



Siegrunen

THE WAFFEN-SS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



SS security troops have apprehended a female Soviet saboteur with the assistance of local citizens and farmers on 6 July 1943. She had been air-dropped behind the German lines. (Photo never before published.)

EDITORIAL

The Achievements Of WWII Historical Revisionism

In light of the continuing establishment media strangle-hold on the determination of what passes for "historical truth" in our society, it is sometimes difficult to feel optimistic about the effectiveness of historical revisionism, particularly as it pertains to the WWII era. As someone who has been somewhat of a practitioner in this field for over 16 years now, I feel an assessment of what has been accomplished is certainly due.

It seems to me that the first and foremost function of revisionism is to insure that the truth is passed on down the line to future generations. It matters not at all that it is not fully accepted by the people in charge (I'd be worried if it was!), and their brain-washed minions,

all it has to do is to reach a few of the right people so that the torch can be passed on. And when a re-evaluation of the history of our century takes place, as is bound to happen someday in the distant future, then the revisionist position can be placed in its proper perspective.

On the other hand, the rather modest revisionist field has already scored some startling achievements. There certainly would have been far more victims of "Allied" justice in the post-war era had not such farces as the Malmédy Tribunal been exposed to the proper people. Major Walter Reder, a man who has been written up in SIEGRUNEN, was released from a life sentence in Italy due almost entirely to the effects of revisionist writings about the deeds for which he had been falsely accused. The protests that came as a result to the Italian government from all over the world, and most prominently from the U.S.A., genuinely startled the people in charge. Frankly, if WWII revision has done no more than help accomplish the release of this courageous man it has been more than worthwhile!

One can also take heart in the fact that revisionist writings, though not widely circulated, have placed the enemy camp on the defensive. They have been forced to waste much time and effort bolstering positions which had heretofore been considered sacrosanct. It is only a holding action to be sure, but it should be considered a victory when so much of their time and resources is tied down in producing obnoxious movies, museums and monuments that are not going to appeal to anyone but those who have a stake in perpetuating the fraud. This sort of overkill can only have a beneficial effect in the long run. For all practical purposes the near-term is shot to hell anyway, so what we must aim at is posterity. So far revisionism has proved itself to be a cheap and effective method of fighting back!

From a personal point-of-view, I have no illusions or pretensions about my own endeavors; I'm neither a scholar or historian, just someone who tries to chronicle the truth working from whatever information is available to me. NARVA 1944, although perhaps no great guns as a literary work, has touched an emotive thread in many, many people who were completely unaware of the subject, and that at least is a positive sign!

I will be quite frank in stating that I have neither the time, money or inclination to deal with the current "guardians" of the looted archives of war-time Germany and its allied states. But I will continue to do my best to try and keep presenting the story of the Waffen-SS without either compromising my integrity or idealism. Sometimes it is necessary to spell one's principals out clearly for the benefit of the jaded cynics who think only in terms of profit and material self-interest. To those of you who have long understood and supported our mission and purpose, my sincere thanks as always!

The less said about SR issue #41 the better; suffice to say that "fly-by-night" outfits will no longer be dealt with in order to "economize"! Thank you for your understanding about this situation which proved costly in terms of time, money and printing quality.

A new book is in progress on the French, Hungarian and Italian Divisions of the Waffen-SS, with much completed including the cover (another Ramiro Bujairo masterpiece) and some of the typesetting. More details will be provided later on in SR as publication draws nearer.

I am now carrying the audio cassette of the paper delivered at the 2nd Revisionist History Conference by Ray Merriam on the Waffen-SS and the Malmédy Trial. It also includes the European Volunteer Movement in WWII by Richard Landwehr. Price: \$8.95 plus \$2.00 postage and handling. \$

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EDITOR
Richard Landwehr

Associate Editor
Gustav Juergens

Staff Artist and Contributing Editor
Ramiro Bujairo

Contributing Editors
Carlos Caballero
Steve Kane
Ray Merriam
Antonio Munoz

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For my fallen friend L. Ferdinand Troxler Graf von Frickenstaufen; these words by the Swedish SS war correspondent, Obersturmfuehrer Hans-Casper Krueger speak for you as well. RL

To:
**Walter Nilsson - Comrade And Countryman!
Fallen At Narva**

by H.C. Krueger

Flowers I had none, nor time to twine a wreath of firbush to adorn your grave. Words would have sounded idle and hollow - you were a man of action, so I could but undo my steel helmet and softly speak the words carved on the simple birch cross:

"Walter Nilsson - SS Oberscharfuehrer"

As I spoke your name, I thought of the words: "So many an Iron Cross on brave men's chests and so many a wooden cross at the wayside bear witness of bravery and sacrifice."

"Brave and helpful," so had the other Swedish volunteers described you, "blond and blue-eyed, always gay and cheerful." I had never met you but had often heard of you, and your friends never tired of telling about you, so I got to know you though you were no more. "Were no more" - how could I assert such a thing? Of course you were still among us, as long as you lived in the hearts and thoughts of your comrades in arms.

You came from the North of Sweden and had together with other Teutonic volunteers, joined the ranks of SS Division "Nordland," consisting of Germans, Danes, Norwegians and Swedes. You had also fought together with Flemish and Dutch Brigades and when your hour struck you did not die for one country alone but for a unity of Nordic States - a unity we all dreamt and longed for.

Here you rested now, so far away from the land of your forefathers, and before I continued on my way, I wanted to leave something with you; flowers I had none, nor time to twine a wreath, but in a pocket I found a coin from the reign of Oscar II with the motto: "For the welfare of the brother-countries," meaning at that time, Sweden and Norway. I thought not only of these two nations but of the sons of all the Teutonic nations who fought here against the onset of the Asiatic hordes, so I knelt and pressed the coin, as a last greeting, into the frozen earth.

You fell at Narva, this Narva where the greatest victory in Swedish history was won. For you, "Narva" was more than but a name from the school books. For you, it was an obligation. You knew, you came from the same stock as the men who here once stood firm against the threat from the East. You had realized that only through struggle and sacrifice in the present, a link in the chain of time can be forged which connects the past with the future.

"Life is eternal and mighty and cruel and joy cold. Nothing am I but my race and my root and my tribe is everything."

For you, these words of the poet Bertil Gripenberg had meant a reality and you had caught their deeper sense.

From whatever distant Valhalla my friend and comrade, L.F., watches down from, I hope I will always prove faithful to the enormous trust and support that he gave me. More than anyone else, he kept SR going on course when things began to falter. He truly belonged at Uspenkaja with all the other brave Vikings. I will not forget him; may our spiritual solidarity always continue. RL §

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE 36. WAFFEN-GRENADIER DIVISION DER SS

If there is a single name that even today strikes terror into the hearts of former Red "partisans" (many of whom today live comfortable lives in the U.S. as "survivors!"), it would have to be "Dirlewanger." The so-called "Dirlewanger" formation of the Waffen-SS so devastated the partisan-terrorist bands that it was thrown up against, that its reputation was magnified out of all proportion. Every crime under the sun has been attributed to it, most of which are unverifiable, and it has proven impossible to separate fact from fiction in certain aspects of the formation's history. In fact, almost any anti-partisan unit that functioned effectively against the terrorists was likely to be called a "Dirlewanger" force by the foe.

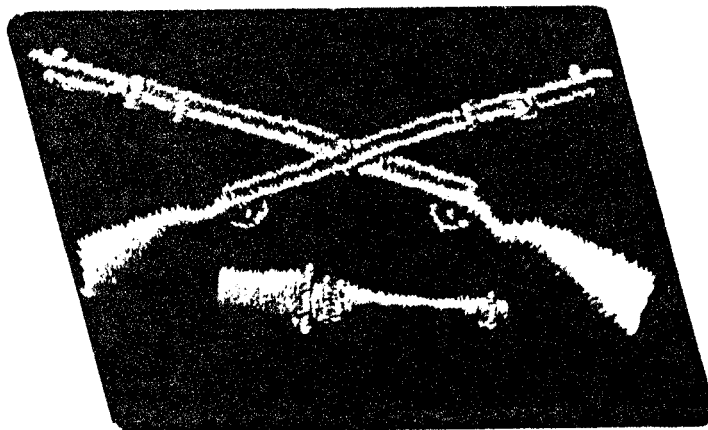
As far as the "Dirlewanger" formation and the eventual 36th SS Division are concerned, it is fair to say that truth is a good deal stranger than fiction. The unit had its origins in a small "special commando" of convicted poachers that was formed on a purely experimental basis. The idea cropped up in March 1940, during "speculative" conversations between Reichsfuehrer-SS Himmler, and his "manpower" specialist, Obergruppenfuehrer Gottlob Berger, the head of the SS Main Office. The idea advanced in favor of the unit by Berger, was that poachers might come in handy in tracking down saboteurs and terrorists in wilderness areas. Himmler liked the notion, secured Hitler's approval, and on 29 March requested a list of name of all convicted prisoners from the Justice Ministry.

The poachers were then contacted and given the option of volunteering for military service. Ninety of them did so and on 4 June 1940, they were grouped together at the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp at Oranienburg for preliminary training. The unit was placed under the control of a former Sachsenhausen inmate, and recently commissioned Obersturmbannfuehrer of the Waffen-SS, Dr. Oskar Dirlewanger, who incidentally was a close friend of Ogruf. Berger (actually more of an "old comrade in arms").

Dirlewanger's command was officially born on 15 June 1940 with the title "Poachers Commando Oranienburg." Dirlewanger officially took charge of the unit and its training staff on 20 June 1940, and he would continue in charge of this formation as it evolved until 15 February 1945, when a disabling battle wound took him out of action. On 1 July 1940, the unit cut out the "deadbeats" and then stood at a strength of 84 "qualified" poachers. An arrangement was made to provide weapons, equipment, supplies, staff and training personnel from the SS-"Totenkopf" Standarte 5, which was stationed in Oranienburg.

Dr. Oskar Dirlewanger was somewhat of an eccentric character, who was in fact very lucky to be gainfully employed at anything at that time. He was born in Wuerzburg on 26 September 1895 and in his earlier years showed great promise. As a junior officer in WWI, he was awarded both classes of the Iron Cross and numerous decorations for valor. In the early 1920s he served with various anti-communist "Freikorps" groups, that staved off a Bolshevik takeover of Germany. It was during this time that he met his later benefactor, Gottlob Berger, and also commanded an early prototype tank platoon against armed Red terrorists.

Following his military service, Dirlewanger finished his education and matriculated with a degree in political



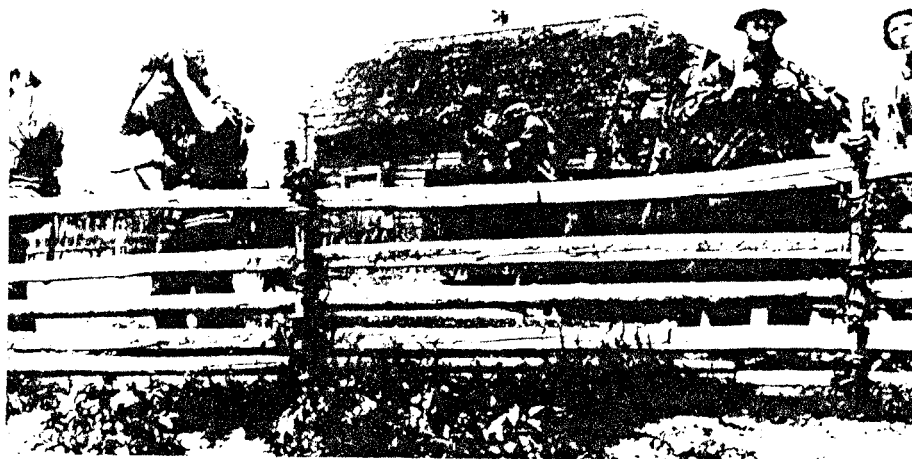
Collar patch attributed both to SS-Sturmabteilung 500 and the "Dirlewanger" formation.

science from the University of Frankfurt am Main. He then became a full-fledged professor at the University of Frankfurt, finding time to join the young NSDAP in 1923. He had a relatively undistinguished career until 1934, when he was arrested for molesting a female minor. As a result he was sentenced to two years in prison and lost his teaching post at the university. His problems were no doubt abetted by what apparently had become a well developed fondness for alcoholic beverages.

After his release from prison in 1936, Dirlewanger found himself jobless and at loose ends and was soon picked up again on the same charges. This time he was given an indefinite sentence to a concentration camp. He appealed to his old "Freikorps" comrade, Gottlob Berger (who had moved up rapidly in the SS hierarchy), to try and help him out. In mid-1936, Berger was able to get Dirlewanger posted to the Spanish Foreign Legion, which was leading the Nationalist revolt against the pro-Red government in Spain. Dirlewanger was later able to transfer into the Luftwaffe Legion "Condor," and by all accounts served well and ably, being wounded in action three times. In May 1939 he returned home to Germany and upon Berger's recommendation, was given an officer's commission in the General SS.

On 1 September 1940, Ostuf. Dirlewanger reported that his poacher unit, now with a strength of 300 or so men (mostly non-poacher criminals who just volunteered to get out of the concentration camp), was fit for duty. By this time another 33 of the original poachers had been released to serve out the remainder of their sentences in prison. The unit was now retitled SS-SonderBataillon "Dirlewanger," and was dispatched to the Polish sector of the "Generalgouvernement" (Poland and Western Ukraine), where it quickly became entangled in numerous small-scale encounters with partisans.

In late December 1940, there was a mass escape of nearly 500 violent criminals from the Warsaw Prison, who separated into small groups of bandits, and Dirlewanger and his men were set to work rounding them up. As the unit troop strength waxed and waned (poacher replacements were hard to come by!), so did the title



Waffen-SS partisan hunters.

of the battalion, which occasionally also read Sondorkommando Dr. Dirlewanger and/or SS-Sondorkommando "Dirlewanger."

In 1941, the Sondorkommando saw stints of guard duty at the Lublin Ghetto, and was in action against smugglers and Polish resistance members in the vicinity of Lublin. In the summer of 1941, the outfit was used to help construct and guard military defensive projects (mainly anti-tank ditches), along the Bug River, in what was known as the "Otto Line." The Sondorkommando's home base at the time was at a labor camp at Dzikow.

Technically, the Dirlewanger Battalion came under the command of the Higher SS and Police Leader (HSSuPF) for the Generalgovernment, who at that time was Gruppenführer Friedrich-Wilhelm Krueger. It soon became apparent that Dirlewanger was not particularly responsive to Krueger's commands. Weary of authority, and living on what he felt was borrowed time, Dirlewanger decided to do things his own way. The result was that he paid attention to higher command only when he felt like it and pretty much conducted himself like a privateer on the Spanish Main. His additional "ace-in-the-hole" was that he was ultimately only answerable to Himmler, as his battalion was a part of the Field Command Troops of the RF-SS and was only "loaned" out to subordinate commands.

The friction with Krueger therefore continued to grow and in January 1942, the HSSuPF requested the removal of the Dirlewanger Battalion from his jurisdiction before he had everyone in it arrested. Krueger went straight to Himmler with his complaint and a month later the outfit was dispatched to Russia.

On 29 January 1942, the Sonderkommando was reconstituted as a "volunteer detachment," which gave it the same status as a "foreign legion," placing it in the nebulous category of not quite being a full-fledged formation of the Waffen-SS. This notwithstanding, the battalion was able to get fairly good supplies and equipment through the efforts of Ogruf. Berger.

In February 1942, SS-Sdr.Kdo. "D" was sent to Mogilev, White Russia, where it would be assigned to the control of the HSSuPF "Mitte" in Minsk, but would also serve under the Chief of Anti-Partisan Operations (Gruf. Bach-Zelewski) and the C-in-C Rear Area Forces/Army Sector 102. Over the next couple of years it would participate in 37 major military operations against communist terrorists. It engaged in serious combat action

for the first time in April 1942, when it fought to eliminate a so-called "autonomous partisan republic" in the Usakine region of Byelorussia. The ensuing conflict resulted in the complete elimination of the enemy concentration, and brought a measure of respect for the battalion.

In fact, this success caused Ogruf. Berger to request the formation of a second "poachers" battalion in June 1942, a proposal that was approved by Hitler on 20 August 1942. The fact that there were only 115 known poachers in custody was overlooked; this group was forwarded to Dirlewanger to use for replacements in September 1942.

While the authorized second battalion would not be ready for action until the spring of 1943, Ostubaf. Dirlewanger was not at a loss for personnel. On his own initiative he had been recruiting Russian and Ukrainian volunteers from among POWs, turncoat partisans and local militias. In this way he had constructed two auxiliary companies (one Russian and one Ukrainian), which in the course of 1942 became fully established combat units within the Sonderkommando. In addition, on 15 October 1942, the SS Grenadier Replacement Battalion "Ost" in Breslau, was assigned the task of coming up with regular replacements from the ranks of military delinquents, to SS-Sdr.Kdo. "D." As if it was necessary, the unit also was now occasionally referred to by another title: Einsatz-Bataillon Dirlewanger.

