It can be correctly interpreted that the Battalion was formed to carry out special missions which no other branch of service could accomplish, or be entrusted to accomplish.

Otto Skorzeny had proven the value of such units when he rescued Benito Mussolini in 1943. Though Skorzeny's SS commandos could boast of training and leadership nowhere else found in the German Army, The SS parachute battalion had been trained in a similar manner, but had the added advantage of being parachute trained. The only drop made during its short lifespan was at Drvar in May 1944. This turned out to be a partial success since it disrupted Marshal Tito's command for several months afterwards. The capture or elimination of

the Yugoslav partisan leader was not achieved however. This was the most important objective of their mission. As such, the drop can be considered a failure, one that would haunt the German Army in the Balkans in the coming months.

This failure should not be reflected on the men of the SS para battalion. The mission they were given was almost impossible. What is amazing is that in spite of all the odds, these men actually came so close to succeeding.

As Otto Skorzeny forwarned, the problem of getting Tito was a delicate one, requiring guile and stealth, not massive brute force. For the rest of its existence, the Battalion was used as regular ground combat troops, certainly a waste of much talented manpower. Hitler's interest in the unit soon faded. Once the Battalion was committed to the grinding war in the East, it lost the purpose for which it was formed. It was sheer lunacy (and in the end, out of sheer desperation for lack of troops) that this battalion of skilled and well-trained soldiers were committed to anything but unorthodox fighting.

It is a credit to its officers and men that the Battalion managed to survive the war for as long as it did. As it turned out, it was virtually destroyed several times — at Drvar, Riga, Zehden, and Neuruppin. Because the Battalion was used only once in the intended purpose it was formed for, we can theorize that it was not worth forming. The fact that it existed, and helped numerous times to delay the collapse of the Third Reich cannot be overlooked, however.

It would be better to compare these men with the elite units of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS. In the end they were used as elite infantrymen. They served their country in this fashion and I might add, in this fashion they served extremely well!

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#### A Note on Sources

The idea to write a story about the men who served in the SS parachute force was the result of a burning desire to lift the veil of mystery from the more obscure formations of the Waffen-SS. In 1986 the last commander of the SS Parachute Battalion, SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Siegfried Milius co-authored a photo history on *His Paras*. Containing hundreds of rare illustrations, supplemented by a substantial text in both German and English, his work will soon become a classic.

Though some authors have gone into some detail concerning the SS paras at Drvar, very little else had been known about them. This book fills in the missing pieces to the puzzle on the history of the SS Parachute Battalion. In effect, writing about the SS paratroopers was like putting together a very hard puzzle. I have had to research over sixty different works since no one source contained *the* definite account. Certainly Mr. Milius's work can be listed as a primary source, and comes very highly recommended.

Translating the text in the German volumes was a substantial time consuming problem. There was no way to get around this however, since most of the "hard" information can only be found in the German language. I also had to deal with one book in Italian, though thankfully, I did not have to translate very much.

As stated before, sufficient information has been written about the drop on Drvar. For my story I used several classics. Otto Kumm's work on the history of the 7th SS-Freiwilligen-Gebirgs-Division "Prinz Eugen" immediately come to mind. James Lucas has offered an excellent account of Rybka's airborne assault on Tito's headquarters in his book, *Kommando: German Special Forces in WWII*. This is the only English-language work which goes into any kind of detail about the drop. Incidentally, Mr. Lucas was wise enough to use Mr. Kumm's work as one of his primary references.

Charles Whiting's classic, *Hunters from the Sky: The German Parachute Corps 1940-45* was of limited though helpful use. For a look at the events in the partisan camp, Vladimir Dedijer's *Tito* is a must. Though it is typically one-sided, he does manage to write a fairly accurate piece of work from a military point of view. Another book along the same lines is *Wartime*, written in 1978 by Milovan Djilas. Djilas became very critical of the Tito regime in the early 1950s. He was thereafter "put away in a box" in order to keep the Yugoslav people from listening to him. Occassionally he has made headlines, most recently in 1986 for criticizing the current Yugoslav regime. He is still a Communist, however, and his book should be read with this in mind.

Otto Skorzeny and his SS commando forces will forever be linked to their close cousins in the SS parachute force. Anyone who has read about both forces will agree that their paths crossed on several occasions. It is thanks to this that allowed me to merge the separate pieces of their history into one story.

Charles Foley's *Commando Extraordinaire* and Skorzeny's first autobiography (*Skorzeny's Special Missions*) are classics which are must reading. Erich Busch's *Die Fallschirmjäger Chronik 1935-45* offered only two and a half pages on the SS paras, but he managed to describe every engagement accurately.

The several volumes in the bibliography dealing with the Brandenburg commandos were very helpful. These men were the first commandos. Many chose to continue their activities in Skorzeny's SS-Jagdverbands. Their history helped to understand the Waffen-SS commando units, which in turn helped me to learn about the SS paratroopers. For specific incidents in time I have consulted the best works available to me. The Mussolini raid was accurately described in Skorzeny's book as well as Mr. Foley's work. Melton Davis gave some coverage to this event which was lacking in the above two works.

The "Hungarian Interlude" was very well covered in Eric Kern's *Die Letzte Schlacht*, and Walter Warlimont's *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*. Burkhart Mueller-Hillebrand's work was also of help on this subject. Some books offered very small and specific information such as *Sturmartillerie* (by the team of Kurowski and Tornau). This excellent book on the German assault gun artillery arm for example, covered the history of the Sturmgeschütz-Brigade 210 which was so vital in describing the events at the Schwedt Bridgehead. Another example is Wilhelm Tieke's work on the battle for Berlin. While General-Major Hans von Alfen gives us (to a lesser extent) the events surrounding the call for SS paratroopers to support the defense of Breslau.

To describe of what help every single book in my bibliography was in writing this story is not necessary, as well as being silly. My intent here has been to guide the reader to the basic books they need if they wish to further research the story of the SS Parachute Battalion. I must call attention to two more works which must be mentioned. These include Kurt Mehner's multi-volume work on the secret war diary of the O.K.W., and George Tessin's masterpiece, *Verbände und Truppen der Deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS, 1939-1945*. They are musts for the serious student of the Waffen-SS (and the German Armed Forces in general). Though expensive, I have never regretted purchasing these sets. They are the first books I look at during my research.

