

EISERNE KREUZ

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT THE SS & WAFFEN-SS - ISSUE #2



- SS-Btl. "Nürnberg"
- SS-Training
- SS on Trial



SS-Stubaf.
Kurt Wahl



A Knights Cross
for Cowardice



Erich Olboeter
Part 2



Uniforms of
Hans Flügel



Editorial

Issue Number Two of *Eiserne Kreuz* is out now!

Issue No. 1 was a success and was very well received by you, the readers. The number of emails and comments we received in response to the first issue led us to quickly decide to continue. Although the process has taken a long time - longer than expected - issue No. 2 is finally here.

The articles in this issue stand out somewhat, both in terms of the number of contributors and their thematic focus. I would like to emphasize that at the end of this issue you will find the email addresses of the various authors. Please feel free to contact them if you know that you possess material that might be of interest to them. By doing so, they will know that the effort put into writing these articles was worthwhile. This issue offers a diverse range of material: an in-depth study of the obscure SS-Bataillon “Nürnberg”, detailed biographical articles on Kurt Wahl and Bruno Wille, and a closer look at the structure of SS training and educational institutions. We also continue the fascinating story of Erich Olboeter, and delve into Germany’s legal reckoning with the perpetrators of the Holocaust after the Second World War. We are confident that each reader will find plenty to discover and reflect upon.

If you have a subject that interests you and one in which you know you possess considerable knowledge, why not write an article and have it published in *Eiserne Kreuz*? Or perhaps you have a topic that interests you but about which you would like to learn more—get in touch with us. Our goal is to give you, the readers, an experience that may stand out from the usual literature on the SS and the Waffen-SS.

Until then—take care, and all the best!

Georg Schwab

Responsible publisher and editor
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SS-Stubaf. Kurt Wahl

— The Military Career and Fate of SS-Stubaf Kurt Wahl —

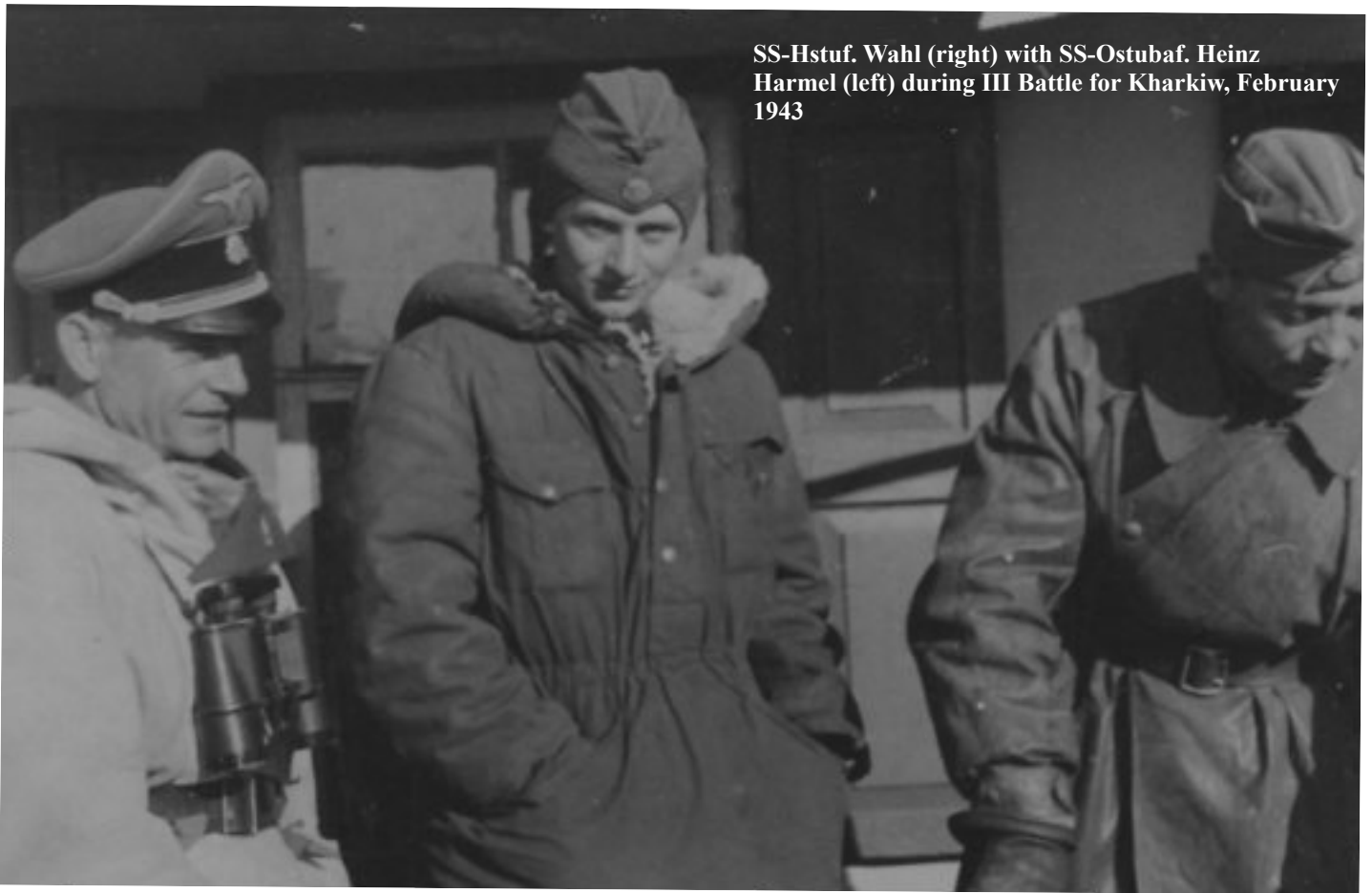
Kurt Wahl was born in Meiningen on August 20, 1914. After attending elementary school, he completed his education at a gymnasium and obtained his Abitur in 1933. On October 1, 1934, Wahl joined the SS-Verfügungstruppe. Initially, he was assigned to an SS-Totenkopf unit, where he served between April 1, 1935, and February 1, 1936. He then attended an officer course at the SS-Junkerschulen Braunschweig. During this course, he was promoted to SS-Standartenjunker on November 9, 1935. Later, he attended platoon commander training in Dachau from February 10, to April 1, 1936. On February 25, 1936, he was promoted to SS-Standartenoberjunker.