As of February 1943, SS-Sdr.Kdo. "D" reported a net troop strength of around 700 men, some 300 of whom were Soviet volunteers. The battalion's composition now included two German infantry companies, along with one Russian and one Ukrainian infantry companies and the usual staff elements. As of 26 January 1943, badges of rank and collar patches were permitted in the "Dirlewanger" unit. Up until that date, rank emblems had been limited to officers and NCOs who served with the unit on a regular basis; convicts and military delinquents had been denied rank. The collar patch assigned to SS-Sdr.Kdo. "D" was supposed to feature two crossed stick grenades, although details of its issuance are not known. A collar patch featuring two crossed rifles over a grenade has long been attributed to both this formation and SS Assault Bn. 500, although veterans of the latter unit claim that this emblem belonged to them alone.

In the spring of 1943, German convicts (born 1901-on) in the Generalgovernment, who were deemed fit for military service, were used to fill out SS-Sdr.Kdo. "D."



"Dirlewanger" troops during anti-partisan operations.

The unit now had the following composition:

- Staff
- 1st Infantry Co. (German)
- Artillery Battery (German)
- Motorcycle Recce Platoon (German)
- 2nd, 3rd, 4th Infantry Companies (chiefly Russian)
- One Ukrainian Volunteer Platoon
- Total Strength: 720 men

In May 1943, the Sonderkommando at least temporarily assumed regimental status when it received its II. Battalion, composed of 350 volunteers from assorted concentration camps and 150 more alleged poachers. This unit had been assembled and trained at the Sachsenhausen KZL then was shipped through Minsk to join SS-Sdr.Kdo. "D" in Ossipovitschi.

The Dirlewanger Regiment's biggest action in 1943 was the subjugation of the "Lake Pelik Autonomous Partisan Republic" in August. The operation was a complete success and brought Ostbaf. Dirlewanger the award of the German Cross in Gold. A casualty report was then released for the unit listing the losses for February through August 1943 as follows: 92 killed, 218 wounded, 8 missing. On 10 August 1943 convict replacements were forwarded to the Regiment for the first time from the SS and Police Military Prison at Dachau. They were joined by additional drafts of "poachers" along with some new staff personnel from SS Replacement Bn. "Ost" (now in Zhitomir), who were to be used in the further expansion of the regiment. Unit structure now looked like this:

- Staff
- Staff Company
- I. Bn. with 1st-4th Companies
- II. Bn. with 5th-8th Companies
- III. Bn. with 9th-12th Companies
- Replacement Company (added in 1944)

This of course was the "planned" structure, whether it actually took this exact form is open to some question. Service in the "Dirlewanger" Regiment now counted for official "military service," and those in its ranks could fulfill their national military obligation, even if they were convicts to begin with. Due to the penal nature of the formation, the enlisted personnel were still, however, given only second-rate status, and were liable to much harsher treatment and penalties than normal soldiers.

Sometime in late 1943, the first criminal replacements reached the Regiment from the Neuengamme KZL. Then

in November 1943, the "Dirlewanger" Rgt. was rushed into the frontlines. As of 14 November it was in action to the south of Kosari in Army Group Center. Then at year's end it was engaged in very costly defensive fighting at Lake Beresno with Army Group "North." To say the least Dirlewanger's troops were inadequately trained and prepared for front operations, and within a few weeks the regiment was no longer even battalion-strength in size. As of 30 December 1943 the newly rechristened SS-Sdr.Kdo. "D" could only report the following active troop strength:

Six officers, 44 NCOs, 209 men. Total strength: 259

The reformation and reconstruction of the "D" Regiment went on at a rapid pace in early 1944, due to the addition of 800 more criminals from concentration camps and more military convicts from the Waffen-SS and Police Military Prison at Danzig-Matzkau. As of 19 February 1944 the net strength of the command stood at about 1,200 men. On 15 April 1944, SS-Sonder Rgt. "Dirlewanger" (and/or SS-Bewahrungsverbaende "Dirlewanger"), established its own replacement company in Minsk and was no longer serviced by the SS Replacement Bn. "Ost" (which had moved from Breslau to Zhitomir and back again). In addition, on 24 April 1944, the first signals platoon for the Regiment was established, drawing its personnel from the ranks of the W-SS run Berlin Postal Protection Troops (an organization directed by Staf. Dirlewanger's patron, Ogruf. Berger). It would appear that in this case, Ogruf. Berger's helpful hand was once again in evidence.

In the spring of 1944, SS-Sdr.Rgt. "D" carried out operations against terrorists at Uschatschi and near Lepel and then in the area to the north of the Minsk-Borrisov railroad line. The HQ Staff and I.Bn. were quartered in Usda, with II.Bn. being located in Sabolotje. More replacements arrived from the Buchenwald KZL on 6 June 1944. By this time there were no longer any Russian or Ukrainian volunteers on duty with the Regiment, although a number of military reprobates from assorted West European nations were with the unit. As of 30 June 1944, the Regiment reported the following troop strengths: 17 officers, 87 NCOs, 867 men or 971 personnel in total.

In July 1944, a Moslem Uzbek Volunteer Bn. was attached to the SS-Sdr.Rgt. "D" on a temporary basis, but it was eventually detached and sent to Warsaw where it was incorporated into Kaminski's RONA Brigade (later



"Dirlewanger" troops during anti-partisan operations.

briefly the 29th Waffen-Grenadier Div. der SS). In this same month the "Dirlewanger" Rgt. was caught up in the Soviet summer offensive and had to fight difficult retrograde actions to the southeast of Minsk alongside other penal detachments from the Army and Air Force. It should be noted that in this tough situation the Regiment conducted itself quite well, and was chiefly responsible for spearheading a successful breakout from an entrapment around Grodno. After successfully defending Lomscha, the Dirlewanger troops withdrew to Zicheway before being sent back to the SS Training Camp at Ayrs, East Prussia for refitting. For the outstanding performance of his command during this trying time, Dirlewanger was promoted to the rank of SS-Oberfuehrer (senior colonel), effective 15 August 1944.

On 1 August 1944, the march of the Regiment to East Prussia was brought to a screeching halt by the uprising of the Polish Underground Army in Warsaw. The staff and I.Bn. of the Regiment, which was located near Lyck in the Generalgouvernement, received orders to reroute to Warsaw. As a result, I.Bn. reached the outskirts of the Polish capital in the late afternoon of 2 August, where it was assigned to the Corps Group "Von dem Bach" (led by Gruf. Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski). For some reason the II.Bn. could not be located immediately and it did not turn up until 6 August.

On the evening of 4 August, the Regiment received its combat assignment; to re-take the city center, and get ready for action. Supported by tanks and combat engineers with flame throwers from the "Hermann Goering" Division, the "Dirlewanger" Rgt. (less II.Bn.) began its assault on 5 August from the western suburb of Wola.

On the Regiment's left was an ad hoc Police Brigade under SS-Gruf. Heinz Reinhardt with a strength of 2,695 men (it would have been somewhat ironic if some of these policemen had originally been responsible for the arrest of some of the Dirlewanger men!), while on the regimental right was the East Prussian Grenadier Rgt. 4. This latter regiment was temporarily withdrawn from the fighting when its right-hand (southern) neighbor, the White Russian RONA Brigade began running amuck, becoming a threat to even its German allies!

The directives issued to the Dirlewanger Rgt. from Bach-Zelewski were as follows: it was to drive through the Wola district, clearing Wolska Street and Kerceli Square, then proceed down Choldona and Elekoralna Streets to rescue Warsaw's German Commandant, Gen. Stahel, in the Saxon Gardens area. Following that, the Regiment was to attack the Polish Home Army stronghold in the medieval Old Town and then proceed to seize and clear the approaches to the Kierbedzia Bridge on the Vistula River.

The Dirlewanger troops managed to gain about 1,000 yds. against stubborn resistance on its first day of operations. But perhaps more unfortunately it was charged with misbehavior and looting by some Army observers.

However, its actions were moderate compared to the rampage by the RONA Brigade (proposed 29th SS Division). This unit was only brought under control when its commander, Col. Kaminski was lured away from his command under false pretenses, secretly court-martialed and executed. His soldiers were informed that he died in an automobile accident and they were later incorporated to an extent into the 31st SS Division (White Russian Nr.1).

At one point in the fighting, Bach-Zelewski apparently had the "Kaminski treatment" in mind for Oberfhr. Dirlewanger, and he sent his chief-of-staff to Dirlewanger's HQ to bring him back for a "command conference." Being somewhat suspicious, Dirlewanger didn't take the bait, and he had the chief-of-staff escorted from his command post at gun point.

On 6 August, with the addition of the until-then absent II.Bn., and the help of Stukas and captured T-34 tanks from the "HIG" Div., the Dirlewanger Rgt. made the deepest penetration into rebel-held territory, establishing a foothold in the Saxon Gardens. Gruf. Reinhardt visited the Regiment's advance positions, and with the aid of two tanks, broke through to the isolated Bruhl Palace where Gen. Stahel had been trapped. The two men then plotted the next phase of the combat operations.

Over the next several days the battle for Warsaw raged with brutal intensity. The Dirlewanger Rgt. was able to clear the Saxon Gardens, capture the Royal Castle and seize the approaches to the Kierbedzia Bridge all by 19 August. But it was done at a heavy cost in casualties. During the fighting the Regiment received about 2500 replacements, some 1900 of them from the SS Military Prison Camp at Danzig-Matzkau, with most of the rest being political prisoners from concentration camps. The latter group was used to form a new III.Bn. and took no part in the battle for Warsaw.

On 27 August 1944, Dirlewanger began his all-out attack on the Old Town quarter of Warsaw. Fierce fighting raged here until 1 September, when the Polish guerrillas generally evacuated the area, using the sewer conduits beneath the cobblestone streets.

The actual battle for the city continued on until 4 October, but with the conquest of the Old Town, the issue was no longer in doubt. Dirlewanger's troops spent much of September parked along the banks of the Vistula, waiting to repel any Soviet attack that might be made (none were, as the Reds were also eager to see the Polish Home Army destroyed), and mopping up pockets of resistance. By the time the Dirlewanger Regiment was withdrawn from Warsaw, it consisted of 648 troops (not counting the undeployed III.Bn.), out of some 3,000 or so used in the fighting.

Immediately after leaving Warsaw, the Dirlewanger Rgt. reassembled in Radom, Poland for extensive refitting. Replacements and reinforcements now poured into the unit from all branches of the services, particularly from

the formations that had been shattered in the battle for France and had only just gotten around to sending their disciplinary cases to the military prisons at Torgau and Glatz. Included among these reprobates were many downgraded former Army officers. Within a couple of weeks the Regiment had gained enough new personnel to be reformed as a brigade.

By early October the Dirlwanger formation had adopted the title: SS-Sturmbrigade "Dirlwanger," which would become recognized as the 2.SS-Sturmbrigade ("Dirlwanger") on or about 15 November 1944. The surviving members of the Dirlwanger Rgt. who had participated in the suppression of the Warsaw rebellion were considered to have rehabilitated themselves, and were free to transfer to "regular" Waffen-SS units. But as far as is known, none did so. The links that had developed between the soldiers and their commander - he was very much liked by most of those that served under him - had become so strong during the battles of the previous few months, that no one wished to break them. There was also sort of the perverse pride that tended to develop in probationary units, the bond of the outcasts; all of these soldiers had gone through the same types of humiliation and this in turn brought them much closer together.

On 12 October 1944, on the advice of Ogruf. Berger (who had served briefly as Waffen-SS commander in Slovakia), the Dirlwanger Brigade was ordered to Slovakia to help fight the Slovak Army mutineers and partisans in the Lower Tatras. Part of the unit's assignment was to protect the Carpathian German community, while also assaulting rebel-held territory. The brigade staff and HQ were based in the ethnic-German Zips region, while the combat elements were deployed against the northwest corner of the rebel-held pocket in central Slovakia. Brigade structure at this time was as follows:

Staff & Support Troops

Two Assault Regiments of three Battalions each

Three Artillery Batteries formed into one Detachment

One Reconnaissance Company

The roughly 4,000 troops in the Brigade could be categorized like this:

200 poachers (5%)

600 Waffen-SS/Polizei convicts (15%)

2,000 Army/Air Force convicts (50%)

1,200 assorted criminals and political prisoners (30%)

The Dirlwanger Brigade's combat chronology for Slovakia went as follows:



Sonderkommando troops with captured partisan.



"Dirlwanger" men after heavy fighting around Grodno.

16 October 1944: Brigade arrival in combat zone; somewhat delayed by attacks by Red-sponsored 1st Czech Air-Fighter Regiment.

18 October 1944: Beginning of brigade assault on fortified rebel positions on Ostro Mountain; little ground gained in heavy fighting.

19-20 October 1944: Further Brigade attacks bogged down.

22 October 1944: The Brigade battled for possession of Necpaly and Biely Potok. One Dirlwanger Assault Rgt. near Necpalska Dolina, 9 km to the southeast of Turc Svaty Martin (St. Martin), made some slow progress against the "Stalin" Red Slovak Bde. being led by a Capt. Jegorov. The other Dirlwanger Assault Rgt. was unable to gain any ground against the 6th Slovak Tactical Group under a Lt.Col. Cernek to the south of Biely Potok.

25 October 1944: The Brigade captured both Necpaly and Biely Potok and broke through the rebel front to a depth of 6 km.

26 October 1944: Good progress was made against the "6th Tactical Group" and the Brigade drove to within a few kilometers of the rebel capital of Banska Bystrica.

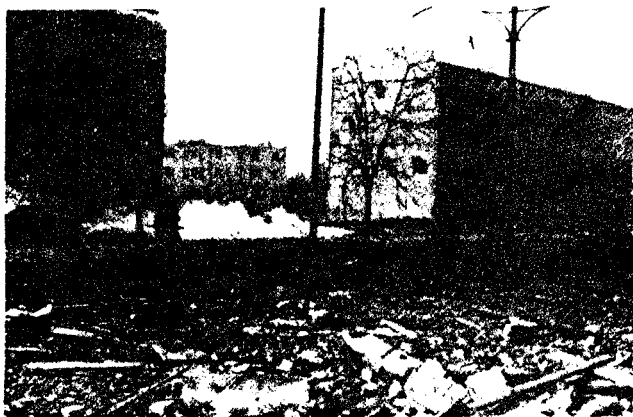
27 October 1944: The Brigade assaulted and overran the rebel stronghold at Liptowska Osada after a protected struggle; however, the main enemy forces had largely withdrawn from the area.

28-30 October 1944: The Brigade was engaged in mop-up fighting between Liptowska Osada and Banska Bystrica in which most of the dispersed rebel forces were neutralized.

During this particular time the Dirlwanger Brigade had been assigned to the control of the neighboring 14th SS Division (1st Ukrainian), but its commander, Brigfhr. Freitag, made no effort to even contact it, much less control it. Ogruf. Hoeffle, the Higher SS and Police Leader for Slovakia, who was in charge of putting down the military mutiny, had overall command jurisdiction over the Brigade, but he was not particularly happy with that responsibility.

After the war, prior to his execution as a "war criminal" by the Czechs, Ogruf. Hoeffle was allowed to make court depositions about what had happened during the revolt. In his side of the story, Hoeffle noted that he was opposed to the deployment of the Dirlwanger Brigade in Slovakia, stating that it had only happened due to Himmler's insistence upon Berger's request. Once arrived, Hoeffle informed Dirlwanger that he expected his troops to be fully disciplined and do their duty whether in quarters or in the field.

But Hoeffle soon ran into trouble with him. He insisted that Dirlwanger telephoned false reports about his artillery detachment's alleged successes (particularly around Sahy in December 1944), behind his back to Gruf. Fegelein,



"Dirlewanger" troops on the offensive in Warsaw.



"D" Rgt. machine gunners in the Saxon Gardens of Warsaw.

the Waffen-SS Liaison Officer in the Fuehrer HQ in Berlin. Hoeffle was also troubled by the fact that Dirlewanger Brigade deserters began turning up in towns throughout Slovakia, becoming a burden to the Military Police and Secret Field Police Troops who had to track them down. It was discovered that many of these deserters had actually sold their weapons to Slovak partisans. Despite these lapses, Hoeffle admitted that the brigade had fulfilled its assigned combat mission.

On the plus side, two former Army officers, serving as enlisted men in the brigade, were fully pardoned and decorated for their performance during the crushing of the Slovak mutiny. As of 1 October 1944, the Brigade's

replacement company listed its address as Fischerstrasse 16 in Cracow; effective 15 November it was listed as the replacement company for the SS Assault Brigade "Dirlewanger," so it was around this time that the nominal "brigade" status for the unit became official. On 17 November the Dirlewanger Brigade received another large contingent of concentration camp prisoners, most of whom had been former Communists and Socialists. When they arrived they had to be taught how to make a proper "Hitler salute," since none of them had had the time or inclination to practice this before. At this time, it was still customary to refer to unit commanders within the Brigade by their position titles rather than their



"Dirlewanger" man with heavy machine gun.



SS "convict" troops in Warsaw, August 1944.



SS-Gruf. Reinefarth as commander of a special SS-Police Brigade in Warsaw.

ranks (since most of them were un-ranked anyhow!); i.e., a former Hauptmann or Hauptsturmfuehrer would be referred to only as "Company Commander" (Kompaniechef).



SS-Gruf. Reinefarth at the end of the war.