Finally, if you are a subscriber to *Siegrunen* you must notice

that my earlier story (dealing with the Ostturkischer-Waffenverbände) was written in a narrative style. I found it unwise to do the same for the story on the SS parachute force since it was quite long. Somewhere between the first rough draft and the actual typing I realized that in order to keep the reader's interest in such a very long history, I would have to change my style of writing completely.

The result is what I believe to be a "you are there as it happened" story. I felt that the article needed a "conclusions" section in order to make some sense of what was accomplished by these men. Reading their story will make you realize that in spite of everything, they did serve a purpose in the war, though not what they were originally intended for. No one can take away their bravery and their accomplishments. In the end, that is exactly what this story attempted to describe.

\* \* \*

#### Postscript

The following information has only surfaced just recently. Thus it was not included in the main text. I felt enough material was now in my hands to warrant writing this postscript. No doubt more information will eventually surface in the future, a sign that the history of the SS Parachute Battalion deserves to be told in book form. Perhaps one day such a project can be approached.

SS-Obersturmfuehrer Dr. Wilhelm Wagner served as the Battalion dentist from the unit's initial formation up until November 9th, 1944, when he was transferred and posted to the Berlin SS Garrison Command. Dr. Wagner was 42 years old in 1944.

The structure and command roster of Sturmgeschütz-Brigade 210 on January 21st 1945 was as follows:

Commander: Major Langel  
 Adjutant: Oberleutnant Althoff  
 Ordnance Officer: Leutnants Apprich and Ingendaay  
 Paymaster: Oberzahlmeister Schobe  
 Troop Doctor: Oberleutnant Dr. Carl  
 Technical Officer: Oberleutnant Latzel  
 Reconnaissance Officer: Oberleutnant Wiloth

Headquarters Staff Battery: Oberleutnant Ahrendt  
 1. Battery: Oberleutnant Gedeck  
 Platoon Leaders: Oberleutnant Randzio, Leutnant Hanstein  
 2. Battery: Oberleutnant Schmeing-Engberding  
 Platoon Leaders: Leutnants Uhlig and Knechtel  
 3. Battery: Hauptman Vincon  
 Platoon Leaders: Leutnants Kohler and Naumann  
 5. Battery: Oberleutnant Lindemann  
 Platoon Leaders: Oberleutnant Bachmann

The Waffen-SS contingent at the Schwedt Bridgehead consisted of the following units and commanders:

SS-Jagd-Verbande Mitte under SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Fucker<sup>4</sup>  
 SS-Fallschirmjaeger-Bataillon 600 under SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Siegfried Milius  
 SS-Sturm-Kompanie under SS-Obersturmfuehrer Otto Schwerdt<sup>5</sup>  
 SS-Scharfschutzen-Kompanie<sup>6</sup> under SS-Obersturmfuehrer Otto Wisler

(4) SS-Untersturmfuehrer Walter Girg was commander of 1st Kompanie, SS-Jagd-Verbande Mitte.

(5) Otto Schwerdt would later be killed-in-action while leading a flank counterattack near Grabow.

(6) SS-Scharfschutzen-Kompanie (SS Sharpshooter's Company). This company was still in the process of forming. It contained only 70 men when it was committed to the Schwedt Bridgehead. This company, and the SS-Sturm-Kompanie, were held in ready-reserve on the eastern bank of the bridgehead. They were to be employed as a last reserve, and eventually took part in some of the most heavy fighting.

## WAFFEN-SS MISCELLANY

SS-Ustuf. Erich Biebl, born 27 September 1910 in what became Czechoslovakia, served with the 5th Company, Schutzmannschafts Battalion 57 (Ukrainian), Field Post Nr. 15 119. This became a battalion in the 1st Regiment (later Waffen-Grenadier Regiment der SS 75) of the 30th Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS "Weissruthenien" (Russian Nr. 2) in 1944. Biebl was last heard from in Kattowitz, Poland, in January 1945.

\* \* \*

The POW camp at Blatna in Czechoslovakia was a quickly set up facility that in early May 1945 was only guarded on its perimeters by four American tanks. As a result many inmates attempted to escape. Among those that fled were Ostuf. Paul Weeks, Oscha. Schulze-Koenig, SS-Junker Jost, and a veterinary assistant from the 9th Company, SS Cavalry Training and Replacement Regiment "Beneschau." All but the vet assistant were captured and murdered by Czech partisans. The latter individual was later captured but returned alive to the Blatna Camp.

\* \* \*

The SS Replacement Commando Greifenberg located in Pomerania, was the reporting station for trained French volunteers for the 33rd SS Division "Charlemagne" (France Nr. 1), at least until February-March 1945.

\* \* \*

SS-Jaeger Battalion 500, SS-Sturmjaeger Regiment "Bobruisk," was deployed in the Parititschi Bridgehead during the winter of 1943-1944 and later saw action around Bereska-Kartuska; possibly under the control of 292nd Infantry Division.

\* \* \*

SS Construction Brigade 5, with a Field Post Number of 15 566, was located in the south Harz-Thuringia area from January to March 1945. Its fate is unknown.

SS Construction Brigade 6, with a Field Post Number of 22 873, was located at the Berlin-Lichterfelde Barracks from January to March 1945 with a contingent in Dresden. Its fate is also unknown.

SS Front Worker's Construction Brigade (SS-Frontarbeiter Baubrigade), Field Post Number 39 764, was deployed in Kurland from January to March 1945. This was possibly a mixed unit, containing personnel from the Army and Police. Like the others, its fate is unknown.

\* \* \*

At around noon on 26 March 1945, three American fighter-bombers attacked the XIII. SS Army Corps hospital train on the Huettenheim-Russheim railroad line even though it was clearly marked with Red Cross signs on the top for easy identification from the air. Three strafing runs were made at the defenseless train which was packed with hundreds of badly wounded soldiers. A panic set in, during which some of the wounded men tried to flee the train only to be gunned down by the planes' machine guns. Out of the sheer anger many of the soldiers stood their ground and shot back at the planes with their pistols. A large number of fatalities resulted from this cowardly war crime.

\* \* \*

SS-Unterscharfuehrer Momm of the "Dirlewanger" Brigade (see *Siegrunen* 42, page 12), won back his old rank and position as a result of his outstanding battlefield achievements with the SS Penal formation. At the end of the war he was once again an Army Oberst and commander of the Army Riding and Driving School at Krampnitz. He died in retirement after the war in Munich.