In early December 1944, the "D" Brigade was sent to Hungary to participate in a counterattack along with part of the Panzergrenadier Div. "Feldherrnhalle" in the northern Hungarian hills in an effort to relieve the pressure being mounted against Budapest. But the Brigade was not permitted to retain what little cohesiveness it had. One Dirlwanger battalion was assigned to the 2nd Armored Div. of the Hungarian 3rd Army, while further Brigade elements were detached to Army Group "Woehler" for use in the 18th SS Pz.Gr.Div. "Horst Wessel."

On 12 December, the commander of 4th SS Polizei Div., Brigfhr. Fritz Schmides, unexpectedly found himself canned; he had disobeyed a "Fuehrer" attack order some-



SS-Oberfhr. Dirlwanger after receiving the Slovak War Victory Cross, 1st Class.



SS-Oberfuehrer Dr. Oskar Dirlwanger upon receipt of the Knight's Cross, 30 September 1944.



Oberführer Dirlwanger (left) and members of his staff, 1944.

what earlier on the grounds that it would have been suicidal, and thought at best he would receive a reprimand. Such was not to be the case as the Reichsführer-SS decided to make an example of him. Himmler hurriedly promoted a junior officer, Ostbaf. Walter Harzer, to Standartenführer, and ordered him to replace Schmedes as divisional commander. But for Brigführ. Schmedes the worst was yet to come: he was eventually posted on probation to the Dirlwanger Brigade! His exact position was that of "Tactical Officer," which was rather ambiguous. In essence he would be an advisor and second-in-command to the brigade CO, Oberführ. Dirlwanger.

On 14 December 1944, a major attack by the 6th Guard Army of the 2nd Soviet Ukrainian "Front," succeeded in scrambling the Dirlwanger Brigade sector, which straddled the Slovak-Hungarian border, and created an extreme crisis for all of the German Army Group "South." One of Dirlwanger's battalions had been committed to the defense of the key Slovakian border town of Sahy (or Ipolysag to the Hungarians), and the battalion com-



Hauptmann Otto Hafner, who commanded two "Dirlwanger" battalions with success in Hungary, late 1944.

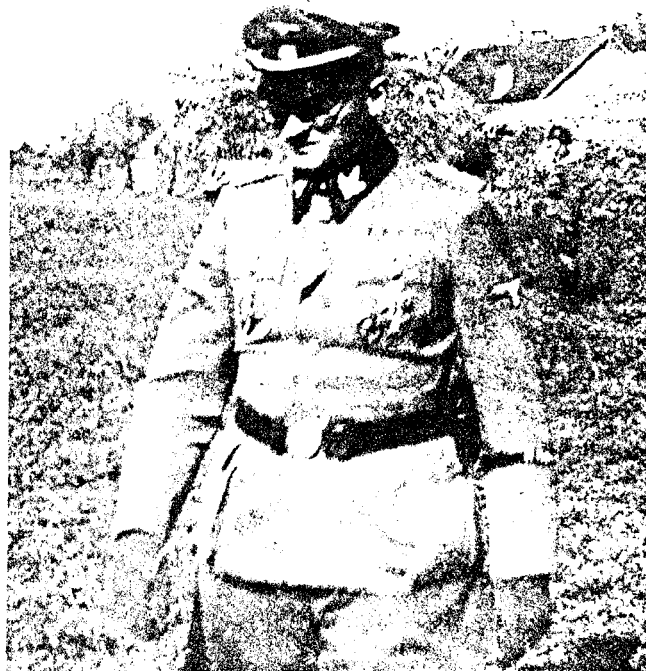


Emblem

Crossed stick grenades.

mander apparently misdeployed his troops by placing only a thin picket line where the bulk of his command should have been located. The result was a major enemy breakthrough that cracked the German lines wide open.

The commander of Army Group "South," Generaloberst Friessner, visited the "D" Brigade command post on the afternoon of the 14th, to impress upon Oberführ. Dirlwanger that he was to keep his troops in place. Friessner was taken aback by the unmilitary demeanor he found at the Brigade HQ, including the sight of Dirlwanger seated at his desk with a pet monkey on his shoulder. He later would refer to Dirlwanger as an "errant adventurer." In any case, Dirlwanger argued against Friessner's orders, noting that his command would be cut off if it didn't withdraw, but the Col.-General would have none of it. After going on to inspect the nearby 24th Panzer Div., Friessner decided to stop by the "D" Brigade HQ that evening to make sure that it was still in place. Naturally it wasn't and Friessner barely escaped capture.



SS-Brigadeführer Fritz Schmedes, Tactical Officer of and last effective commander of the 36th SS Grenadier Division.



Waffen-SS assault gun in Warsaw, 5 October 1944. [Courtesy of Kenneth Nieman]

by the Soviets!

Part of Dirlwanger's problems near Sahy was caused by his III.Bn./SS-Sturm Rgt. 2, which was the so-called "political prisoner" battalion composed to a large extent of Communist Party functionaries. About half of it, 160 men in total, deserted en masse to the enemy. The deserters made sure to rip-off their "incriminating" insignia in advance, however. By 15-16 December, Dirlwanger's command was in even greater chaos than normal. One battalion had been overrun and another had virtually ceased to exist. As the Reds began expanding their foothold at Sahy between the 6th and 8th German Armies, the still functioning segments of the Dirlwanger Brigade were subordinated to officers of the 357th Inf. Div. to be used in building up a new defensive line between Kistompa and Syemerod. What developed in this area was the so-called "Gran Bridgehead," in the north part of which was located the bulk of the "D" Brigade along with units of the "FHH" Div. and the IV. Pz. Corps.

During some of the heaviest fighting in Hungary, more Dirlwanger battalions were attached to other formations. The main body of the Brigade came under the operational control of the 18th SS Div. "HW," with a battalion going to Kampfgruppe "Schenz" (until 27 December), and two battalions going to Kampfgruppe "Hafner" of the 357th Inf. Division. These detached elements, composed as they were of mostly "disgraced" ex-officers, performed

well when they were adequately led. Hauptmann Hafner went out of his way to praise the steadfast conduct of the Dirlwanger men under his control. In particular he singled out for special recognition, SS-Unterscharführer (Sgt.) Momm, who distinguished himself in the fighting. Momm was a former cavalry staff officer and internationally known equestrian show-jumper from the Cavalry School in Hannover, who had run afoul of Wehrmacht disciplinary authorities.

The critical battle for northern Hungary came to a stalemate on 28 December 1944 with both sides now digging in. However, the city of Budapest along with the IX. SS Mountain Corps, had become hopelessly encircled. Much of the blame for this has been placed on the "D" Brigade for allowing the enemy to make his deep penetration near Sahy. But this may well be a case of "passing the buck"; the military powers responsible were aware of the composition of the Brigade and its lack of potential as a frontline unit to begin with and had they chosen to do so, they could have placed a more experienced combat element at this critical juncture.

On 29 December 1944, the new C-in-C Army Group "South," General-of-the-Infantry Woehler, ordered the Dirlwanger Brigade removed from the front and sent back to Neuhaeusel/Nove Zamky, Slovakia for regrouping. The fully unreliable "communist" III./SS-Sturm Rgt. 2, was

restocked with troop contingents from the other five assault battalions; in this way both of the regiments were brought up to strength. By this time the unit had been officially titled 2.SS-Sturmbrigade ("Dirlewanger").

As of 2 January 1945, the Brigade was still located to the north of Sahy, Slovakia in the vicinity of the 24th Pz. Div., however, in the course of the month it was reformed in the Prilevidza area of Slovakia. On 2 February the Brigade was in the region to the northeast of Pressburg (Bratislava), the Slovak capital, near SS Rgt. "Schill" and two battalions of the "Tatra" Pz. Division. On this same date the "D" Brigade was ordered to relocate to the Guben area in Germany on the threatened Oder River front.

Ten days later, on 12 February, the Dirlewanger Brigade arrived near Guben and parts of it were immediately rushed into the frontlines. On the 14th, orders arrived authorizing the Brigade to expand into the 36th SS Division, which because of its probationary nature, would not be given full Waffen-SS status, but would only be designated a "Waffen-Grenadier" division, on par with the non-Germanic SS divisions. The new division was to be formed around Kottbus based upon the Brigade, using new troops from Army penal units along with probationary soldiers from the "Hermann Goering" Division. Officer cadets from the SS-Junkerschule "Braunschweig," who had been serving in a battle-group with the "HG" Div., were assigned to the 36th SS Div. to serve as NCOs. In addition some specialist personnel were provided to the new formation from the Army Engineer Brigade 681.

On the same day, the "D" Brigade was forced to evacuate positions near the town of Sommerfeld in the face of a vigorous enemy advance. Oberfhr. Dirlewanger was not happy with the situation (nor were his superiors!), so on 15 February 1945 he personally led a counterattack aimed at re-taking the town. Along with troops from SS-Polizei Brigade "Wirth" (the nascent 35th SS Polizei Div.), the Dirlewanger men regained Sommerfeld, Christianstadt and Naumburg in vigorous fighting, in the course of which Dirlewanger received his twelfth and most severe war wound. Command was then passed on to Brigfhr. Schmedes, who although he led the Brigade/Division from this point until the war's end, seems never to have been more than a "temporary" commander.

At the end of the day, fighting for the western part of Christianstadt was reported as still in progress. To the north of this town, the Bober line was pierced by enemy forces and the Bober Bridgehead across the Oder was evacuated, with the Oder River bridges in the area subsequently being destroyed. The 16th of February was another day of fierce combat, with the Soviets unable to gain any ground in their previous penetration some 8 km south-southwest of Guben. The Dirlewanger Brigade was heavily engaged and expelled the Reds from two towns to the west and east of Sommerfeld. On the next day the fighting continued with little change, but the Brigade was credited with the destruction of one enemy tank near Sommerfeld.

On 18 February 1945 a defensive front was rapidly assembled to block a Soviet advance to the southwest of Crossen. The Dirlewanger Brigade was reinforced and advanced from Guben to occupy towns farther to the east. The Brigade's spearhead ended up reaching a spot about 5 km east of Guben on the Guben-Crossen road. To the north, other weak Waffen-SS forces struggled valiantly (and mostly successfully) to stave off another enemy advance to the northwest.

From this point in time to the middle of April 1945, the entire Oder Front settled down into a pattern of static, but often very violent positional fighting. The



Wilhelm Asmus, former officer in SS-Standarte "Deutschland" and the SS Mt. Div. "Prinz Eugen"; MIA with 36th SS Div. on 22 February 1945. Born 25 September 1898 in the Alsace.

enemy drive had been temporarily halted and the Soviets spent these weeks largely in regrouping huge new forces in the rear while continuing to probe the porous German frontlines. The 36th SS Div. began taking on some semblance of shape in March 1945 and its assault regiments were supposed to have been redesignated Waffen-Grenadier Regiments of the SS 72 and 73 (this according to the Waffen-SS historian and researcher Wolfgang Vopersal). One can assume that the regimental number 74 was also set aside for the Division, since it did not appear in use elsewhere in the Waffen-SS.

Whatever the case, the 36th SS Div. was not able to fully organize itself into a division in the brief time allotted to it and by 15 April 1945 the combat-worthy portions of the formation were designated as Kampfgruppe 36, SS Division. On this day, while serving as part of V. Army Corps, it joined the 342nd Inf. Div. in throwing back several enemy attempts to cross over the Neisse River. From this time on the divisional chronology is as follows:

16 April 1945: The great Soviet Spring Offensive begins; enemy inroads are made all along the German frontlines.

17-18 April 1945: The Division participates in desperate defensive fighting around Guben.

19-20 April 1945: 36th SS Div. begins to withdraw from its Oder-Neisse positions; retrograde fighting in progress.

21 April 1945: 36th SS Div. assumed defensive positions to the southwest of Guben, between the 342nd and 214th Inf. Divisions.

22 April 1945: No change in the situation.

23-24 April 1945: The 36th SS Div. takes part in retrograde actions towards the Neu-Zauche area.

25 April 1945: The 36th SS Div. took up temporary positions to the southwest of Lake Schwieloch.

26 April 1945: Beginning of withdrawal towards Maerkisch Buchholz.

27-28 April 1945: 36th SS Div. is encircled in the extreme south-southeastern part of the Halbe Pocket.

29 April 1945: With no hope of escape in sight, Brigfhr. Schmedes surrendered the bulk of the 36th SS Div. to the Red Army.

3 May 1945: Remnants of the 36th SS Div. that had gotten isolated in the fighting, crossed over the Elbe River and surrendered to the Americans.

Thus ended the somewhat unusual story of the Dirlewanger Bde./36th SS Division. It was not the end for its commander, who while recuperating from his wounds fell into French captivity. Soon after the end of the war, Oskar Dirlewanger was murdered by French soldiers, who applied the same fate to a number of other disabled and helpless Waffen-SS officers who wound up in their hands. No investigation into this misdeed was permitted

of course! Later it was rumored that Dirlwanger had been killed by ex-KZL inmates or even his own soldiers, but these seem to be feeble efforts to cover up yet another "Allied" war crime! In the post-war era, rabid "Nazi-hunters" were convinced that Dirlwanger lived in Cairo on the payroll of the Egyptian government, so his body was exhumed and positively identified in 1963.

As for the fate of the 36th SS Div. itself, details are largely lacking, though many of its soldiers did survive the war, and quite a few ended up in government positions in the DDR (East Germany). We can assume that these individuals were probably ex-members of the notorious III.Bn./SS-Stu.Rgt. 2. The claim by the alleged historian Reitlinger that the division was "put to the sword" after the surrender has never been verified.

The 36th SS Div. will probably always be the subject of some controversy due to its activities, composition and marginal status with the Waffen-SS, but it did function, occasionally with great effectiveness, as a very unique military unit!

Replacement Company/Dirlwanger Brigade 36th SS Division

This was established in Minsk in April 1944 and as of 1 October 1944 had relocated to Fischerstrasse 16 in Cracow. It moved to Breslau in December 1944 and was located at Schulplatz 2 in Bruenn-Koengisfeld as of 15 February 1945. (Note: The Cracow address was supposed to have been a former monastery.) §

THE FIRST SS DISCIPLINARY UNITS

Prior to the outbreak of World War Two, the Armed SS had no special provision for handling the severe disciplinary cases in its ranks; criminal cases were routinely handed over to civilian courts. In July 1938, two "reformatory" detachments were set up to handle minor offenders from both the General (civilian) and Armed (military) SS. The members of these units were considered under "protective custody" but were not incarcerated. They were given full opportunity to improve themselves and transfer back to their regular units.

The first war-time Armed SS combat disciplinary unit was a special "commando" of roughly company strength that was attached to the Engineer Battalion of the SS "Totenkopf" Division on 30 November 1939. Its personnel consisted of malefactors from the Waffen-SS, General SS and SS Police troops. This particular commando was dissolved on 18 August 1940 after its members were

deemed to have rehabilitated themselves through their actions in the recently concluded French campaign. However, in the autumn of 1940, another disciplinary commando was established with the SS Engineer Replacement Bn. in Dresden. On 15 July 1941 the members of this element were sent to join the "Das Reich" Division, where they served mainly as minefield clearers and construction workers, to prove themselves at the Russian Front.

As the Waffen-SS expanded and saw more action there was a corresponding increase in the number of criminal and disciplinary cases and most of these cases were soon forwarded on to the newly established Waffen-SS and Police Penal Camp at Danzig-Matzkau or a similar facility at the Dachau KZL. Eventually, military prisoners were used to form a variety of special-use, commando and paratroop combat units. §

SS-Junker Oskar Graeper enlisted in 3rd Co./"Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler" at the Lichterfelde Barracks in Berlin on 27 May 1940. He later transferred to the "Das Reich" Division. In 1943 he served with the special commando unit "North Star" (unit history unknown) and in 1944 he attended an officer's training course at the Junkerschule Posen before being assigned to the SS Assault Brigade "Dirlwanger." Unlike many of the officers in this unit, Graeper survived the war and his postwar confinement.

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SS-Obersturmfuehrer Graf Ahlefeldt-Laurvig was a company commander in SS Pz.Gr.Rgt. 40 "General Seyffardt" (Dutch Nr.1) when it was part of SS-Kampfgruppe "Scheibe." He was an MIA in early 1945.

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SS-Standartenfuehrer Karl Marks was the first designated divisional commander for the 24th SS Mountain Division "Kerstjaeger," but when the divisional formation failed to pan out in the autumn of 1944 he was transferred to the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS "Galizien" (Ukraine Nr.1), and assumed command of the SS Training and Replacement Rgt. 14, a position which he held until the final capitulation.

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L.J. Bogaerts was a Flemish member of the 2nd SS Military Geology Company of the Waffen-SS Military Geology Battalion. He was born on 2 February 1906 and died after a long illness due to his war wounds on 6 October 1960.

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SS-Oberscharfuehrer Ernst Fieger was a decorated assault troop leader from 2nd Co./SS Rifle Bn. "Nord." which served as a striking force for the 6th SS Mountain Division "Nord" during its battles with the Americans in early 1945. Fieger was heavily involved in W-SS veteran's affairs and died on 4 November 1973.