\* \* \*

As far as can be determined, the half-dozen known SS Construction Brigades were composed of concentration camp

inmates supervised by military personnel and never saw any combat usage.

\* \* \*

SS-Hstuf. Hermann Kling (born 15 October 1914; SS Nr. 115,132), was a company commander in the SS-Panzer Grenadier Training Regiment at Neweklau, Bohemia-Moravia. Neweklau was the training facility for members of the never fully formed Assault Gun Detachment of 33. SS Division "Charlemagne."

\* \* \*

Bruno Lembach volunteered for the Waffen-SS on 15 April 1941 and served in the SS Mountain Artillery Regiment 6, "Nord." He was an auto mechanic who also served as a driver for officers. In October 1944 he was sent to the SS Penal Camp at Danzig-Matzkau and was never heard from again. Possibly he was an MIA with a penal unit since Danzig-Matzkau supplied both the "Dirlewanger" Brigade and the later SS Penal Regiment "Kaltofen" with personnel.

\* \* \*

SS-Stubaf. Dr. Hans Herbach (born 3 August 1911; SS Nr. 284,366) was the chief veterinary officer of 5. SS-Panzer Division "Wiking." He died on 18 December 1967 at the age of 56.

\* \* \*

SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Heinz Peinemann, born in Hamburg on 4 September 1915 (SS Nr. 120,126), commanded both 2nd Company, SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment 1, "LSSAH" (Field Post Nr. 29 707 C) and later the SS-Panzer Grenadier Training and Replacement Battalion 12, which serviced the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitler Jugend."

\* \* \*

SS-Hstuf. Julius Feyer was the commander of the Replacement Battalion (Waffen-Grenadier Feldersatz Battalion der SS

25) of the 25th Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS "Hunyadi" (Hungarian Nr. 1).

\* \* \*

SS-Obersturmfuehrer Dr. M. Niedler from the Field Hospital of the 6th SS Mountain Division "Nord" (Field Post Nr. 28 119), was captured by the turncoat Finnish Army during the divisional withdrawal through Finland on 3 October 1944 near Tornio. He was first held at the Rauderkule POW Camp and then three weeks later, the Finns turned him over to the Red Army. Dr. Niedler was last heard from at the Volosovo Slave Labor Camp on 4 November 1944.

\* \* \*

Konstantin Kussunis, born 28 October 1914 in Greece, underwent training with the Greek Volunteer Company of the Waffen-SS in Stettin in 1944. In 1945 he saw action with his Greek comrades around Breslau, Marienberg, Bromberg, and Danzig. Kussunis was wounded at Danzig and evacuated by the hospital ship *Pretoria* to Copenhagen. From here he was sent by rail to the military hospital at Elmhorn. A number of Greek SS volunteers were also sent to Denmark from Danzig towards the end of the war, and many eventually settled in that Scandinavian country due to the fact that a trip home might have meant a death sentence!

\* \* \*

The Knight's Cross holder, Ostuf. Franz Budka (born 18 August 1920 in Vienna), who was a company commander in SS-Regiment "Besslein," Festung Breslau, was reported an MIA at the conclusion of the battle. But several stories about his fate later circulated. One report stated that he was badly wounded during the breakout attempt from Breslau and took his own life. But entirely different information came from another source (sources being people who had served with Budka). According to this report, Franz Budka was indeed captured by the Soviets. He was supposed to be at the Vorkuta slave labor camp from 1950 to 1952 (Camp 4, Barracks 6). Three times he was placed on a list of those to be sent home

and three times he was pulled from the lists. No further news about Ostuf. Budka exists after 1952. It can be assumed that this latter report emanated from returning POWs.

\* \* \*

The Dutch volunteer Nicolaas Willem Kruys, born 27 December 1925 in The Hague, Netherlands, served with 4th Company, Panzer Abteilung 214 and 4th Company, Panzer Regiment 9 (Field Post Nr. 01625 — both Army units!). Kruys was captured by the Soviets near Kiev on 25 December 1943. However, he was soon able to escape and rejoin his unit. On the same day he arrived back he was badly wounded and sent to a civilian house that was being used as a hospital. Despite its Red Cross markings, the house was attacked and destroyed later in the day by Soviet tanks. All of the occupants perished!

\* \* \*

SS-Untersturmfuehrer Hans Nicoleisen Lausen Tychsen (born 13 May 1921), joined the Waffen-SS in 1940 and underwent basic training near Prague. In the course of the war he rose through the NCO ranks to become an officer. In September 1944 he was commanding 1st Company, I Battalion, SS-Gebirgsjaeger Regiment 11 "Reinhard Heydrich" (Field Post Nr. 14 040A) of the 6th SS Mountain Division "Nord," during the division's withdrawal across northern Finland. On 17 September 1944, Ustuf. Tychsen was killed-in-action leading a breakout effort from the Korpijarvi Pocket along the Kiestinki-Kuusamo road.

\* \* \*

Hermann Schroeder, born in Mannheim, the son of a veterinarian, served 7-8 years in the German Navy before being sent to a military prison. He was eventually attached to the SS Assault Brigade "Dirlewanger" as a radioman. Schroeder was killed-in-action with the 36th SS Division on 27 April 1945 near Bibersporf in the Spree Woods.

\* \* \*

SS-Hstuf. Dr. Helmut Falk, born in East Prussia on 13 September 1905 (SS Nr. 168,354), was a dentist with SS-Panzer Grenadier Training and Replacement Detachment 17. He died (probably was murdered) in captivity on 12 May 1945 near Milin/Boehmerwald, Czechoslovakia.

\* \* \*

SS-Oberfuehrer Johannes Baier commanded the Training and Replacement Detachment of the SS Administrative Supply Service situated at Dahau. He was born on 4 November 1893 (SS Nr. 279,458). Among his decorations were the Iron Cross, 2nd Class, the Cross of Honor for Front Fighters, and the War Service Cross, 1st Class.

\* \* \*

Many fallen soldiers of the "Dirlewanger" Assault Brigade, 36th SS Division are buried in the Schenkendoebern Cemetery near Guben; they were killed-in-action during the period 10 March to 18 April 1945.

\* \* \*

SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Ulrich Duemichen, born in Silesia on 26 November 1908 (SS Nr. 219,538), was the head of the Legal Detachment (Abteilung III) of III. SS Panzer Corps (Germanic).

\* \* \*

SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Hans Moeller, born on 22 June 1905 in Lubeck (SS Nr. 283,689), took charge of SS Engineer Battalion 9, "Hohenstaufen" Division, on 30 January 1945. He was held in the Ebensee POW Camp after the war.

\* \* \*

In April 1945, SS-Standartenfuehrer Anton Kaindl (born 14 July 1902; SS Nr. 241,248) and his adjutant, SS-Sturmbannfuehrer August Harbaum (born 25 March 1913; SS Nr. 37,163; promoted to Stubaf. on 21 June 1944), organized an evacua-

tion of female SS communications personnel from Oranienberg to keep them out of the way of the advancing Red Army. Where this column ended up is unknown. Kaindl was the commandant of the Sachsenhausen internment camp. Among his decorations were the Iron Cross, 2nd Class, the Front Fighter's Cross, 1st Class, and the SS Sword of Honor and Death'shead Ring of Honor.

\* \* \*

The Polish farm worker Mieczyslaw Kulisch (born 6 November 1926 in Sosnica, Poland), joined a Waffen-SS unit in Schwandorf, Bavaria, in late 1944. He was not the only Polish volunteer to join this (unidentified) unit, despite a previous prohibition from the Reichsfuehrer-SS on Poles serving in the Waffen-SS.

\* \* \*

SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Walter Bellwidt, born on 5 May 1900 (SS Nr. 15,770), served as the commander of the SS Panzergrenadier Replacement Battalion 3. His decorations included the Iron Cross, 2nd Class and the War Service Cross, 1st Class. He died suddenly on 13 October 1965 at age 65.

\* \* \*

Dr. Louis Anneshaensel, born in Lorraine on 12 August 1915, was a senior medical officer with the 33rd SS Volunteer Grenadier Division "Charlemagne." He was listed as an MIA at Heinrichswalde, the site of the Division's initial combat deployment in February 1945.

\* \* \*

Personnel transfers from disbanded SS-"Totenkopf" Standarten:

SS-"T"-Standarte 13: III. Battalion and band sent to SS-"T"-Standarten 9; other troops sent to the SS-"T"-Standarten 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11.

SS-"T"-Standarte 14: Disbanded on 30 June 1941, with troops dispersed to elements of the Field Command Staff of



the Reichsfuehrer-SS I. Battalion became a "Special Use" Battalion (Sonderbataillon Kommandostab RF-SS), while other troops went to SS-IR 9, the SS Escort Battalion RF-SS and the Signals Company, RF-SS Field Command Staff.

SS-"T"-Standarte 15: Disbanded effective 2 November 1940, with its I. Battalion assigned to guard duty at Oranienberg. Other troops said to have gone into the formation of 2nd SS Infantry Brigade in April 1941.

SS-"T"-Standarte 16: Disbanded on 15 August 1940; troops going to SS-"T"-Standarten 8, 10, and 15.

\* \* \*

Former Stubaf. Willi Seyda (SS-Panzer Regiment 1 and commander of SS Recce Detachment 8, "Florian Geyer"), died on 12 August 1973 at the age of 62. His SS Number was 37,133 and he had been decorated in the field with the Iron Cross, 1st Class.

\* \* \*

Hstuf. Karl Fritzsche (born 10 July 1903; SS Nr. 7,287), was the Supply Troop commander for the 8th SS Cavalry Division "Florian Geyer." He was disabled in a motorcycle accident in March 1945. Most of his rear area command escaped the Budapest encirclement.

\* \* \*

SS-Oberscharfuehrer Desire van de Putte, born 30 October 1919 in St. Lambrechts, Belgium, served with SS Medical Detachment 503, III. SS Panzer Corps (Germanic), Field Post Nr. 59 626. He was listed as missing-in-action in Estonia on 16 August 1944.

\* \* \*

SS-Hstuf. Herbert Vanselow (born 15 December 1914; SS Nr. 91,394), commanded 10th Company, SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment 22, "Frundsberg." He became an MIA in Normandy on 9 July 1944 and his fate has never been ascertained.

\* \* \*

SS-Stubaf. Dr. Ernst Frowein (born 25 August 1916; SS Nr. 411,912), was last posted to the SS Medical Training and Replacement Battalion in Berlin. After the battle of Berlin, Frowein fell into Soviet hands and was last seen in May 1945 at the Esterwegen internment camp.

\* \* \*

SS-Grenadier Herbert Steiner, born in Heidelberg on 3 January 1926, was a medic with the 31st SS Volunteer Division ("Batschka"). On 12 or 13 May 1945 he was in Ketschdorf/Rosenbaude (Reisen Mountains) and was last known to be in Oberschreberhau. Like many members of this division he was trying to avoid Soviet captivity, but most would not be so lucky. Steiner was last seen in civilian clothes heading west towards Lauben-Goerlitz-Bautzen-Chemnitz.

\* \* \*

SS-Stubaf. Wilhelm Morisse was born on 21 July 1901 in Verberlingen (SS Nr. 3,874). He was the commander of the Supply Troops of the 23rd WGDdSS "Kama" and later the 31st SS Division ("Batschka"). He perished in Soviet captivity. In the photo Morisse is shown as an Obersturmfuehrer.



SS-Sturbaf. Wilhelm Morisse

SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Frans Hellebaut, the operations officer of the 28th SS Division "Wallonien," who commanded a mixed Flemish-Walloon SS battlegroup in the last days of the war, died in Brussels on 18 June 1984 at the age of 86. From World War I to 1940 he had served as a career officer in the Belgian Army and was a close personal friend of SS-Stubaf. Lucien Lipert (commander of 5th SS Sturmbrigade "Wallonie"), dating back to their days at the Royal Belgian Military Academy. Hellebaut proudly wore a number of Belgian and British decorations next to his German ones in his Waffen-SS tunic.

He was the effective day-to-day tactical commander of the "Wallonien" Division throughout most of its service in Pomerania and the Oder Front in 1945. After the war, Frans Hellebaut was sentenced to death by the Allied-installed Belgian government for his service in the Waffen-SS. The sentence was later commuted to 15 years imprisonment, which were spent at the St. Gillis Prison. Hellebaut spoke Dutch as well as French and German and became favorably acquainted with many Flemish SS volunteers during his long years in prison.