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Fifteen crewmen from three tanks belonging to either the "LAH" or "H.I." SS Divisions were taken captive by the Soviets on 23/24 April 1945 near Kaumberg, Lower Austria. They were executed on the spot and eventually buried (without ID) in the Kaumberg cemetery.

- § -

SS-Grenadier Wolfram Hofmann, born 17 October 1912 in Leipzig, was posted to the "Dirlwanger" Division as a disciplinary case. He was killed in action at Scheek Doehren on 19 March 1945 while serving with 3rd Co./I.Bn./Gr.Rgt.2/36th SS Grenadier Division.

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WAFFEN-SS PERSONALITY PROFILE

SS-Brigadefuehrer FRITZ SCHMEDES

Fritz Schmedes was born on 7 October 1894 in Schwarm near Verden, the son of August Schmedes, an Evangelical pastor. He attended school in Hameln and on 20 February 1913 enlisted in the Ost Friesische Field Artillery Rgt. Nr. 62 in Oldenburg as an officer candidate.

Schmedes was commissioned a Lieutenant on 23 June 1914 and spent the entirety of WWI on the Western Front, ending up with the Strassburger Field Artillery Rgt. Nr. 84. From members of this regiment he formed the "Volunteer Battery Schmedes" which was attached to the Freikorps "Hasse" in the immediate post-war era. In 1919 this outfit was deployed in Berlin and Upper Silesia. In October 1919, Schmedes returned back to his original regiment (Feld.Art.Rgt.62) in Oldenburg. He then participated in the fight against the "Red Army" in the Ruhr area. In June 1920 he joined the "Security Defense Force Central Germany," and was with a company that was formed in Ohrdruf and sent to Muehlhausen in Thuringia.

Fritz Schmedes soon found his career in the German Police. After many years of service he became a police staff officer under the city administration in Erfurt in 1935. During the years 1937 and 1938, he was the commander of the Protective Police in Erfurt and received a promotion to Lt.Col. of the Police. In March 1939, Schmedes became chief-of-staff to the Inspector of the Order Police in Kassel.

Schmedes transferred into the SS-Police Div. in 1941 and on the basis of his past military experience, became the commander of the division's artillery regiment in June 1941, holding this position until 16 February 1942. On 1 April 1942 he became an active member of the Waffen-SS with the rank of Obersturmbannfuhrer. This was followed by a quick promotion to Standartenfuhrer on 20 April 1942. One year later he was promoted to Oberfuhrer and became the commander of the 4th SS Police Pz.Gr.Div. on 10 June 1943. To help him with his duties, Schmedes attended a divisional commanders training course that ran from 26 July to 21 August 1943. His promotion to Brigadefuehrer followed on 9 November 1943.

Brigfhr. Schmedes was relegated to the Waffen-SS officers reserve pool from 5 July to 22 August 1944. He then re-took command of the division and led it in action in fighting from Greece to Hungary. In the autumn of 1944, he deliberately disobeyed a "Fuehrer Command Directive" ordering him to launch a counterattack on the grounds that he did not have enough troops to do the job and what he did have were worn out. He expected a reprimand at best, but a telegram soon arrived from RF-SS Himmler relieving him from command. This was coupled with a quick promotion to a junior officer, Ostufaf. Walter Harzer, to Standartenfuhrer, so that he could take charge of the division with an adequate rank.

The shocked Schmedes soon found himself in disgrace and placed initially again in the reserve pool but at some point-in-time over the next several weeks he was assigned as punishment to the 2nd SS Assault Brigade "Dirlewanger," composed largely of convicts and disciplinary cases. On 15 February 1945, following the severe wounding of the brigade commander, Oberfhr. Dirlewanger, Schmedes became temporary CO, even though his official

title was, and remained, "Tactical Officer." A few days later, on the 20th to be exact, the brigade was authorized to begin forming into the 36th SS Gren. Div., and Fritz Schmedes would lead this formation until its final surrender on 29 April 1945, while hopelessly trapped in the Halbe Pocket. Brigfhr. Schmedes then went into Soviet captivity and his ultimate fate is not known to this writer.



Waffen-Hauptsturmfuehrer-der-SS AVERKIY HONCZARENKO

staff officer 14.WGD der SS ("Galicia")

Averkiy Honczarenko was born on 22 October 1890 in Doshchenky, Poltava Province, Eastern Ukraine. He was descended from an old Ukrainian Cossack family and attended the military school at Chuhuyiv, graduating in 1912. After the outbreak of WWI, Honczarenko was sent to the Austro-German Front where he served as a company commander in the Imperial Russian Army. By 1915 he had risen to battalion commander, but he was severely wounded the same year and saw no further combat duty. Decorated with the St. George's Cross he became a lecturer at an NCO school in Kiev.

With the outbreak of the Russian revolution and the subsequent attempt to make Ukraine an independent, but non-communist state, Honczarenko became commander of the Kiev NCO school and made it a Ukrainian rather than Russian facility. On 1 April 1917, with the rank of Colonel, Honczarenko became chairman of the Ukrainian Officers' Congress in Kiev, which had the task of creating a Ukrainian national army for the first time since the Battle of Poltava in 1709 while at the same time converting all military schools in Ukraine from Russian to Ukrainian.

The first Ukrainian officers' school, named after Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky, was set-up in Kiev in July 1917, and Col. Honczarenko was assigned to it as a lecturer/instructor. At the same time he was made a battalion commander in the new Ukrainian Army. When the Bolsheviks began their attempt to conquer Ukraine, Col. Hon-

czarenko took to the field with his troops. From 23 December 1917 to 29 January 1918 he commanded an anti-Bolshevik "front" near the towns of Backhmach and Kruty to the north of Kiev. His command consisted of his 500-man battalion, which had been formed from cadets at the officers' school in Kiev.

In January 1918 Honczarenko's battalion ably defended a 3 km sector of frontlines against the repeated attacks by a strong Bolshevik force led by a Col. Muraviev, an unsavory individual who was responsible for many atrocities in Ukraine. Towards the end of the month, Muraviev placed a direct phone call to Honczarenko's command post demanding his surrender. Colonel Honczarenko refused to do so and advised Muraviev that a "reception committee" awaited the Bolsheviks on the Kruty front.

What followed on 29 January was the day-long battle of Kruty, in which Honczarenko's battalion continuously repelled Red attacks from a much larger force with the aid of only 18 heavy machine guns and one artillery piece. This heroic victory in which some 250 Ukrainians, including 10 officers and one entire platoon perished, bought time to help prepare for the defense of Kiev.

Following the Battle of Kruty, Col. Honczarenko was elevated to a staff position with the "Slobidsky Kish," a new Ukrainian military formation. He then served in a variety of posts for the military administration of free Ukraine, including county commander at Letychiv, and different positions in the National Administration of Military Schools under the government led by Hetman Pavlo Paul Skoropadsky.

In December 1918 he became the provincial military commander of Podillia at Kamianets Podilsky. He then served as chief of staff officers during the advance of the united Ukrainian armies on Kiev under the command of Otaman Symon Peliura. This offensive failed and the independent Ukrainian state was swallowed up by the Soviet Bolsheviks. Colonel Honczarenko then settled in western Ukraine (Galicia), which had been incorporated into the new independent Polish state, which at least was non-communist. During the inter-war years he worked for the Union of Ukrainian Cooperatives in Tovmach and Krynytsia.

In 1943, at the age of 53, he offered his services to the new 14th Waffen-Grenadier Div. der SS (galizien Nr. 1), which was composed mostly of Ukrainian volunteers. Honczarenko joined the divisional staff with the rank of Hauptsturmfuehrer (Captain). He seems to have been involved in the planning for the deployment of the first Ukrainian Waffen-SS combat troops (SS-Kampfgruppe "Beyersdorf") in February 1944 (see photo on page 119 of *Fighting for Freedom*), and later participated in and survived the epic battle of Brody. The rest of his career is somewhat obscured except for the fact that Col. Honczarenko eventually wound up in the United States and died in New York on 12 April 1980 at the age of 89.

Photo: War-time portrait of Waf.-Hstuf. Honczarenko in the uniform of the 14th SS Division.

SS-Oberfuehrer STEFAN HEDRICH

Stefan Hedrich was born on 14 March 1880 in the Siebenburger "Saxony" area of Austro-Hungary. He was the fifth of seven children of a medical doctor. At the age of 14 he was sent to the Imperial Military Cadet school in Vienna and after graduating became an officer-candidate in the Austro-Hungarian Army. In WWI he served as a Captain and battalion commander in the Imperial Army, winning numerous decorations for bravery, including the prestigious Order of Leopold with oakleaves and swords.

In the post-WWI era, Hedrich joined the Romanian



Army when his homeland was transferred to that country and eventually arose to the rank of Colonel of the Mountain Troops. He was a good friend and acquaintance of Artur Phelps, another Siebenburger "Saxon" and General of the Mountain Troops in the Romanian Army. Hedrich subsequently followed Phelps' example and volunteered his services to the Waffen-SS, which awarded him his old rank of Colonel (i.e., Standartenfuehrer).

At the age of 62 in March 1942, Staf. Hedrich became one of many former Austro-Hungarian officers assigned to oversee the training and formation of the ethnic-German SS Mountain Div. "Prinz Eugen" in Yugoslavia. As the right-hand man to the divisional commander, Gruppenfuehrer Phelps, Hedrich was named "Infanterie fuehrer" of "Prinz Eugen," which effectively made him second-in-command. In this capacity Hedrich would serve as acting divisional commander, battle-group leader, and for awhile, acting commander of the division's 1st Mnt. Rgt. (later SS-Gebirgsjaeger Rgt. 13).

After conducting difficult winter operations in 1942/43, in hard terrain and treacherous weather conditions, Staf. Hedrich became so crippled with rheumatism that he could barely walk. So on 4 April 1943 he began a sick leave. He then underwent six weeks of treatment for his condition at the "radioactive" mud baths at Pystion, Slovakia, which seemed to do the trick. His biggest problem was negotiating a bank draft in Slovakian currency to

pay for the cure!

After regaining his mobility, Hedrich returned to Yugoslavia to rejoin the "PE" Div. at the end of May 1943. He reached the divisional staff in Montenegro, during the final stages of an anti-terrorist operation and found himself with nothing to do - reduced, in his own words, to a "camp follower." He was soon declared unfit for combat duty by the Waffen-SS HQ and recalled to Berlin where he was to become Inspector of SS Mountain Troops. Hedrich's journey from Mostar to Berlin via Sarajevo and Vienna took a full week to accomplish by horseback, ambulance, truck and train. He would later make the same journey in reverse by airplane in a mere five hours.

In the course of the war, Stefan Hedrich was awarded the WWII clasps to both grades of the Iron Cross (which he had already received in WWI), and may have been promoted to Brigadefuehrer at the end of the war (still unsubstantiated). All of his three sons served ably as officers in the Waffen-SS. During nearly three years of U.S. captivity after the war, Hedrich devoted his time to writing and eventually did a memoir of his wartime experiences with the "Prinz Eugen" Div. for the Waffen-SS veterans' magazine *Der Freiwillige* in the early 1960s. He lived a rich and full life, serving in his own words "as a soldier under three emperors and two kings," and died on 1 February 1975, nearly 95 years of age.

Top photo: Portrait in uniform.

Bottom photo: "Prinz Eugen" divisional staff, 1942. Front row: second from left, Staf. Hedrich; third from left, Gruf. Phleps.



Von Treuenfeld as CO of 10th SS Division.

SS-Gruppenfuehrer

KARL VON TREUENFELD

Karl von Treuenfeld was born on 31 March 1885 in Flensburg, the son of an Imperial Navy sea captain. From 1909 to 1933 his name was listed as von Fischer-Treuenfeld to reflect the old family name of Fischer. For whatever reason, he had the Prussian Interior Minister change his name to simply von Treuenfeld in 1933.

After completing primary schooling in 1898, von Fischer-Treuenfeld was admitted to the military academy in Ploen; he later transferred to the main Imperial Military Cadet training school at the Lichterfelde Barracks (later to be the home of the LSSAH), in Berlin. In 1903 he joined the 4th Guard Field Artillery Rgt. in Potsdam as an officer candidate and he received his promotion to Leutnant in the following year. Two years later he transferred to the 1st Hussar Lifeguard Rgt. in Danzig, where he served with the son of Field-Marshal von Mackensen, the later Col.-Gen. Eberhardt von Mackensen.

In 1910, von Fischer-Treuenfeld was off to France, to study the French language and visit the country. From 1912 to 1914 he attended courses at the Imperial War Academy, and in mid-July 1914 his knowledge of French paid off when he was sent on a secret military intelligence mission in France and Belgium. With the outbreak of WWI he quickly returned to his old regiment.

On 30 March 1916, von Fischer-Treuenfeld joined the staff of the Commander-in-Chief "East" with the rank of Hauptmann. He later joined the operations detachment of the General Staff. After the defeat of Romania, it was his job to get the vital oil production in that country flowing again. In the summer of 1917, von Fischer-Treuenfeld had the task of delivering daily military briefings to Kaiser Wilhelm II. In the autumn of that year he worked on standardizing regulations for the deployment of modern signals or communications equipment. During parts of 1917 and 1918 he also attended classes for troop leaders and General Staff officers, and in 1918 he became the chief-of-staff of the 232nd Infantry Division.

On 6 November 1918, von Fischer-Treuenfeld was sent to help organize border defenses in Silesia against the Czechs. After that he was sent on another special military intelligence mission to Hasselt, Belgium. In the meantime the war had reached its conclusion, and he found himself sent back to the 232nd Inf. Division in East Prussia, where it was soon demobilized. In January 1919, von Fischer-Treuenfeld went to work for the State of East Prussia with the job of locating and neutralizing secret military munitions and explosives dumps left over from the war. At his own request he left the Army with the rank of Major on 31 March 1920, but he maintained his many military contacts and continued to participate in exercises for staff officers.

From 1920 to 1933, von Fischer-Treuenfeld worked in business managerial positions in Hamburg. In 1933 he became the director of the industrial department of the Viktoria Company in Berlin, a post that he held until 1939. In the meantime he had become involved in politics through the populist *Voelkischen Verbaende* in Hamburg. Due to his contacts with Gen. Ludendorff, he had learned of Adolf Hitler and his movement as early as 1922.

In 1933, von Treuenfeld became acquainted with the Reichsfuehrer-SS, Heinrich Himmler, and eventually, in April 1939, Himmler offered him a position in the SS. Eager to return to military life, von Treuenfeld accepted and was given the rank of SS-Oberfuehrer (senior colonel) on 1 May 1939. He was subsequently posted to the staff of an SS Totenkopf Standarte, before becoming a bureau chief in the SS Main Office and Inspector of SS Officers Schools. In 1940 he was assigned to the SS-Verfuegungs Division (later to become "Das Reich"), and served with it during its combat stint on the Western

Front. He was then promoted to SS-Brigadefuehrer on 9 November 1940 and on 28 November became the director of the Bureau for Officer Training in the SS Main Office.

In the years that followed, Karl von Treuenfeld held a wide variety of Waffen-SS field and office positions. He served in succession as Waffen-SS Commander "North-east," Waffen-SS Commander "Bohemia-Moravia," Commander 1st SS Motorized Infantry Bde., and Waffen-SS Commander "Russia-South." On 30 January 1944 he received a promotion to SS-Gruppenfuehrer and assumed command of the 10th SS Pz.Div. "Frundsberg." He led this division during the successful effort of II.SS Pz.Corps to free the trapped 1st Pz.Army in Galicia in April 1944. From 1 May to 24 May 1944, von Treuenfeld found himself in SS officers' reserve. He was then assigned to command VI. Latvian SS Army Corps on 24 May and held this position until 15 July 1944, when ill health apparently forced him back into the reserve pool.

Gruf. von Treuenfeld was next reassigned to the SS Main Office, where he became an Inspector of SS Institutions and Facilities. However, on 10 January 1945 he was again returned to the reserve officers' pool. At war's end, Gruf. von Treuenfeld went into U.S. captivity. Still in bad health, he was certain that he would recover once he was released, but the "victors" had no intention of letting him go any time soon. As a result he died in American captivity at Allendorf on 6 June 1946, at age 61.



**SS-Oberscharfuehrer
LUDWIG KOECHLE**

Ludwig Koechle was born on 28 January 1921 in Nofels, Vorarlberg. He joined the armed SS in 1938 as a 17-year-old volunteer. Following a year of training he participated in the Polish and Western Campaigns as a machine gunner, demonstrating great dash and energy on the battlefield. While serving in France he was promoted to Unterscharfuehrer and made a squad leader.

In June 1941, Uscha. Koechle entered Russia with the rest of his unit, 5th Co./SS-"T" Inf.Rgt.1/SS-"Totenkopf" Division. During the difficult defensive fighting for the Demyansk Pocket, he fully proved his mettle many times over. He led over 100 scout troop missions at Demyansk and participated in 30 combat assaults. For his demonstration of personal courage, Koechle was promoted to Oberscharfuehrer and awarded both classes of the Iron Cross. He was also listed many times in the regimental orders-of-the-day for carrying out successful combat missions.

In January 1942, Koechle led an operation against enemy positions that were threatening the deep flank of his battalion's sector. Using hand grenades he personally destroyed six enemy bunkers and a machine gun position and its crew. Then he led his squad in demolishing an enemy counterattack at close range, thus preventing

the Soviets from regaining their lost positions. This action won Koechle the award of the Knight's Cross on 28 February 1942.