\* \* \*



SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Frans Hellebaut

SS-Obersturmfuehrer Jos Van Ackere was born on 7 July 1906 at St. Kathlijne-Wauer, Flanders (Belgium). He studied at the University of Leuven and joined a Flemish nationalist youth movement. Van Ackere served in the Belgian Army in 1926/1927, spending much of his time in the "Allied" occupied Ruhr District of Germany. Afterwards he returned home to resume his activism for Flemish independence.

In the autumn of 1939, Van Ackere was mobilized as a reserve Lieutenant in the Belgian Army. He proved himself a capable officer during the 18-day campaign of 1940. In July 1940, following demobilization, he became the general secretary of the Verdinaso organization, which helped coordinate Flemish National Socialist activities. Van Ackere went to Germany in November and December 1940 for political studies and in June 1941 he became the publisher-secretary of *The National Socialist* in Flanders.

In September 1941, Van Ackere joined the Flemish Germanic SS and in November 1941 he left for Germany to help recruit volunteers from Flemish workers in that country for the Germanic-SS Sturmbann and the Waffen-SS. Following the German defeat at Stalingrad, Van Ackere resolved to put his own life on the line for his beliefs and he volunteered for Waffen-SS combat duty. He was given an officer's commission (reserve Untersturmfuehrer) and was sent to the SS-Junkerschule "Toelz" for a brief training course. He was then assigned to the 6th SS-Sturmbrigade "Langemarck" as a political training officer, although he was utilized as combat officer. On 3 March 1943, Ostuf. Jos Van Ackere was killed-in-action alongside Hstuf. Cambie at Stara-Constantinov. He left a widow and six children, and the legacy of a true idealist and political soldier in the war against Bolshevism and International Capitalism.

\* \* \*

On 8 September 1940, Reichsfuehrer-SS Himmler inspected the "Luxembourg Volunteer Company," a 450-man reserve force consisting of local recruits who were subordinated to the Gendarmerie and Police in Luxembourg. The "Company" had been sponsored by the German Police and SS. Eventually, most members of the "Luxembourg Volunteer Company" went into the Waffen-SS, although about 100 members later requested release from this service, which was granted through the inter-

vention of some Luxembourg officers. Later in the war the "Luxembourg Volunteer Company" was dissolved, with some of its members being incorporated directly into the German Police while others were sent to Yugoslavia to fight partisans.

\* \* \*

In February 1944, 15 men from the SS-Karstwehr Battalion were discovered missing in the Adriatic Coastland region near the Italian-Yugoslavia frontier. A search party later discovered the mutilated bodies of these soldiers, none of whom was over 20 years of age. They had been captured alive by communist partisans and tortured to death. The SS soldiers had then been decapitated and their heads were impaled on bayonets! The Nuremberg Tribunals somehow overlooked this little breach of international laws.

\* \* \*

Between 27 and 31 May 1945, 11,800 members of the Slovenien Army (Slovensko Domobranstvo), were turned over to Tito's Red terrorists by the British. They were all brutally massacred in rapid order. The British officer in charge of the forced extradition, one Major William Johnson, had given his "word of honor" to the Slovenes that they were simply being relocated to Italy from Austria to be placed under the command of the ex-Yugoslav King!

\* \* \*

SS-Untersturmfuehrer Paul Kaendler (born 9 March 1919), commanded the motorcycle messenger contingent attached to the staff of SS Panzer Rgt. 12/"Hitler Jugend" Division. He was killed-in-action on 21 December 1944 in Buellingen, Belgium during the Ardennes Offensive.

\* \* \*

SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Hebert Pollner (born 14 June 1916 in Gelsenkirchen/SS Nr. 351,229), was attached to the SS und Waffen Junkerschule at Posen-Treskau which specialized in training East European NCO and officer candidates. He was

listed as an MIA on 21 January 1945 while serving with a battle-group from the Junkerschule.

\* \* \*

Guido Rombaut, born 27 April 1923 at Waarschoot, Belgium, was a Waffen-SS volunteer who transferred into the Luftwaffe. He later served as a Sergeant in the 6th Staffel-Jagdgeschwader 1. Declared at first missing-in-action, he was certified killed in 1962.

\* \* \*



SS-Standartenfuehrer Leon Degrelle as he appears today.

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WAFFEN-SS PERSONALITIES

SS-Brigadefuehrer Joachim Ziegler

Joachim Ziegler was born on 18 October 1904 in Hannau, the son of Oberleutnant August-Heinrich Ziegler, a career officer in a Royal Prussian Ulan Regiment who was an early MIA on the Western Front in WWI. After completing secondary schooling, Joachim Ziegler joined the Army and soon underwent officer's training. By June 1929 he held the rank of Oberleutnant (1st Lt.) and in 1930 he joined the 15th Prussian Cavalry Regiment in Paderborn.

Oberleutnant Ziegler served with the German ground contingent on the Nationalist side in the Spanish Civil War and was decorated with the Spanish Cross. After returning to Germany he was promoted to Hauptmann and became the adjutant of the 3rd Panzer Brigade. He subsequently served as a staff officer with various Panzer formations, rising to the rank of Oberst (Colonel) by 1943. On 1 June 1943, Ziegler was assigned to the Waffen-SS Operational Command Office and he became chief-of-staff of III.SS-Panzer Korps (Germanic), with the responsibility of assembling and forming the Corps' Troops (i.e. speciality units assigned directly to the Corps' jurisdiction), on 20 June 1943.

Ziegler was initially given the rank of Standartenfuehrer, but he did not officially transfer into the Waffen-SS "for the duration of the war" until 9 November 1943, when he was also given the rank of Oberfuehrer. It was on 1 August 1944 that he finally decided to become a permanent member of the Waffen-SS and he received the SS Nr. 491,403 and a promotion to Brigadefuehrer on that day. On that same day another Army transferee, Fritz Kraemer, the chief-of-staff of 6th SS Panzer Armeekorps, also became a permanent member of the Waffen-SS receiving the SS Nr. 491,402 and a military promotion to Brigadefuehrer.