On 9 June 1942, Oscha. Ludwig Koechle was killed by a direct artillery hit near Polizo, southwest of Lake Ilmen. He was given a hero's burial at the divisional cemetery at Mirochaiv.

SS-Sturmabfuhrer GUNTHER FAROHS

Career Outline

Born 5 April 1914.

SS Number: 62,935.

Entered General SS on 20 April 1933, joining 1./18 SS Standarte in Koenigsberg.

At an officer candidate training course with the LSSAH from 1 October 1934 to 1 April 1935.

At SS Junkerschule Toelz from 15 April 1935 to 31 January 1936.

Served as platoon leader at a Dachau training course from 1 February 1936 to 30 April 1936.

Attached to the Funk Sturm (Radio Co.) of the SS/VT Nachrichtenabteilung (Signals Det.) on 1 April 1936; becoming a platoon leader in same element on 20 April 1936.

In 1937 he attended Signals courses at the Army Signals School in Halle.

In early 1939 he attended a company commanders training course at the Army Signals School in Halle.

On 20 October 1940 he became commander of the Radio Co. of the Signals Det. of the SS-"V" Div., upon the recommendation of the Detachment commander, Stubaf. Weiss, and the divisional commander, Gruf. Hausser. He would this position through 1 April 1942, during which time the SS-"V" Division became the 2nd SS Pz.Gr. Div. "Das Reich."

From 1 April 1942 to 20 May 1943 he served as commander of SS Signals Det. 2/"Das Reich" Division.

From 16 November 1942 to 12 December 1942 he attended a detachment commander training course in Paris.

On 20 May 1943 Farohs took charge of I. Training Group/SS Signals School Metz and held this post until 15 November 1944.

From 15 November 1944 to the end of the war, Farohs was head of communications in the SS Personnel Office.

Ranks

Standartenoberjunker, 25 February 1936

Untersturmfuehrer, 20 April 1936

Obersturmfuehrer, 11 September 1938

Hauptsturmfuehrer, 30 June 1939

Sturmabfuhrer, 20 April 1943

Decorations

Iron Cross, 2nd Class, 30 September 1940

Iron Cross, 1st Class, 14 November 1940

§

The son of the President of Iceland from 1944 to 1952. Sveinn Bjornsson, was a Waffen-SS volunteer and a graduate of the SS-Junkerschule "Toelz." He served during most of the war with the SS War Correspondents Rgt. "Kurt Eggers." Service in the wartime German armed forces was not considered a "crime" in neutral Iceland, and as a result, Icelandic SS men, unlike other European volunteers were never persecuted by their own government. Interestingly, Bjornsson's political career was never negatively affected by his son's well-known activities!

THE BAND OF THE SS REGIMENT "DER FUEHRER"



III./E./Btl. der SS "Totenkopf" Band.

The military music corps of the "DF" Rgt. had its origins in 1934, when in the late autumn of that year a 40-man band was formed for II. Bn./SS-Standarte "Deutschland" under Ustuf. Adolf Laubmann at the Dachau SS Training Facility. The musicians were recruited either locally in Bavaria or came from the contingent of SS auxiliary workers who were stationed at Dachau. In addition to their musical practice the bandsmen were required to undergo standard infantry training and later were given specialist communications instructions so that they could be given military duties as assistant signals troops.

In a short time the II. Bn. band along with its counterpart from I./SS-"D", was giving local concerts in and around Munich and on the Munich radio station. At civilian concerts the twin "Deutschland" battalion bands usually performed together, with Gustav-Adolf Bunge from I./SS-"D" and Adolf Laubmann alternating as conductors. Classical, opera and military musical arrangements were played at the concerts.

Not long after the II./SS-"D" band was formed, the largely ceremonial SS-Detachment "N", stationed in Nuremberg, found itself in need of a musical contingent. As a result the II./SS-"D" band was transferred to it and began participating at all of the important National Socialist and patriotic functions that were held in the city. In 1938 the band was assigned to IV./SS-"D" for the military advance into Austria. It was then quartered in Kufstein, where it carried out numerous open-air concerts for the locals. Following a brief transfer back to its old command the band was sent to Vienna to serve as the nucleus for a music corps for the new Austrian "Der Fuehrer" SS Regiment.

Adolf Laubmann, now a Hauptsturmfuehrer, was placed in charge of the new "DF" band which was first quartered

in the famous Radetzky Barracks before relocating to the SS Barracks at Vienna-Schoenbrunn. It soon gained a fine reputation among the civilians in this music-loving city on the Danube. Numerous personnel changes now took place as cadres of musicians had to be assigned to the newly established bands of II. and III./"Der Fuehrer," tively. The departing bandsmen were replaced by former Austrian Army musicians and by students from the Austrian Army School of Music. The "DF" band soon became a familiar fixture of Radio Vienna.

The band subsequently accompanied the "DF" Rgt. into the Sudetenland and Bohemia-Moravia and as of 1 June 1939 was stationed in the city of Prague. With the outbreak of hostilities the "DF" musicians found themselves on the move, first to Freiburg-Bleibach, then to Recklinghausen-Datteln and finally to the Wehrmacht Medical Training School at Emmerich. Here they underwent a six-week instructional course for medics.

In the French Campaign of 1940, the "DF" band went along with the regiment and its parent SS-"V" Div. on the march to the Spanish frontier. It next briefly spent time around Zwolle in Holland and near Vesoul in France before participating in the Balkan Campaign of 1941 with the "Das Reich" Division. Just before the start of the war with the USSR, the "DF" band was disbanded in Pulawy, near Lublin, in the Generalgouvernement. The musical instruments were stored in the Kurow warehouse in Pulawy and the bandsmen were assigned to various companies of the regiment to serve as medics or motor vehicle drivers.

In 1946, the founder and leader of the "Der Fuehrer" band, SS-Hstuf. Adolf Laubmann, perished in Soviet captivity. His name will always be associated with the military music corps of the Waffen-SS.

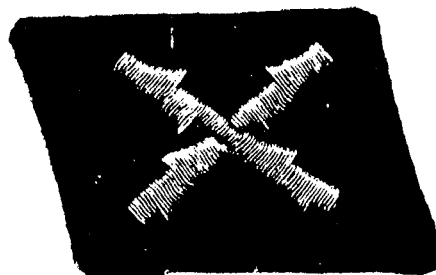
1ST BATTERY SS ASSAULT GUN DET. 4 WITH THE "WALLONIEN" BRIGADE

The Assault Gun Detachment (armored, motorized artillery) of the 4th SS Police Div. was formed in the autumn of 1943 at the SS Training Grounds in Debica, Poland. The unit commander was Stubaf. Etthoefer and the CO of 1st Battery was Hstuf. Planitzer. Hstuf. Planitzer had served with the Police Div. since its inception in 1939, initially being with the 14th Anti-tank Co. of SS Police Rifle Rgt. 3. Most of his officers and NCOs as well hailed from the anti-tank and artillery elements of the Police Division.

In November 1943, 1st Battery/SS Assault Gun Det. 4 was temporarily assigned to the 5th SS Sturmbrigade "Wallonien," which although well-trained and equipped, was somewhat undermanned (2,000 troops) and lacking in firepower. "Wallonien" had been subordinated to the 5th SS Pz. Div. "Wiking" on the southern part of the Eastern Front. After a long train ride from Debica, 1st Battery joined the Belgian volunteer brigade in the Cherkassy area on 23 November 1943. The assault gun troops first saw action in the vicinity of Bol. Starosselje; in the wild lands to the east and southeast of the Irdyn Swamp. Here the enemy was well represented by fanatic partisan units and dispersed Red Army remnants. The Walloons were involved in fairly heavy skirmishing in this sector and the 1st Assault Gun Battery provided some heavy weapons support, losing one of its armored vehicles to an enemy mine in the process.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day, 1st Battery was sent to the town of Olschana, about 35 km to the southwest. This town had been an important supply base for the "Wiking" Div. but now half of it was in the hands of the enemy. On the 2nd of January, the Walloons, supported by the SS-Police assault guns, stormed the Russian occupied part of the town. Another assault gun was knocked out by anti-tank rifles but two T-34 tanks were damaged and captured. Ustuf. Jaeger, in charge of 1st Platoon was wounded.

The Soviet forces from Olschana were pushed back into a ravine where they took heavy losses. The 2nd Platoon



Proposed "Wallonien" collar patch.

of 1st Battery, led by Oscha. Gutmann, continued on in pursuit of the foe for a distance of about 3 km past Olschana. Here the platoon was suddenly confronted by about 300 mounted communist troops who were promptly sent reeling with high casualties. Then orders arrived stating that Olschana must be held under all circumstances. It then became the defensive sector for 1st Battery up until 8 February 1944.

During the large scale enemy offensive that began on 28 January, the so-called "Cherkassy Pocket" was formed around the 50,000 or so German and European troops in the vicinity. The town of Olschana was cut off and left stranded about 7 km outside of the main pocket, which posed additional problems for its defenders, who consisted of 1st Assault Gun Battery and around 200 Walloon volunteers. They were forced to carry out a relief attack to try and rejoin the main pocket. Coming under fire from some 70 enemy anti-tank guns, the SS-Police assault guns led the main effort until they were ambushed by a group of Soviet 17.2 cm cal. assault guns at close quarters (only 10 m separated the combatants!).



Unknown Walloon volunteer (note armshield).



Walloon SS volunteers near Cherkassy.

Three of the German armored vehicles were knocked out but most of the crews and battery members were able to escape back to Olschana. Despite being outnumbered in terms of armored vehicles by 20 to 1, the men of 1st Battery were able to knock out a further eight enemy tanks in the days ahead.

On 8 February Olschana was finally evacuated and

the defenders successfully fought their way back to the "big pocket." Less than a week later the members of 1st Battery (now without any assault guns) joined their comrades from the "Wallonien," "Wiking" and assorted Heer divisions in a largely successful breakout from the Bolshevik envelopment. <

THE STRUCTURE OF PANZER DIV. "KEMPF" THE FIRST ARMED "SS" DIVISION

Order Of Battle, September 1939

Divisional Staff HQ

Commander: Gen.Maj. Kempf
Chief-of-Staff: Oberstlt. von Bernuth
Intelligence Officer: SS-Hstuf. Erich Grenzing
2nd Orderly Officer: SS-Ostuf. Horst Geguns

SS Panzergrenadier Rgt. "Deutschland"

Commander: SS-Staf. Felix Steiner
Staff & I.-III. Battalions
13. Co. (Infantry Guns)
14. Co. (Anti-tank)
15. Co. (Motorcycle)
16. Co. (Engineer)

Panzer Rgt. 7 (Army)

Two Light and one Heavy Armored Detachments

Panzer Det. 10 "Zinten" (East Prussian)

Commander: Oberst Landgraf

SS Artillery Regiment

Commander: SS-Ostufaf. Peter Hansen
Three Light Detachments

SS Reconnaissance Detachment

Commander: SS-Stubaf. Dr. Wim Brand

SS Signals Detachment

Commander: SS-Stubaf. Erich Weiss

Anti-tank Detachment 511 (Army)

Motorized Engineer Battalion 505 (Army)

Medical Corps (Army)

Divisional Supply Service (SS)

Supply Officer: SS-Staf. Viktor Knapp

Special Observers on the Divisional Staff

SS-Gruf. Paul Hausser, the Inspector of the Armed SS and his Chief-of-Staff, SS-Ostufaf. Werner Ostendorff

Panzer Division "Kempf" went into action at dawn on 1 September 1939 and served throughout the duration of the Polish Campaign, during which time the Armed SS troops attached fully proved their mettle in combat. §

CLASSIFIEDS

New Monograph Biography of Paul Hausser in English; stiff paper covers, photos, \$10. Also comprehensive catalog of Waffen-SS/German Army books, \$1.00. John Fedorowicz, Military Book Dealer, 267 Whitegates Cr., Winnipeg MB R3K 1L2 CANADA. [42]

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WANTED: Copies/negatives of photographs of well known W-SS personalities in portrait type poses (combat or dress). Also interested in other known 3rd Reich military figures. You keep the originals. Earl Cousins, 4125 Silbury Rd., Richmond VA 23234. [42]

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WANTED: Waffen-SS sleevebands, awards, documents, etc. up to \$3,000 for complete SS soldier's estates. Paying up to \$200 for SS Soldbuch. Free, no obligation appraisals. Will travel to view on either side of the Atlantic. All transactions strictly confidential. Write to: Robert Springer, Genco Oil Corp., 725 E. Market St., Wilmington DE 19801. [46]

THE SS-KAMPFGRUPPE "DIRNAGEL"

25 MARCH 1945 TO 8 MAY 1945

The SS-Kampfgruppe "Dirnagel" was formed on 25 March 1945 from members of the SS Flak Training and Replacement Rgt. in Munich. It was structured as follows:

I. Grenadier Bn. (1st-4th Companies). CO: Hstuf. Schettgen;

II. Grenadier Bn. (5th-8th Companies). CO: Hstuf. Mendrzyk;

SS Flak Detachment "Dirnagel" (mixed) with the following elements:

two batteries (1st, 2nd) of "88" Flak each with six guns;

one battery (3rd) of 3.7 cm Flak with nine solo guns and a twin gun;

one battery (4th) of 2 cm Flak, with some multi-barreled guns;

Flak Det. CO: Hstuf. Martin;

Overall unit commander: Ostubaf. Dirnagel;

Kampfgruppe strength: about 2,500 men.

On 27 March the battle-group left Munich in a motorized convoy that took it through Augsburg, Donauwoerth, Noerdlingen, Dinkelsbuehl and Crailsheim to the area around Rot-am-See/Blaufelden where it arrived on the next day. On 29 March, SS-KGr. "D" was posted to the XIII. Temporary General Command Staff in Rothenburg under Gen. Weissenberger and was deployed in the vicinity of Oberstleutnant von Hobe's 212th Volksgrenadier Division.

The front situation was extremely confused at this time. The 1st Battery/Flak Det. "D" was initially posted to Riedbach. Most of the rest of the battle-group went into secondary blocking positions, while combat contingents from the "88" and 2 cm Flak batteries were put directly into the main lines from Stuppach to Neunkierchen to a point west of Reichs Highway 19, for use in ground action.

In the afternoon of 31 March an American attack towards Althausen developed and an assault on Neunkirchen was broken up. At 16:30 six U.S. tanks renewed the attack on the western outskirts of Neunkirchen and four of them were promptly destroyed by Flak Battle Troop "Hosch" from 1st Battery/SS-KGr. "D," which was led by Hstuf. Graul. But in a continuing exchange of fire with the remaining tanks both of the "88" guns belonging to Battle Troop "Hosch" were knocked out and Oscha. Hosch and six members of his gun crews were killed. The two surviving tanks were then driven off by Panzerfausts wielded by SS infantrymen.

In the process of smashing another U.S. tank and infantry attack, 2nd Battery/SS-KGr. "D" led by Hstuf. Wundelrich lost four of its "88" heavy Flak guns, thus the battle-group was deprived of one-half of its "88" contingent in one day alone. On 1 April, SS-KGr. "D" was subordinated to XIII. SS Corps and its Flak batteries helped to destroy an enemy tank assembly area in the woods northwest of Koenigshofen, and also supported a German counter-attack towards Edelfingen-Koenigshofen.

On the next day the whole battle-group was involved in the battle for these two towns; Edelfingen in particular changed hands many times over. On an important hill known as the Thurmberg, very bitter hand-to-hand fighting raged. But the combat was fierce all over and SS-KGr. "Dirnagel" reported losing 59 men killed in Koenigshofen alone. During the fight for Mergentheim it proved possible

to better outfit the deployed SS battalions with more mechanized weapons and entrenching tools. When there were pauses in the action the children of the town helped out by bringing food and drink to the soldiers.

During a reconnaissance-in-force towards Boxberg on 3 April, the CO of 5th Co./SS-KGr. "D," Hstuf. Martin Krenkel, was killed in action. The previous summer he had commanded 14th Co. (3.7 cm Flak)/49th SS Pz. Gr. Brigade. The CO of I./SS-KGr. "D" was also wounded on this day. On 6 April the battle-group was subordinated to the 9th Flak Division. The fighting had now moved into the southern outskirts of Mergentheim. Kampfgruppe "D" next became entangled in a violent struggle against U.S. tank forces for the town of Stuppach, losing another 63 men killed in the process. Now deployed alongside the SS task force were assorted Volkssturm (home guard) troops, the Landesschuetzen Stamm Kompanie 1./13 and the Army replacement battalion in Mergentheim. In the course of the evening of 6 April, Bad Mergentheim was evacuated, and while serving as a rearguard 5th Co./SS-KGr. "D" was cut off and had to break through enemy forces in the direction of Niederstetten.

From 7 to 9 April the battle-group saw very hard fighting for Apfelbach, Riedbach, Hollenbach and Wildentierbach. A great number of men were killed during and after (!) the battles. In Hollenbach 53 SS men died while in Wildentierbach seven more were killed - all shot in the head. In the postwar era it was discovered that of the 22 members of SS-KGr. "D" that had been killed over Easter weekend 1945, 16 had been shot in the head. The implications were obvious; most SS men to die in such a manner at this stage of the war were victims of post-battle executions! The evidence now clearly demonstrates that American troops did not hesitate to murder Waffen-SS POWs whenever the mood struck them, and no one of course, was ever brought to account for such activities.



Most of the American tanks knocked out in the fighting of 7-9 April were destroyed by hand-held weapons in close combat. Due to vehicle losses caused by the overwhelming enemy firepower, severe shortages in Flak supplies and equipment had begun to develop, greatly restricting the use of these weapons on the field of battle.

On 8 April SS-KGr. "D" was engaged in extremely bitter street fighting with troops from the 10th U.S. Armored Division. The Americans took many wounded members of the battle-group prisoner, and a number of them were indiscriminately executed on the spot. The 2nd Battery/Flak Det./SS-KGr. "D" was also completely committed to the fight for Adelshofen.

By 10 April, Kampfgruppe "Dirnagel" was in a steady retreat, but with larger combat responsibilities and far less troops to handle them with. Two days later it was again in the area around Rothenburg on the Tauber River. Part of the battle-group was sent to the vicinity of Crailsheim where it succeeded in destroying a number of enemy tanks. However, heavy losses were sustained again during the continuing pullback around Schillingsfuerst on 14 April.

On 15 April the battle-group underwent a brief "refreshing" near Fuerth. It was then attached to the 350th Special Use Volksgrenadier Div. under Gen.Maj. Schmidt. For the first time there was a severe shortage of fuel and ammunition. Battlefield actions took place around Vach and Gruendlach and all of the remaining light and heavy Flak guns were pressed into use as ground artillery. Kampfgruppe "D" had now begun to get some of its gaps refilled by non-SS personnel from assorted Army anti-tank units, and Paratroop and Labor Service elements. April 16th saw further fighting against enemy forces who were well supported by artillery, around Gruendlach.

From 17 to 19 April, SS-KGr. "Dirnagel" saw action around Burgfarnbach, Fuerth and Schwabach and began marching south towards Wassermungenau on 20 April. On 20 April it worked in close collaboration with 350th VG Div. around Wassermungenau and Rittershausen. From 21 to 22 April it served as divisional reserve in the vicinity of Pleinfeld and later around Ramsberg.

On 23 April the Americans took Weissenburg without a fight at 07:00 and continued advancing towards Pappenheim. The next day saw Kampfgruppe "Dirnagel" manning a new defensive line which quickly came under a forceful attack by enemy tanks causing the SS troops to withdraw to new positions about 3 km to the south at about midday. During the night a further pullback was made to the Altmuehl sector.

In the morning hours of 25 April the enemy crossed

the Altmuehl River near Dollenstein and further advanced towards Neuburg on the Danube and Ingolstadt. The SS battle-group was required to provide flank security along a line running from Ochsenfeld to Siesenhart to Nassenfels. Under cover of darkness a further withdrawal was carried out to the Danube sector. On 26 April, Ingolstadt fell to the enemy without a fight.

From 1 to 3 May 1945, SS-KGr. "D" saw continuous but insubstantial fighting in the vicinity of Pfaffenhofen-Wasserburg. There was a tough battle at Eberstetten and at its conclusion 15 German POWs, including a medic from SS Flak Det. 17/"GvB," were shot out-of-hand by the Americans. Around Erding, KGr. "Dirnagel" fought in conjunction with the 17th SS Div. "Goetz von Berlichingen."

On 4 May, the battle-group, now subordinated to LXXXII. Corps, fought its last battle to the south of Bad Reichenhall. Capitulation came four days later on 8 May 1945. The soldiers from Kampfgruppe "Dirnagel" were held first in a POW camp at Bischofswiesen for three weeks. They were then sent on to Egelsee by Ebersberg before finally being incarcerated at Langwasser near Nuremberg.

Despite being composed primarily of trainees, SS-KGr. "Dirnagel" had acquitted itself with great success on the battlefield in near continuous action. Its soldiers were credited with destroying around 40 enemy tanks, half of them in close combat with Panzerfausts. In addition the Flak batteries brought down ten enemy aircraft. But a high price was exacted in return. Some 200 men from the formation were killed (a good many in captivity) and probably 4-5 times as many were wounded.

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SS troops in Normandy.

SS FLAK ABTEILUNG 18

18.SS-FREIWILLIGEN PANZERGRENADIER DIVISION

"HORST WESSEL"

The Flak Abteilung (Detachment) for the "Horst Wessel" Div. was based upon the air defense contingents that remained with the 1st Motorized SS Inf. Bde. in 1943. These were a light 2 cm Flak battery and a special Flak "Kampftrupp" (task force), which consisted of a pair of 88 mm heavy Flak guns and 30 men under the leadership of Untersturmfuehrer Bachler. This unit was in existence from May to December 1943. Other Flak batteries had served with the 1st SS Bde. but seem to no longer be in existence when the brigade was transformed into the 18th SS Division.

Ustuf. Bachler's Flak "Kampftrupp" had been engaged to a considerable extent in ground fighting, taking part in battles against partisans in the Rigaer woods and during the brigade's relocation movements in the Nevel sector. For supply purposes the unit was assigned to 1st SS Brigade's SS Panzerjaeger Co. 51 (Anti-tank) under Ustuf. Urbani, but it came under the operational control of the brigade's SS Grenadier Regiments 8 and 10. For his leadership accomplishments and the achievements of the Flak "Kampftrupp," Ustuf. Bachler was awarded the German Cross in Gold.

In the course of December 1943 and January 1944, elements of 1st SS Bde. were removed to the Staback Barracks in East Prussia for rest and refitting. As of 25 January 1944 the brigade units were assigned to serve with the newly authorized 18th SS Div. "Horst Wessel" and Ustuf. Bachler's small command was used as the nucleus of 2nd Battery/SS Flak Abt. 18. However, it would be several months before the division got around to forming its Flak detachment. Initially, only a provisional detachment was authorized, consisting of two light 2 cm Flak platoons, which were used primarily for headquarters security.

It was not until May 1944 that the final portions of 1st SS Bde. reached the far-flung training area of the 18th SS Div., which stretched from the Zagreb-Cilje region of northern Croatia to the German homeland of Batschka in southern Hungary. Most of the division's recruits came from ethnic-German farming families in Batschka along with a number of Romanian ethnic-Germans. The idea of forming the "Horst Wessel" SS



Stubaf. Julius Riepe, CO I/SS-Pz.Gr.Rgt. 40 and battle-group commander in Division "Horst Wessel."



Sleeve title.



Collar patch (never issued).

Div. from the ranks of the German S.A. (stormtroops) never really got off the ground, though the S.A. emblem would serve as the divisional ID sign.

So in the spring of 1944 SS Flak Abt. 18 began forming with the following structure:

Three 88 mm heavy Flak batteries, each with four guns and three 2 cm multi-barreled guns. These batteries were derived for the most part from the SS Flak Training and Replacement Rgt. at the Freimann Barracks in Munich.

One 3.7 cm medium Flak battery consisting of 12 3.7 cm guns.

Rounding out the formation was a staff Flak battery, a 2 cm platoon, a supply section and a transport column that suffered a severe shortage of vehicles.

Each of the batteries was designed to contain 200 men but during the sometimes chaotic period of training and formation, this number was frequently exceeded. Most of the officers, NCOs and specialists were "Reich" Germans with the rank and file being comprised of Hungarian and Romanian ethnic-Germans.

The detachment's command roster was as follows:



Hstuf. Dr. Hans Lipinski, CO 1st Battery/SS-Flak Detachment 18.

Commander: Stubaf. Dr. Warninghoff, replaced by Stubaf. Karnitzki in 1945.

Staff Battery: Ostuf. Wewetzer

1st Battery: Ostuf. Dr. Hans Lipinski

Battery Officer: Ustuf. Stroebel

Gun Commander: Hscha. Schwenke

2nd Battery: Commander unknown

3rd Battery: Ostuf. Rahn

4th Battery: Hstuf. Limmer

Light Flak Troop: Oscha. Felgner

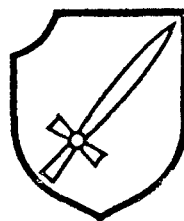
Throughout its existence the detachment would be crippled by an insufficient number of gun towing and other vehicles. Each battery only had one tractor assigned to it which was hardly adequate. Even though the detachment would receive all of its weaponry before the end of the year, lack of transport kept it from ever functioning as a truly cohesive unit.

Late in the summer of 1944, the still only partially trained SS Flak Abt. 18 was posted to the area northeast of Budapest for air defense duties. Along with the rest of the "Horst Wessel" Div. it would see piecemeal deployment on an emergency basis throughout Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Despite its air defense role the Flak detachment was used primarily in ground actions during the retrograde fighting in Hungary.

In December 1944 the SS Flak Abt. 18 gained military immortality due to the incredible triumph of its 1st Battery over a Soviet tank brigade. Ostuf. Dr. Lipinski led the battery when it was serving with SS-Kampfgruppe "Riepe" along with I. Bn./SS-Pz. Gr. Rgt. 40 under Stubaf. Riepe which had been temporarily subordinated to the 4th SS Polizei Division. This battle-group, along with some neighboring Army units, was trying to set up a new defensive line at the base of the Matra Mountains by Belahalm and Szurdoh-Puspoki when a strong Soviet armored force put in an appearance at around dawn on 21 December. This was a Red tank brigade that had broken into the rear area of the 4th SS Polizei Div. and was now trying to form an entrapment.

The communists had not counted on the presence of SS-KGr. "Riepe" and I./SS-Flak Abt. 18 in particular. Ostuf. Dr. Lipinski saw the opportunity for an ambush and maneuvered his "88" guns into position accordingly. Using an old "Eastern Front" tactic, the SS gunners shot up the head and tail of the armored column, trapping most of the tanks in-between. They then went to work on these with their armor-piercing weapons. In a matter of minutes the Soviet tank brigade had been totally obliterated and the hulks of 24 smoldering tanks lay before the 1st Battery's guns. This action had the twin effect of saving the SS-Polizei Div. from encirclement and indeed preserving the entire front sector. As a result, Dr. Lipinski was promoted to Hauptsturmfuehrer and awarded the Knight's Cross and one of the gun commanders, Unterscharfuehrer Fitzner was decorated with both classes of the Iron Cross and mentioned in the Honor Roll of the German Army for his deeds which also brought him the award of the Honor Roll Clasp. In the course of the one-sided battle, 1st Battery lost one "88" gun whose crew members were also slightly wounded. There were no other German casualties.

In February 1945, the "HW" Flak detachment was forced to dissolve two of its heavy batteries and transfer them to SS Flak Abt. 4 of the SS-Polizei Div., which had the personnel and transportation but needed the weaponry. The members of the dissolved batteries were then converted into infantrymen. After this there was only one "88" battery left in SS-Flak Abt. 18. In March the remainder of the detachment was trapped with most of the rest of the 18th SS Div. in an encirclement around Neustadt, Upper Silesia. A successful breakout was made but SS-Flak



18. SS-Frw-Pz-Gr Div HORST WESSEL (HW) ID signs:

The SA (Sturmabteilung) sign was planned as a unit emblem but was never utilized. Instead the sword emblem of the 1. SS Inf. Bde. was carried over when the Brigade was expanded into the Division. The sword's pommel differed from that employed as a sign by the SS Kav. Brigade. Although "HW" was supposed to have been an SS Div. for SA (Sturmabteilungsmanner) men, there was little evidence to show that it ever became one. The planned SA signs were never apparently utilized, and a substantial percentage of the personnel were Hungarian ethnic Germans.

Abt. 18 lost most of its equipment and much of its manpower in the process.

Since the survivors no longer had any Flak guns left, they were put to use constructing field fortifications in the Altwater Mountains around Hirschberg in early April 1945. A short time later the detachment was dissolved altogether and the troops were used as replacements for SS Grenadier Regiments 39 and 40. Most would eventually end up in Soviet captivity following the "HW" Division's second entrapment near Hirschberg in the last days of the war.

In the course of its existence, SS-Flak Abt. 18 accounted for 26 tanks destroyed and 15 aircraft brought down, with 1st Battery being its most successful element by far. The two grenadier regiments in the 18th SS Div. also had Flak companies, but little is known about their history. The following is a list of the Flak contingents in the "Horst Wessel" Div. with their Field Post numbers:

SS-Flak Abteilung 18 [07 579 A-E]

14th Co./SS-Gr. Rgt. 39 [21 135]

Commanders: Hstuf. Reutzel, Ustuf. Malkemus, Ustuf. Kaemper

14th Co./SS-Gr. Rgt. 40 [39 840]

Commanders: Hstuf. Brock (MIA), Ustuf. Hebach §



SS FLAK DETACHMENT "LANGEMARCK"

The Flak Detachment for the Flemish volunteer 27th SS Div. "Langemarck" existed only in the form of one mixed company of light and medium Flak (air defense cannons). It was based upon the 8th Light Flak (2 cm) Co. of 6th SS Sturmbrigade "Langemarck," which had fought in Ukraine early in 1944 and then had been reformed in Munich before being sent to rejoin the brigade at Knowitz near Prague in August 1944.

At the beginning of the formation of the "Langemarck" Div. in late September/early October 1944, the Flemish 2 cm Flak Co. was sent to the Lueneburger Heath in Northern Germany where it was stationed in the village of Nindorf. The 9th Heavy Flak (88 mm) Co. of the Sturmbrigade was now being used as the nucleus for SS Art.Rgt. 27, so it was not available to combine with the Light Flak Co. into a normal Flak Abteilung (Detachment).

The "Langemarck" Flak Co./Detachment was equipped with new self-propelled, multi-barrelled Flak guns and some 3.7 cm Flak guns that had belonged to the German Navy. During the Ardennes Offensive in December 1944, the company was dispatched to the twin towns of Nieder and Ober Bolheim, where it was kept in ready reserve. On 4 February 1945 it began a journey by rail to Bohemia-Moravia when it was redirected enroute to join the three-battalion SS Kampfgruppe "Langemarck" in Pomerania. The Flak Co. was subsequently deployed in ground fighting against both infantry and tanks around Zachan and Stargard and in the Altdamm Bridgehead at Stettin.

In April 1945 the company took up positions around Mescherin on the Oder River Front that had been previously prepared by the Volkssturm. At this time the company commander roster looked like this:

Commander: Ustuf. Beirnaert then Ustuf. Dillinger

1st Platoon (2 cm): Oscha. Kraf

2nd Platoon (2 cm): Oscha. Tyncke

3rd Platoon (3.7 cm): Oscha. Weber, replaced by Uscha. Jan Bosselaers

Weaponry: Four pieces of 2 cm Flak (self-propelled) in each of the first two platoons; four pieces of 3.7 cm



The Flemish Unterscharfuehrer Jan Bosselaers at the Munich-Freimann Barracks on 11 July 1944 (where "Langemarck" Brigade Flak troops were stationed during unit reformation). Uscha. Bosselaers was the last commander of 3rd Platoon (3.7 cm Flak) of the "Langemarck" Div. Flak Detachment.

Flak (tractor pulled) in the third platoon.

After the Soviets shattered the Oder Front on 19/20 April 1945, the Flak Co. joined most of the rest of the 4,100 man "Langemarck" contingent on the Oder in a retreat down the Stettin-Prenzlau-Neusterlitz Autobahn, which was also choked with civilian refugees. The unit lost most of its heavy equipment during the withdrawal.

SS Flak Det. "Langemarck" went into position for the last time near the Schweriner Bridge at Schwerin, at the Allied-Soviet demarcation line on the Elbe River, on or about 1 May 1945. The unit crossed the bridge and surrendered to the Americans at 1500 hours on 2 May 1945.

Reference

Vlaanderen In Uniform, Vol. 7 by Jan Vincx.

§



Waffen-SS 3.7 cm Flak crew.

THE SS-POSTSCHUTZ (POSTAL GUARD)

The SS-Postschutz was a formation of distinctly confused character, part of and yet separate from the Allgemeine and Waffen-SS. Its indistinct status can be blamed to a large extent on bureaucratic and political infighting and the strong wills of Dr. Ing. Ohnesorge, the Minister of Posts and SS-Ogruf. Gottlob Berger, head of the SS Main Personnel Office.

In 1933, the new National Socialist German government appointed Dr. Ohnesorge as Minister of Posts (Reichspostminister). Ohnesorge had served as a communications advisor to Gen. Ludendorff in WWI, and was quite an inventor and innovator, holding no fewer than 42 patents for devices of his own creation. One of his first acts upon assuming office was the creation of a voluntary "Postschutzes" (Postal Guard), to guarantee the security of the mail along with telegram, telephone and radio communications, all of which came under Ohnesorge's charge. Previously functions of this nature had been carried out in part by the German Railway Service.

Postal Guard members were recruited from among Army veterans who had joined the Postal Service. To handle the military functions of the Guard, some 15 major "protective districts" were set up throughout Germany, each jointly run by a postal official and a protective police (Schutzpolizei) Major. Once this arrangement was in place, Ohnesorge used members of the Guard to help him set up a pet project: a special research bureau in Prague. This bureau was effectively a laboratory where Dr. Ohnesorge carried out his own experiments in listening devices, laser-like light beams, and methods for photographing objects through obstructions like clouds.