For the past year, Ziegler had proven to be an excellent, experienced right-hand man to the III.SS-Pz.Korps' commander, SS-Obergruppenfuehrer Felix Steiner but on 10 August 1944 he had to replace the fallen SS-Brigfhr. Fritz von Scholz and the commander of the 11th SS Panzer Division "Nordland." Ziegler led "Nordland" brilliantly during its subsequent battles in

Estonia and Latvia and as a result was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 5 September 1944. He fully proved his leadership capabilities in the extremely difficult battles that lay ahead in Kurland and Pomerania. But the deteriorating military situation and the steady attrition of the troops under his command led him to take a darker view of the future.

When the "Nordland" Division was ordered to go to the defense of the city of Berlin in April 1945, Ziegler vigorously disagreed with the decision, proclaiming the situation hopeless. Still orders were orders and he followed them, although he carried them out with reluctance. By 22 April 1945 it was clear to General Weidling, the Berlin Commandant, that the "Nordland" Division was not being deployed with any enthusiasm. In fact Brigfr. Ziegler had fallen into a deep funk and was only going through the motions as far as command decisions were concerned. Therefore on 23 April 1945 he was relieved of his command and replaced by the Inspector of the French Waffen-SS, Brigfr. Gustav Krukenberg, who immediately was able to energize the "Nordland" Division through the example of the French SS volunteers he brought with him.

Brigfr. Ziegler was sent to the Fuehrer Bunker, located under the Reichschancellery, where he was to stay under a sort of "house arrest." Despite this situation, he was clearly not in ill-favor with the Fuehrer, who decorated him with the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 28 April 1945, in recognition of "Nordland"'s splendid achievements in Kurland and Pomerania. During the night of 1/2 May 1945, Brigfr. Ziegler left the Fuehrer Bunker in conjunction with Brigfr. Mohnke (central city commander) and others. While leading a battle-group attempting to breakout of the city, Joachim Ziegler was struck by an enemy tank shell and instantly killed. He had been the 848th recipient of the Oakleaves and among his other decorations was the German Cross in Gold.

\* \* \*

#### SS-Brigadefuehrer Hans Schwedler

Hans Schwedler was born in Berlin on 17 October 1878, the son of salesman Karl Hugo Schwedler. Following his schooling, Schwedler joined 1. Lower Alsatian Infantry Regiment Nr. 132 and in August 1898 he received an officer's commission with

the rank of Leutnant (2nd Lt.). It took another 15 years before he would attain the rank of Hauptmann (Captain). During WWI, Schwedler served as a company, then a battalion, commander on the Western Front and in Macedonia. He left the service with the rank of Major in February 1919.

From 1919-1927, Schwedler ran a farm in the Ost-Sternberg District without a great deal of success. When his lease expired in 1927, he moved to Upper Bavaria. During these years he was an active member of the Stahlhelm veteran's organization and in 1931, discouraged by the corrupt political conditions in Germany, he joined the NSDAP (Nr. 455,899) and soon volunteered his services to the SS, joining Sturm 2 of the SS Standarte 34 in November 1932 (SS Nr. 60,740). He received the rank of Untersturmfuehrer on 31 July 1933 and underwent training as a staff officer with SS District I, headquartered in Munich.

Schwedler was subsequently promoted to Obersturmfuehrer on 9 November 1933 and to Hauptsturmfuehrer on 20 April 1934, becoming the commander of SS-Standarte 79 (Ulm) on 10 June 1934. From 4 December 1934 to 1 November 1938, he served on the staff of the Armed SS Standarte "Deutschland" with some stints as an instructional officer at the SS-Junkerschule "Toelz." He attained the rank of Stardartenfuehrer (Colonel) on 30 January 1938.

Schwedler next served at the SS-Junkerschule "Braunschweig" and received a promotion to Oberfuehrer on 30 January 1940. With this rank he became the Inspector of the SS-Totenkopf Standarten, holding this position until 1 October 1940, when he became the Higher SS and Police Leader "Ost." Following a stint at this post, Oberfhr. Schwedler served as the SS Garrison Commander for Prague from 4 August 1941 to 20 March 1942. On the latter date he became the commandant for the Waffen-SS and Police Supply District "Russland-Sud" (southern Russia). This position was held until his promotion to Brigadefuehrer on 9 November 1942.

Brigfr. Schwedler was next posted to the SS Main Operational Office in Berlin, becoming the Chief of Office XI on 1 August 1944, which was concerned with all aspects of communications in the Waffen-SS. Hans Schwedler died in 1945 of causes unknown.

\* \* \*

**SS-Obersturmfuehrer Dr. Hillairie Gravez**

SS-Ostuf. Dr. Hillairie Gravez was born on 8 April 1889 in Gijzegem, Belgium. In WWI, while still a medical student, he served with the Belgium Army on the Ijer Front from 1914-1918. He completed his studies after the war and became a medical doctor. An ardent Flemish patriot, he soon became active in the Flemish Nationalist Movement and in 1929 was elected as a Senator in the upper house of the Belgian Parliament. He would hold this post for the next decade.

During WWII, Dr. Gravez joined the VNV (Flemish National Union), and expressed his support for the ideal of a "Free Flanders in a New Europe." In the wake of "Allied" occupation of Belgium in September 1944, Dr. Gravez left of his own volition for Germany and volunteered his medical services to the new 27th SS Division "Langemarck" (Flemish Nr. 1). He was shortly commissioned an Obersturmfuehrer and became the chief medical officer of the Flemish Hitler Youth Battalion (later I./SS-Rgt.67) in the 27th SS Division. In this position he saved the lives of many young soldiers during the bloody fighting on the Oder Front and Northern Germany in April 1945.

At the conclusion of WWII, Dr. Gravez went into "Allied" captivity and was transferred back to the new Belgian authorities, who sentenced him to a long prison term for "treason."



SS-Obersturmfuehrer Dr. Hillairie Gtavez

After 10 long years in prison he was finally released to resume his medical practice in Aalst. At all times he remained in contact with his old comrades from the "Langemarck" Division, and for many years served as Honorary Chairman of the Flemish East Front Fighter's veteran's group. He devoted much of his time in his later years to cancer research. The former SS-Ostuf. Dr. Hillairie Gravez died on 3 September 1974 at Aalst, at the age of 85, well respected by all those that served with him or owed their lives and health to him.

\* \* \*

**Raymond Van Den Berg**

Raymond Van Den Berg, born 3 April 1929, in Antwerp, Belgium, left for Kitzbuehel, Austria on 4 January 1945 with a contingent of Dutch Hitler Youth. In Graz, Austria, although still only 15 years old(!) he joined the Germanic SS Training and Replacement Btl. 11 ("Nordland" and "Wiking") and was later assigned to the staff of the 23rd SS Pz.Gr.Div. "Nederland." He became an MIA (almost surely killed) along the Austro-Slovene border in April 1945.

\* \* \*

**SS-Mann Heinrich Isaak**

Heinrich Isaak (photo), was born 17 June 1926 in Neuenburg, Ukraine, which was an ethnic-German settlement. He



SS-Mann Heinrich Isaak

served with the SS-Panzerjaeger Abteilung (Anti-tank Detachment) 22 22nd SS Kavallerie Division "Maria Theresia." He was later declared an MIA during the battle for Budapest (almost certainly killed). As a result of his service in the Waffen-SS, his mother and sister, who still lived in Soviet territory, were shipped to Siberia and forced to stay there from 1945 to 1980!

\* \* \*

#### SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Hugo Eichhorn

Hugo Eichhorn was born in Weilmuenster/Taunus on 11 February 1911 into a working class family. He joined the SS in the early 1930s (SS Nr. 44,503) and from 1937 to September 1939 was a scholar at the SS "Ordensburgen" (Castles of the SS Order) at Kroessinsee and Vogelsang. The "Ordensburgen" were elite educational facilities specializing in Germanic culture and National Socialist political ideology. From February to May 1939, Eichhorn underwent training with the Army Infantry Battalion at Eschweiler as an officer candidate.

On 5 September 1939, soon after the beginning of the Polish Campaign, Hugo Eichhorn was called up for duty with the combat engineer battalion of the newly authorized SS-"Totenkopf" Division. He served with this unit until February 1940 when he was sent to the SS-Junkerschule "Toelz" to attend an officer's training course that lasted until September 1940. Soon afterwards he was posted to the engineer battalion of the new "Wiking" SS Division, receiving the rank of Untersturmfuehrer in December 1940.

During the first year of the Russian Campaign, Eichhorn served as battalion adjutant and was promoted to Obersturmfuehrer in early 1942. At times he served as an acting company commander. On 9 November 1942 he was promoted to Hauptsturmfuehrer and served as the battalion staff officer in charge of materiel. In this position in January 1943, he was dispatched to Orlovskaja to the battalion supply dump to bring up equipment and explosives for the use of the rest of the unit. At the time the Soviets were advancing in force to the west from the Stalingrad area and the "Wiking" Division soldiers were attempting to fend them off while in turn withdrawing from the Caucasus Mountains region.

At 0400 hours on 8 January 1945, a Red Army infantry regiment launched a surprise attack on Orlovskaja under the cover of darkness during a snow storm. The "Wiking" front-line defenses, which consisted only of a few widely separated strongpoints, were quickly overrun. In the eastern part of Orlovskaja, 1st Co./SS Engineer Bn. 5 was surprised and swiftly surrounded by the advancing enemy forces. The company commander was Ostuf. Guenther Wanhoefer (later CO of SS Engineer Bn. 54 "Nederland"). Wanhoefer was able to achieve link-up with Ostuf. Eberhard Heder's 3rd Co./SS Engineer Bn. 5 and together the two companies fought their way back to the Engineer Battalion supply dump using hand weapons only. The battalion CO, Stufab. Max Schaefer, and his staff were absent from the area, supervising the removal of 2nd Company SS Eng.Bn.5 from the front.

Hstuf. Eichhorn was therefore the senior battalion officer in Orlovskaja and it was left to him to organize a defense and then a counterattack against the Reds. He molded a task force from the "Wiking" engineer troops and with the support of 2 assault guns and 2 armored cars from the "Wiking" Division, Eichhorn was able to accomplish his mission. But it wasn't easy. In a desperate close-range battle that raged from many long hours, the SS combat engineers were able to finally stop the communist incursion and then launched their own assault. When the fighting had ended the attacking Red infantry regiment had



SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Hugo Eichhorn

been annihilated: leaving 700 dead on the field. Most of the rest of the foe, around 200, had been captured. Stubaf. Schaefer gave all of his accolades to Hstuf. Hugo Eichhorn for this brilliant success, and as a result, Eichhorn was awarded the Knight's Cross on 15 January 1943.

On 4 September 1943, Hstuf. Eichhorn was badly wounded in the head in the Mius sector and never again returned to combat duty. After his recovery he became the permanent commander of SS Engineer Training and Replacement Battalion (later expanded into a Regiment) 1, in Dresden. He was subsequently promoted to Sturmbannfuehrer on 20 April 1944 and to Obersturmbannfuehrer on 20 April 1945. In addition to the Knight's Cross, Ostubaf. Eichhorn held both classes of the Iron Cross and the Wound Badge in Black.

\* \* \*

#### SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Eberhard Heder

Eberhard Heder was born in Gross-Kuedde on 30 June 1918. On 1 November 1937 he joined the SS Engineer (Pionier) Bn. in Dresden and underwent basic and specialist training. He later attended special NCO training courses held by the SS Standarten "Germania" and "Deutschland." In 1939 he graduated from the last peace-time officer's candidate course to be held at the SS-Junkerschule "Braunschweig."

Effective 1 January 1940, Hstuf. Heder was assigned to the SS Engineer Replacement Battalion in Dresden as a training officer. In June 1940 he became a platoon leader in the "Ger-



SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Eberhard Heder

mania" Regiment and served as such during a period of occupation duty in Holland. With the incorporation of "Germania" into the newly forming "Wiking" SS Division late in 1940, Heder became the adjutant of III. "Germania," prior to becoming the commander of 3rd Co., SS Engineer Bn. 5 "Wiking," a position which he ably held during the first 18 months or so of the Russian Campaign.

At Orlovskaja in January 1943, he led his company out of a Soviet entrapment and joined in the successful destruction of an entire Red infantry regiment by a "Wiking" engineer battle-group led by Hstuf. Hugo Eichhorn. Heder went on to succeed Eichhorn as the "Captain of the Staff" of the "Wiking" Engineer Bn., a somewhat ambiguous position, closely analogous to chief-of-staff. This was to be a brief assignment however, since Hstuf. Heder was soon placed in command of 2nd Co., SS Estonian Volunteer Bn. "Narwa" for a six month stint. "Narwa" was a replacement unit sent to the "Wiking" Division when the "Nordland" Regiment was withdrawn from "Wiking" to serve as the nucleus of the 11th SS Division. Heder's 2. "Narwa" distinguished itself greatly during the exceedingly difficult breakout from the Cherkassy Pocket in February 1944. Following this heroic episode, Hstuf. Heder was named commander of the Staff Escort Company of the "Wiking" Division HQ.