Commencing in the autumn of 1935, the Postal Guard developed a working relationship with the Wehrmacht (Reichswehr) and as of 13 March 1936, was structured firmly on military lines and regulations. Adolf Hitler was personally unaware of Ohnesorge's Postal Guard for some time, and when he finally did learn about it he was mildly amused, stating: "Everyone has to have their own uniform, everyone has to have their own Army!" Actually, to help train and equip his private army, Ohnesorge had quietly secured three obsolete paramilitary training schools that had been abandoned when the 100,000 German Army once again began to expand, and he had managed to covertly build up first-class sources of supplies and equipment for his men.

At the outbreak of WWII, the Army High Command (OKW) banned the wearing of all field-gray uniforms by all "non-combatants," including the Postal and Railroad Guards. The only way to get around this directive was to subordinate the outfit directly to the Army, which indeed happened with the Railroad Guard. Doctor Ohnesorge, however, did not want this intrusion into his own domain, and he resisted this approach and began looking around for support elsewhere. He quickly found out that various police agencies were most eager to take over the Postal Guard, but this posed an ethical problem, since subordination of the Guard to a police agency would compromise the privacy of mails and communications. For this reason Ohnesorge opposed the police takeover efforts and he was supported in this by Adolf Hitler, who now owed a special debt to him. With the help of his research facilities and Postal Guard, Ohnesorge had developed a special listening post in Holland which was able to eavesdrop on all of the secret Transatlantic telephone conversations between Churchill and Roosevelt, the texts of which all reached the Fuehrer within 24

hours via a special Postal Guard courier.

In any event, Dr. Ohnesorge was able to keep the Postal Guard functioning as an independent military force. In 1940 he linked the Guard to the Waffen-SS for support and administrative purposes, while maintaining full control over it. This eliminated the threat of Army or Police takeover. But by 1942, with the war in full swing, it was clear that the Postal Guard had become a "combative force." While protecting mail busses in frontier areas or occupied territories (South Steiermark, Croatia, South East Prussia, Poland), Guardsmen had increasingly come under terrorist attack with resultant high casualties. It was clear that the military role of the Postal Guard had to be expanded, and among other things, Dr. Ohnesorge wanted Guardsmen to arm and train all postal employees, who voluntarily sought such assistance, so that they would not be vulnerable targets.

In order to assume its increased duties, the Guard had to be reorganized and needed to obtain additional armaments and support services. To achieve this it had to become a part of the SS organization proper, and Dr. Ohnesorge gave increased jurisdiction over it to Ogruf. Berger at the SS Main Office. In return for more control of the Guard, Berger saw to it that new carbines, machine-pistols, automatic weapons and machine guns were distributed to Guard troops as needed. The Guard also adopted Waffen-SS uniforms and its title was officially changed to SS-Postschutz.

For all that, the exact status of the organization remained unclear. Doctor Ohnesorge was still the overall commander, and most of the Guard members never joined any branch of the SS, although quite a few of them were members of the Allgemeine or General SS. To further complicate matters, two sub-units of the Postal Guard were, however, considered official formations of the Waffen-SS on the grounds that they were entirely composed of Postal Guardsmen who had volunteered for duty with the Waffen-SS. These units were:

1. "Fronthilfe Deutsche Reichspost" - SS-Kraftfahrstaffel (SS Motor Vehicle Staff).
2. "SS-Sicherungs-Bataillon Deutsches Reichspost" (a security battalion with four companies).



SS-Ogruf. Gottlob Berger.



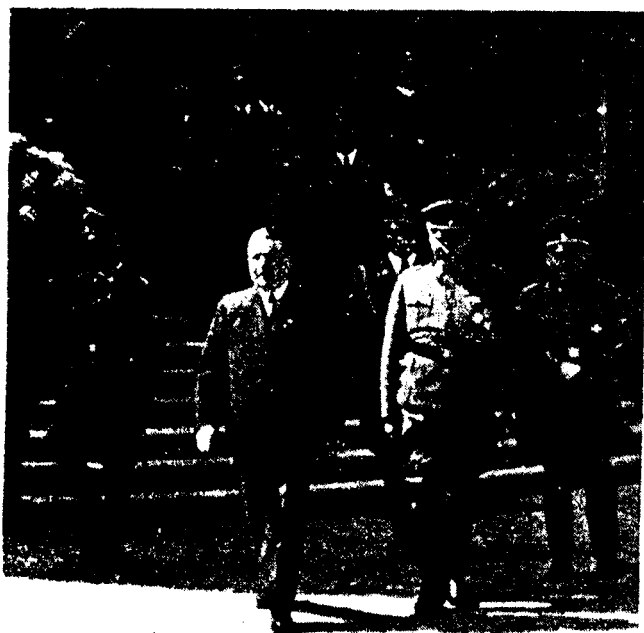
SS-Postschutz (Postal Guard) on parade before the Reich Postminister Wilhelm Ohnesorge.

The "Fronthilfe Deutsche Reichspost" consisted of Postal Service volunteers who conveyed replacement soldiers and wounded ones to and from the frontlines in postal vehicles, and the Postal Service volunteers who were also members of the Waffen-SS served in their own special unit.

On 14 February 1945, Reichsfuehrer-SS Himmler certified that only members of the above two mentioned sub-units of the Postal Guard came under SS and Police jurisdiction, however, the Postal Guard was considered a "Police Auxiliary for Special Purposes," and disciplinary

cases could be handled by the SS and Police, although in actuality few, if any, ever were. Towards the end of the war Postal Guard members were simply incorporated into local Volkssturm (Home Guard) units.

It should be noted that on at least one occasion, SS-Ogruf. Berger used his nominal control of the Postal Guard to benefit one of his longtime friends and comrades, Staf. Dr. Oskar Dirlwanger. When Dirlwanger's SS Penal Rgt. was being reformed in 1944, Berger saw to it that radio communications specialists from the Postal Guard were transferred into it to form a signals unit. Given the poor reputation of Dirlwanger's Regiment it was probably not an assignment that they relished! §



Reich Postminister Ohnesorge with Ogruf. Berger at the ceremony marking the transfer of the Postal Guard to the Waffen-SS.

The predecessor to the SS "Wallonien" Assault Brigade and Division, the Legion "Wallonie," was trained and formed at the Meseritz Training Camp from August to October 1941. It was based upon a contingent of 860 Belgian volunteers about 95% of whom were members of Leon Degrelle's Rexist Movement. The Legion was designated the Army Infantry Battalion 373. The first Legion commander (until December 1941), was Georges Jacobs, who was succeeded by Pierre Pauly. Due to German concern over a "lack of discipline" in the Legion, Pauly was in turn replaced by the former Belgian Army chief-of-staff, Lt.Col. Lucien Lippert, who would remain the permanent commander.

- § -

31st SS Volunteer Division "Batschka"

Artillery Detachment Commanders with SS-AR 31:

I./SS-AR 31: Hstuf. Mailhammer

IV./SS-AR 31: Hstuf. Dottewich

?/SS-AR 31: Hstuf. Maas (Detachment CO in early 1945 but exact unit unknown.)

All of these officers came from the 4th SS-Polizei Division.

- § -

SS-Sturmabfuhrer Friedrich Troeger, a battalion commander in SS-Pz. Gr. Rgt. 49 "De Ruyter"/23rd SS Div. "Nederland," died on 8 May 1980, age unknown.

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WAFFEN-SS BOOKS

Latvian Legion by Arthur Silgailis; R. James Bender Publishing; 1986; 256 pages; heavily illustrated with photos & maps.

This is perhaps the most important book that R. James Bender has yet published, constituting the complete history of the twin Latvian SS Divisions (15th and 19th) and VI. SS Corps in considerable detail by one who was closely involved with these formations from beginning to end. It is told from a Latvian perspective but it is still likely to be the best book ever to appear on the subject. I have nothing but the highest regard for the highly capable performances and sacrifices of the Latvian W-SS units, particularly the 19th Division, and this volume offers a worthy tribute to them all.

Arthur Silgailis, now in his nineties, was a Waffen-Oberfuhrer and chief-of-staff of the Latvian Legion, as well as serving at times as a combat commander and second-in-command in the Latvian divisions. He has to rank alongside Leon Degrelle as one of the most important non-German surviving members of the Waffen-SS. His book is an absolute necessity for anyone interested in the European volunteers of the Waffen-SS. The photos are fantastic, most never before seen, including some of the epic 3rd Battle for Kurland (or Kurzeme). The maps are clear and concise and the whole package is a quality job through and through. Particularly memorable to me is Silgailis' account of his meeting with the Reichsfuehrer-SS which is worth the price of the book alone. It is a major view of the continuing re-evaluation of the RF-SS and offers very important new perspectives! Get this at all costs! Now available directly from SIEGRUNEN at \$21.95 plus \$1.00 postage.

New Memoir Details U.S. War Crime At Dachau

by Mark Weber

For many Americans, few German names are as infamous as Dachau, the site of the concentration camp in Bavaria captured by U.S. soldiers just a few days before the end of the war in Europe. But not many Americans know that probably the worst single mass killing at the camp was carried out not by Germans, but by GIs who murdered more than 500 Germans who had peacefully surrendered there.

Although the basic facts of this little-known atrocity have been documented in a few rather obscure works published since the war, until recently no detailed account has been available. That gap has now been filled with the publication of Dachau: The Hour of the Avenger, written by an American officer who witnessed the slaughter.

Howard A. Buechner was a First Lieutenant with the 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, of the 45th (Thunderbird) Division when members of his unit took control of Dachau on 29 April 1945. Buechner, a holder of the Bronze Star and other medals, was the first American physician to enter the camp. In his memoir, Buechner carefully establishes that 520 of the 560 captured German camp personnel were murdered shortly after the American takeover.

About 100 were shot down wherever they were found scattered around the camp. The GIs permitted inmates to brutally kill another 40 German prisoners with shovels,

clubs and guns. But most of the Germans who surrendered, 358 in all, were lined up against walls and machine-gunned by American soldiers. High-ranking U.S. Army officers later tried to destroy all evidence of the atrocity. The man most responsible for the mass murder was First Lieutenant Jack Bushyhead, a native of Oklahoma who died in 1977. Ironically, most of the Germans who were killed at Dachau were hastily assembled replacements for the guards who had already fled the camp.

Although many Americans will undoubtedly wish that this eye-opening work had never been written, Dr. Buechner deserves the gratitude and thanks of all those with a regard for historical truth, no matter how unpleasant.

A minor criticism: A few errors have unfortunately found their way into this book. For example, the author uncritically accepts the now discredited story that inmates were gassed at Dachau.

Dachau: The Hour of the Avenger contains numerous illustrations, including several unavoidably gruesome photos of murdered German prisoners. This 160-page book is available (postpaid) in paperback for \$13 and hardback for \$16 from: Thunderbird Press, 300 Cuddihy Dr., Metairie LA 70005.

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I./SS-REGIMENT "GERMANIA" AT SSREDNY

On 18 July 1943, I.Bn./SS-Rgt. "Germania" from the 5th SS Div. "Wiking," spearheaded a desperate counter-attack near the village of Ssredny, some 50 km to the east of Kharkov. The SS column, supported by tanks and assault guns, was ambushed by strong Soviet forces with well emplaced anti-tank guns and artillery. The advance then bogged down and the Reds made their own counterattack. A tremendously violent battle then ensued. I./"Germania," which had just been re-equipped and brought up to full strength, and the remainder of the 700-man task force, was ground down in a grueling struggle of attrition. By evening all but 150 of its men had become casualties and the battalion commander, Stubaf. Hans Dorr, was among the wounded.

On the next day, I./"Germania," now under Hstuf. Iden and 1st Co./SS-Pz.Rgt.5 under Hstuf. Wolfram Schneider, faced a dawn attack by Soviet troops advancing with ten tanks from the direction of Ssredny. Concealed by the morning fog, the Waffen-SS tanks held their fire

until the last possible minute. When the enemy armor broke into clear view the battle opened up, somewhat to the surprise of the Soviets. When the first Red tanks burst into flames the others began pulling back towards the village. The I./SS-Pz.Rgt.5 began the pursuit with the grenadiers of I./"Germania" advancing under the protection of the tanks. Within minutes seven of the enemy tanks were destroyed and the SS men raced into Ssredny, seizing it in a brief hand-to-hand struggle with the foe.

The reconquest of the town was the first victory in the effort to contain the Soviet bridgehead that had been flung up across the Denez River, but it had been bought at the cost of nearly an entire battalion of valiant European volunteers. Worse yet another 100 Soviet tanks began to assemble to the east of Ssredny in the afternoon of 19 July, and they would give the "Wiking" Division many rough days in the hard fighting that lay ahead. §



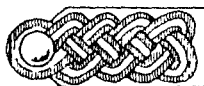
Testing of the first VW Schwimmwagens to be received by the SS "Totenkopf" Division. Never before published.

The Ukrainian volunteer Dmytro Kul'schynsky, who was born in Kolomea, Galicia (Western Ukraine) in 1923 was attached to an SS student company in Giessen/Lahn in 1944 before being sent on to the Neuhammer training camp. On 17 September 1944 he was assigned to the 16th SS Pz.Gr.Div. "Reichsfuehrer-SS" in Italy, being sent to the SS Pz.Gr.Rgt. 35 of that division on 20 October. He was last reported in Prague on 2 January 1945, possibly as a member of the Ukrainian officer's training class at the SS Panzergrenadier School "Kienschlag."

First consignment of VW-Schwimmwagens to the "Totenkopf" Division.

WAFFEN-SS BRIGADEFUEHRER

A PROFILE



There were 52 Waffen-SS Brigadefuehrer, the oldest of whom was Friedrich Tscharmann (an SS HQ staff officer), who was born in 1871 in Saxony, while the youngest was Wilhelm Mohnke (commander of the 1st SS Division "LAH" in late 1944, early 1945), who was born in Lubeck in 1911. Twenty-three of the Brigfhr. were born in the decade from 1890 to 1900, while another 20 were born in the years from 1901 to 1911. Thirty, including two born in Alsace-Lorraine, were of Prussian descent, while six came from Bavaria, four from Saxony, three from old Austro-Hungary, three from Hamburg, two each from Hesse and Baden, and one from Wuerttemberg along with one Dane.

Eighteen of the 52 Brigfhr. retained their religious affiliations, of whom 13 were Evangelical Lutherans. One of the Brigfhr. came from the upper class (Gustav Lombard, whose father was a nobleman), while another 12 were derived from the upper middle class, and 19 others had middle class backgrounds. Thirteen Brigfhr. had lower middle class origins, while the remaining SS Major Generals came from farming, laboring or lower class families. Among the latter were Theodor Wisch (1st SS), Kurt Mayer (12th SS), and Sylvester Stadler (9th SS). The upper middle class Brigfhr. included Peter Hansen (29th SS), Gottfried Klingemann (2nd SS Bde.), Gustav Krukenberg (33rd and 11th SS), Heinz Lammerding (2nd and 38th SS), Ritter von Oberkamp (7th SS), Juergen Wagner (23rd SS) and Joachim Ziegler (11th SS).

Twelve of the SS-Brigfhr. had higher academic learning, while another 21 had some degree of higher education. Thirteen others had graduated from cadet or trade schools. Only five of the Brigfhr. were considered poorly educated. Four of the SS Major Generals (von Dufais, Kryssing, Vahl, and Ziegler) had been career Army officers all their adult lives. Five others (Freitag, Kraemer, Neblich, Schmides, and Voss), were career Army officers who went into the German Police when the Reichswehr was curtailed in size by the notorious Treaty of Versailles. Gustav Krukenberg started off as a career Army officer and became a government functionary.

Eleven SS-Brigfhr. were career Army officers up to the 1918-20 era, when Army cutbacks began. They subsequently followed business or agricultural pursuits, mostly with good success. Seven of the Brigfhr. became medical doctors, while another eight of them were salesmen. Two (Augsberger and Lammerding), were architects; one (Otto Kumm), was a typesetter, and one (Sylvester Stadler), was an electrician. Another Brigfhr. (Lombard), had worked for an American automobile firm, both in the U.S. and abroad, while another (Gaertner), was a

low-level government bureaucrat. Five of the SS-Brigfhr. had begun their careers as NCOs: Helmuth Becker, Wilhelm Keilhaus, Kurt Meyer (Police), August Schmidhuber and August Zehender. One Brigfhr., Joachim Rumohr, was a farmer before becoming an SS officer.

Rumohr also held the lowest SS number in the group, this being Nr. 1,280, while the highest SS number went to Joachim Ziegler at Nr. 491,403. Fifteen of the SS-Brigfhr. had SS numbers below 100,000; ten were in the 100-200,000 range and 26 were above 200,000. The numbers, of course, indicated seniority or lack of it in the SS organization. Brigfhr. Kryssing, a Danish citizen, had no SS number. The lowest N.S. Party number belonged to Gaertner at 35,359, with the highest going to von Dufais, who held 5,276,395. Twenty SS-Brigfhr. had party numbers in excess of 1,000,000, while eight (Hampel, Harmel, Kryssing, Stadler, Tscharmann, Vahl, Zehender and Ziegler), were not party members at all.