In September 1944, Heder took over command of the combat engineer battalion of the "Wiking" Division — a post he would hold until the end of the war. During the autumn of 1944, Hstuf. Heder led an emergency battle-group from his command in another desperation action against a powerful communist assault force to the east of Warsaw. For his skillful and courageous leadership at this time, Hstuf. Eberhardt Heder was awarded the Knight's Cross on 18 November 1944. He had convincingly proved himself one of the finest officers in the ranks of the Waffen-SS!

\* \* \*



## **The Waffen-SS on Video**

**The Waffen-SS in Action** - This tape consists of two films about the Waffen-SS, without a doubt one of the most maligned and, at the same time, most respected military forces that has ever graced the pages of military history. The first of these two rare films is "Junker der Waffen-SS". This rare film details the training of Waffen-SS officers. The comradeship for which the Waffen-SS was renowned comes through in sharp relief as the officer cadets train in skiing, horsemanship, gymnastics, weaponry, and strategic tactical planning. A beautiful film for those who want to know what made the men of the Waffen-SS the men they were. The second film is "Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler im Einsatz". This is the official film history of Adolf Hitler's bodyguard regiment's exploits in Poland in 1939, France in 1940 and the Balkans in 1941. 55 min. **Both dubbed in English.**

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## BOOK REVIEW

*Leon Degrelle et la Legion Wallonie, 1941-1945* (Paris: Art et Histoire D'Europe), 237 pp., 654 photos, many maps, large format. I think it is worthwhile to start off on the brightest possible note and this is surely it! If I had to pick the best militaria book of the past decade this would be it hands down! This is a massive photo history of the Legion Wallonie and the SS Sturmbrigade "Wallonie" and 28th SS Division "Wallonien." The printing and design are of the highest quality and the photos are nearly all sharp and clear.

Each photo is numbered and captioned (the text is in French, but fairly easy to follow), and most have never before been published. The first 300 or so are related to the Legion, with the remainder being devoted to the Wallon Waffen-SS formations. Every phase of the unit's history is covered from beginning to end along with every activity of the volunteers from training to combat.

The coverage of uniforms, insignia and personalities is staggering and add much to our knowledge of these exceptionally fine looking soldiers. The Waffen-SS segment covers the formation and training of the Sturmbrigade and the battle-field actions at Cherkassey, Narva, Pomerania and the Oder Fronts. There is a tremendous spread of pictures of the Sturmbrigade's triumphant homecoming to Belgium in April 1944 and great photos of personalities throughout. Of special note is a great group shot of the Sturmbrigade's officer corps (fully identified) taken on 11 April 1944. Finally names like Derricks, Mathieu, Jacques Leroy, Capelle and more can be matched with their photos. The fine selection of photos taken right up to the end of the war is even more surprising.

Beyond the above, each phase of the "Wallonie" history is clearly charted in clear maps. There are also illustrations of recruiting posters and propaganda cards. The wonderfully designed dust jacket is in full color and carries the designs of even more posters and flags. Even the endpapers are spectacular! While the text is French, it is brief and succinct and not hard to follow. To top everything off there is a complete order-of-battle of the 28th SS Division with a unit command roster going all the way down to platoon level! The work was com-

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piled and written by Jean Mabire and Eric Lefevre and is certainly the finest possible tribute that could ever be made to the "Wallonien" Division. Mabire is one of the best historians on the Waffen-SS and it is hoped that his work can be translated into English someday.

If there is a drawback, the price on this sumptuous volume is steep — in the \$60 plus range, but if there is ever something to mortgage the house for, this would have to be it. It is absolutely one of the best books of its type ever published on the European volunteers or the Waffen-SS. No one will be disappointed in this utterly superb work!



SS-Standartenführer Leon Degrelle as he appears today.

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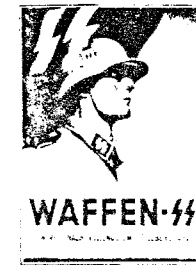


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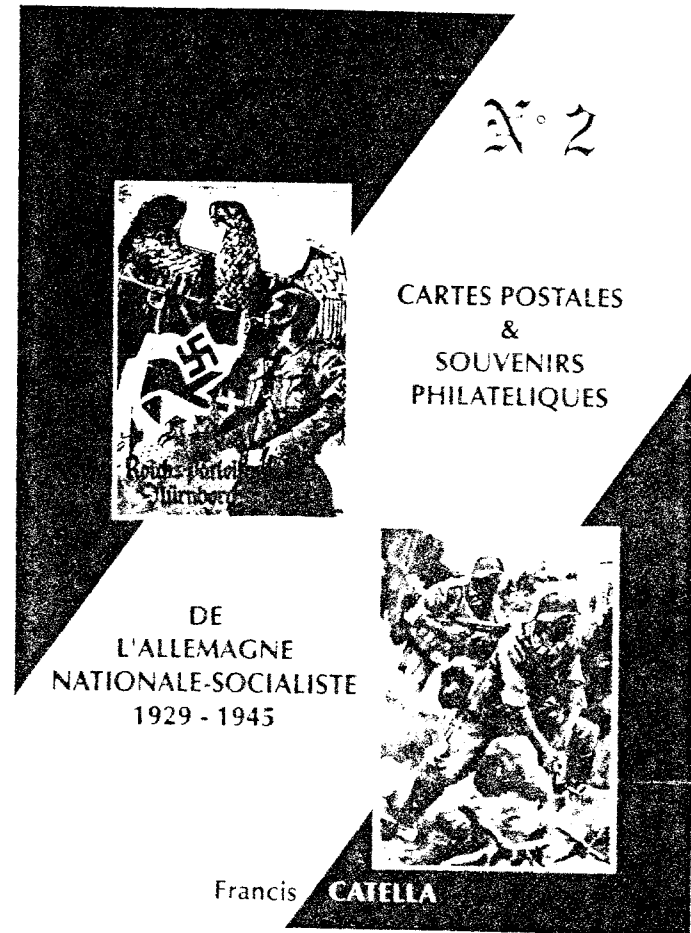


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