Five SS-Brigfhr., Heinz Harmel (10th SS), Otto Kumm (7th and 1st SS), Kurt Meyer (12th SS), Sylvester Stadler (9th SS), and Theodor Wisch (1st SS), were decorated with the Knight's Cross, Swords and Oakleaves during the war. Another five, Joachim Rumohr (8th SS), Juergen Wagner (23rd SS), Fritz Witt (12th SS), August Zehender (22nd SS), and Joachim Ziegler (11th SS), received the KC with Oakleaves. Eight others were decorated only with the KC (no mean feat in itself!): Franz Ausberger (20th SS), Helmuth Becker (3rd SS), Fritz Freitag (14th SS), Desiderius Hampel (13th SS), Fritz Kraemer (1st SS Pz.Corps), Heinz Lammerding (2nd SS), Gustav Lombard (31st SS) and Herbert Ernst Vahl (4th SS).

Four of the Brigfhr. took their own lives: Freitag, Neblich, Schwedler and Rumohr; the latter only after having been badly wounded during the Budapest Breakout attempt, and even then he was not fully successful, since he did not die until a day later. Five Brigfhr. were killed-in-action: Augsberger, Ernst Fick (in the Battle of Berlin), Witt, Zehender and Ziegler. Two more were executed/murdered in enemy captivity: Becker in the Soviet Union and Bernhard Voss (commander of the SS Troop Training Grounds at Beneschau near Prague), in Czechoslovakia. Three others, all exceptionally fine soldiers and human beings, were sent to Tito's executioners by the Americans and British. They were then tortured and murdered, all without the slightest "legal" justification. They were: Juergen Wagner ("Nederland" Div.), Ritter von Oberkamp (7th SS "Prinz Eugen" Div.) and August Schmidhuber (7th SS Div. and 21st Albanian SS Div. "Skanderbeg"). Their blood remains a permanent stain on the hands of the so-called "Allies"!

SS-NCO SCHOOL RADOLFFZELL

The SS NCO School at Radolfzell was established on the site of the newly constructed peace-time barracks for III.Bn./SS-Rgt. "Germania" on the shores of Lake Constance (Bodensee). A preliminary survey of the facilities had been made in December 1940 and on 15 February 1941 the Reichsfuehrer-SS ordered the school into existence, starting out with four NCO training companies that were later expanded into six.

In December 1944, much of the school was formed into a regimental battle-group, alternately known as SS-Rgt. Braun, SS-KGr. Braun and/or SS-Rgt. "Radolfzell." It fought in the Alsace region in January 1945 and took heavy losses in the Vogesen and at the Colmar bridgehead. The survivors later rejoined the school. In April, the last NCO training course was completed and the graduates were formed into an assault company and sent to the front. The school staff and support elements began an evacuation to the Austrian Tyrol, where the school was officially dissolved on 4 May 1945.

Last SS-NCO School Radolfzell Kampfgruppe

On 12 April 1945 the final NCO training course was concluded at SS-NCO School Radolfzell. The graduates remained at the facility pending assignments to W-SS combat units, however, the chaotic battlefield situation made

this impossible. As a result the NCO candidates were formed into an assault company with the following configuration:

Four platoons of four squads each with one NCO and seven men per squad

Two squads of riflemen per platoon

Two platoons had heavy machine gun squads while the other two platoons had two light mortar squads

Everyone in the company was trained in the use of the machine guns and mortars.

On 20 April 1945 the Assault Company Radolfzell was placed on alert and issued with live ammunition. First combat action with American forces took place on 21 April and resulted in heavy losses to the company. By 24 April, after several more violent engagements the company had been reduced to 30 men. This tiny force was then overrun and dispersed by an enemy spearhead. As of 1 May 1945, Assault Company Radolfzell had one officer and six grenadiers left and they surrendered to the French near Lake Constance on this date. The survivors were advised by Army members to dispose of their SS collar patches, but they refused to do so, although other papers (Soldbuch) were destroyed. §

In March/April 1945, the SS Pz.Bde. "Westfalen" was formed from elements of the following units: The SS Pz. Training and Replacement Rgt., SS Pz. Recce Training Detachments 1 and 2, the SS Pz. Maintenance Training and Replacement Det. and an SS NCO Training Company. The Brigade itself consisted of two main battle-groups: SS-Kampfgruppe "Holzer" and SS-Kampfgruppe "Fruehauf." "Westfalen" fought on the Western Front and was initially deployed in the Remagen area. Many of its soldiers were captured and massacred in captivity by American troops, but no formal investigation or punishment for such crimes was ever implemented.

The Icelandic volunteer Odiussen ("Egidir") Grettir, born 7 May 1910, was a student in Germany when the war broke out. In 1939/40 he joined the Waffen-SS and subsequently served either with the "Wiking" or "Nord" Divisions. He was last seen alive in Soviet captivity at the end of the war.

The II. Bn./SS-Pz.Gr. 39/18. SS-Pz.Gr.Div. "Horst Wessel" partial command roster:

SS-Hstuf. Rahn (Bn. CO?)

SS-Ostuf. Guenter Ludwig (Company CO)

SS-Hscha. Fritz Rogge (Platoon leader or Sgt. Major)

SS-Hscha. August Voppel (Platoon leader or Sgt. Major)

SS-Standartenoberjunker Werner Lundberg came from the 1st Inspection/4th Officer's Class of the SS-Junkerschule Kienschlag to the SS Rgt. "Konopaki" of the SS-Kampfgruppe Div. "Bohemia-Moravia" where he commanded a heavy machine gun squad in the 12th Company. Before becoming missing-in-action he was last seen in a discussion with his C.O. about a relocation move in the Nicholsburg/Thaya (Austria) Bridgehead.



Unidentified Knights Cross holder.

On 24 July 1945, the 18-year-old Waffen-SS volunteer Walter Kemker and five of his comrades were tied to posts and executed by French soldiers at the POW camp in Siershahn in the Westerwald. Their "crimes," if any, were unspecified, but what is known is that the "Allies" were notoriously quick on the trigger with Waffen-SS captives.

6TH BATTERY SS-ARTILLERY REGIMENTS 4 ("POLIZEI" DIVISION) AND 38 ("NIBELUNGEN") 1945

When the 4th SS Polizei-Pz.Gren.Div. was ordered to relocate from Slovakia to Pomerania in late January 1945, SS-AR 4 was reorganized. Its three surviving detachments (two light and one heavy) were reformed into three light detachments each with two batteries of six guns each. Two leftover batteries from III.Abteilung (5th and 6th) were to be used as the nucleus of a new IV. (Heavy) Abteilung. These two batteries were sent to a training grounds in Landshut, Moravia to the north of Ludenburg (which was about 100 km north of Bratislava, Slovakia), at the end of January 1945. The new proposed detachment had the following command alignment:

Commander: Hstuf. Wode
Adjutant: Ustuf. Gehm
5th Battery: Ostuf. Schwarz (ex-LSSAH)
6th Battery: Ustuf. Behnke

Over the next several weeks the batteries were overhauled and re-equipped with six light field howitzers (Model 18/42) per each, along with tracked vehicles to haul them. In early April 1945, the batteries were ordered to proceed to Southern Germany in two separate troop trains to join the newly constituted 38th SS Pz.Gr.Div. "Nibelungen." Delays were numerous due to a lack of adequate transport and the depredations of Czech partisans, who among other things, sabotaged the railroad lines.

On 17 April, the detachment was in Pilsen where it survived a fierce enemy fighter attack without loss. However, at the next stop further down the line another fighter attack caused some casualties, including the wounding of Hstuf. Wode (who managed to stay with his troops, however). At Furth, 5th Battery began to disembark only to be caught up in yet another enemy air attack, losing all of its weapons and equipment in the process. The 6th Battery was lucky and escaped destruction since it had been holed up in a railroad tunnel. On the next day it was just able to disembark and reach the cover of a forest before the railroad station was obliterated by enemy fighter-bombers.

The 6th Battery was then able to successfully join SS-AR 38 of the "Nibelungen" Division, which at that time was being led by SS-Gruppenfuehrer Heinz Lammerding. SS-AR 38 had been constructed from an SS Artillery Training Regiment at the Beneschau Training Grounds near Prague. Its commander was Ostuf. Hornung. The 6th Battery first went into action with "Nibelungen" near Ingolstadt on the grounds of an Army engineer water-crossing training camp located on the south bank of the Danube River. It spent two days in active firing positions



38.SS-Pz.Gren.Div. "Nibelungen"

here before being forced to withdraw with the rest of the division.

As SS-AR 38 pulled out, an airbase directly behind it was destroyed by Allied carpet bombing. A fighting retreat was conducted through Landshut (Bavaria) and Wasserburg to the east of Munich. At this point, SS-AR 38 was severely mauled by overwhelming American forces. The 6th Battery was reduced to two guns, both of which were deployed against a U.S. armored spearhead near Reichenhall in early May over the strenuous objections of the local townspeople, who wanted to avert the destruction of their community. This undertaking proved to be the last combat action by the battery which then continued on with "Nibelungen" through Zell-am-See to Liezen in the designated "Alpine Redoubt."

On 6 May 1945, a "truce" was in effect and "Nibelungen" troops made friendly contact with GIs from the 6th U.S. Army, during which encounters cigarettes and other small items were exchanged. Soon afterwards the retreat to the east continued in the vain hope that if the division stayed intact long enough it would be asked to join the Americans in fighting off the Soviets!

May 7th saw the remnants of SS-AR 38 regroup in Bruck an der Mur, where they were placed at the disposal of an unspecified Army Corps for possible future deployment. On 8 May radio news of the capitulation reached the "Nibelungen" Division and SS-AR 38 went to work destroying its field pieces with Panzerfausts. The wrecked guns were then pushed into the Enns River. Following this conclusive act, the 38th SS artillery troops were trucked to Zell-am-See, where they surrendered to the Americans.

THE RUSSIAN LIBERATION ARMY (R.O.A.) IN FLANDERS

General Vlasov's Russian Liberation Army was allowed to recruit from a Soviet POW camp in Limburg, Belgium, circa 1943-44. Consequently, the Army (known as the R.O.A.), established its western HQ for Belgium and Northern France, in the town of Leuven, with staff quarters at the Hotel Metropole in Leuven. New Russian recruits were quartered at the St. Martens barracks in Leuven.

In charge of the R.O.A./Flanders recruit training was the German Sonderoffizier Friedmann and the former

Russian Army Captains Matscheck and Katjeck. One R.O.A. company was stationed at Castle Schoonhoven and other Russian Liberation Army troops were quartered in Antwerp. A group of some 20 Flemish SS men from the Germanic-SS and SS guard units in Flanders were attached as liaison personnel to the R.O.A. unit in Leuven, although actual training was carried out by Germans and Russians. Once trained, the R.O.A. soldiers in Flanders were used to guard military installations in Belgium and northern France. §

ROMANIAN WAFFEN-SS

The proposed Romanian Division of the Waffen-SS began forming at the Doellersheim training grounds in the winter of 1944/1945. Volunteers came from Romanian elements that had deserted to the German side and from members of the Fascist Iron Guard that had been incarcerated in German concentration camps at the request of the Romanian government - a government that turned on the Germans in August 1944!

The designated commander of the Romanian SS Division was SS-Standartenfuehrer Hans Fortenbacher, a Slovakian ethnic-German who was assisted by Staf. Ludwig, a Romanian ethnic-German and a former Colonel in the Romanian Mountain troops. The first element of the division to be fully formed was the Waffen-Grenadier Rgt. der SS 103. After being deemed battle-worthy it was sent to the hard-pressed Oder River Front in early 1945 where it became a component part of the 547th Volksgrenadier Division. This action alone pretty well shot down any chance of actually forming a complete division composed of Romanians.



Romanian SS collar patch

Of the other divisional units, a Fusilier or Reconnaissance Battalion was established with the aim of deriving its manpower from former Romanian Cavalry troops. This was supposed to be mostly a bicycle detachment. The artillery regiment was put "on hold" early on while its assigned officers were sent to training courses at the SS Artillery Schools near Prague. Their training was eventually interrupted during the Soviet advance on the city, and it is assumed that they were assigned to one of the numerous Waffen-SS battle-groups formed from troops stationed in Bohemia-Moravia. §



THE BELGIAN SS DIVISIONS ON THE ODER FRONT, APRIL 1945

Combat ready elements of the 27th SS Pz.Gr.Div. "Langemarck," were organized into SS-Kampfgruppe "Langemarck" and/or SS-Kampfgruppe "Schellong" (named after the battle-group commander, Ostbaf. Schellong).

SS-KGr. "Langemarck" Troop Strengths, 1 April 1945

167 officers, 408 NCOs, 3,537 men. Total: 4,102

Weapons And Equipment

- 120 light machine guns
- 20 heavy machine guns
- 4 medium mortars
- 4 light infantry guns (close support artillery)
- 2 heavy infantry guns (close support artillery)
- 6 light field howitzers (without motorized transport)
- 2 heavy field howitzers (without motorized transport)
- 41 field kitchens
- 22 motorcycles

26 assorted cars and vehicles

41 trucks and 380 horses

Combat ready elements of the 28th SS Pz.Gr.Div. "Wallonien" were organized partially into the SS-Kampfgruppe "Wallonien" or the SS-Kampfgruppe "Hellebaut" (named after the battle-group commander, Stubaf. Hellebaut). Other troops remained in ready reserve.

SS-KGr. "Wallonien" Troop Strengths, 1 April 1945

1,515 soldiers all ranks. (This included most of the Walloon SS Pz.Gr. Training/Replacement Bn. 36.)

Weapons And Equipment

- 35 light machine guns
- 2 motorcycles
- 4 trucks/vehicles
- 256 horses

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Dutch Volunteers: In early 1942, SS Volunteer Legion "Niederlande" had a troop strength of 2,933 men: 2,207 of whom were Dutch nationals. However, only 28 of the officers and NCOs in the Legion were Dutch. This lack of representation in the command echelon was a prime factor in the disillusionment of many volunteers who chose to leave the service. For instance, as of September 1942, 9,600 Dutch volunteers had joined the Waffen-SS and about 2,400 or 25% of them had either been dismissed or left the Waffen-SS on their own volition.

In May 1943, 1,700 survivors from the Legion "Nieder-

lande" joined 3,000 new Dutch recruits in the formation of 4.SS Volunteer Assault Brigade "Nederland." The brigade was topped off by drafts of East European ethnic-Germans and cadres of "Reichsdeutsche." In the time period from 1 January 1944 to 13 April 1944 (Oranienbaum and Narva Fronts), the brigade lost a total of 3,728 men in killed, wounded or missing, or roughly half its strength. The heavy losses prompted the "Nederland" commander, Brigfhr. Wagner to declare the brigade only fit for "defensive warfare."

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Waffen-SS troops
loading supply bombs.

- § -

The daily report for the 9th SS Panzer Division "Hohenstaufen" for 7 August 1944 in Normandy contained the following extract:

"During combat actions yesterday and operations today, the destruction [of enemy armored vehicles] was reported as follows:

"SS Pz.Rgt.9: seven tanks and two armored cars

"Heavy SS Pz.Det.102: 20 tanks and two weapons [munitions] carriers; 11 of the tanks were penetrated clear through by the shells

"2./SS Pz.Engineer Bn. 9: eight tanks knocked out in close combat; four of them by Uscha. Hans Leykauf."

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Almost alone among non-German volunteers, Swedes who served in the Waffen-SS were not treated as criminals when they returned home, and they were almost immediately able to resume their old places in Swedish society.

- § -

The SS-Sicherheitsdienst Guard Company in Flanders had a strength of 143 men on 1 June 1943; most of the officers and NCOs were Germans, while the rank and file troops were Flemish volunteers, coming mostly from the Flemish Germanic-SS and assorted Nationalist organizations.

- § -

In the middle of April 1945 the 1st Hungarian SS Ski Bn. was rushed to the defense of the Semmering Mountain passes where the SS Mountain Training and Replacement Bn. 13 (Croatian) was already in place. The Hungarian Bn. defended the Reich border positions until the end of the war, finally ending up as an infantry contingent with the 5th SS Div. "Wiking." Shortly before the cessation of hostilities a company from the battalion was rushed to reinforce a Honved (Hungarian Army) unit, the Assault Troop "Ghyczy," which was in action to the southeast of Semmering on the Grossen Pfaff mountain.

Some "Special" Comments Recently Received At "SR"

"I was present at the funeral of Waffen-Standartenfuehrer Weiss in Riga which you described. The honor guard, organized from locally hospitalized SS-Panzer troops, would still make any current formation look sick. Please keep up your good work. I realize it is all uphill."

- § -

"Received your SIEGRUNEN #40 - Excellent! You are getting better all the time! I've never seen that picture of the W-SS "grenadier" (probably a non-com) shown on the cover before. I deeply appreciate what you do in memory of my fallen comrades. They were the best Europe had to give, and their sacrifice was not in vain."

- § -

From "Down Under": "I have a great deal of respect for the work you do in bringing truth to public view in regards to the very real contribution the Waffen-SS brought to world dignity. Few people have the courage to confront world opinion, stand their ground and present the truth; a position I admire in yourself. You deal with the Waffen-SS in an extremely moral, sensitive and mature manner ..."

- § -

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