After completing the course and subsequently a platoon leader course, he was promoted to SS-Ustuf. on April 20, 1936, and transferred to the 13./SS-Standarte "Germania" in Braunschweig. Later he was transferred to the Schutzpolizei, where he served as a lieutenant in the Braunschweig Schutzpolizei Command from May 1, 1937. On November 9, 1938, he was promoted to SS-Ostuf. and Oberleutnant of the Schutzpolizei. After serving in the staff

of the SS-Personalhauptamt under SS-Ostubaf. Olt, he was assigned to the newly established SS-Polizei-Division in the autumn of 1939, where he took command of a replacement Kp. which was deployed in Poland. For his actions, he was awarded the War Merit Cross 2nd Class with Swords on December 1, 1939. His unit later participated in the Norwegian campaign starting in April 1940.

At the beginning of the "Barbarossa" operation in 1941 he led the 13.(Infanterie Geschuetz Ersatz) Kp./ SS-Polizei Schuetzen Rgt. in battles in the northern part of the Soviet Union. For his exemplary service, he was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class on September 1, 1941, and received the Wound Badge in Black on His further engagements on the Eastern Front were honored with the Iron Cross 1st Class in April 1942. That same month, Wahl became the Kdr. of the 13. (I.G.) Kp./ SS-Infantry Rgt. (Motorized) "Deutschland. On November 9, 1942, he was promoted to SS-Hstuf. Historian Peter Mooney assumes that the addition of the Eastern Front Medal was made during 1942, though no exact award date was listed.

SS-Hstuf. Wahl (right) with SS-Ostufaf. Heinz Harmel (left) during III Battle for Kharkiw, February 1943



During the heavy combat during III Battle for Kharkiw, while commanding the 13 Kp., he received an order from the Rgt. Kdr. SS-Ostufaf. Heinz Harmel on February 22, 1943, to clear a small settlement in the Zeitsewo near Ssinelnikowo of Soviet forces. However, he did not find the enemy there and instead established a defensive position in the sector with his company. At that time "Das Reich" received orders to block the Pavlograd-Ssinelnikowo line. These forces include 13 Kp. came under a heavy attack from the Soviet troops including tanks and cavalry

During this attack Wahl destroyed a Soviet tank in close combat. For this action, he received the Tank Destruction Badge on March 1, 1943. On March 12, Wahl was appointed on the staff as an Adjutant of the renamed SS-Pz.Gren. Rgt. "Deutschland" after SS-Hstuf. Rolf Diercks was severely wounded. He remained in this position until October 1943.

The regiment then advanced under the command of SS-Ostufaf. Harmel, reaching the Bilgorod-Donets region. It took part in the battle of the Kursk Salient in July 1943 (Operation "Zitadelle"), where it was deployed on the right wing of the II SS-Pz. Corps. After the battle ended, the unit moved to the Mius River, where it had to repel enemy bridgeheads in the Stepanivka area with heavy fighting. After suffering losses, the regiment had to retreat from Kharkiw in early August, establishing a defensive



Wahl as Leutnant of the Schutzpolizei



Above: Wahl is practicing shooting with a sniper rifle, already decorated with a tank destruction badge, while Harmel is trying to distract him. The photo was taken just before Operation "Zitadelle".



Left: SS-Ostuf. Harmel with SS-Hstuf. Hans Bissinger (Kdr. II/"D") and SS-Hstuf. Kurt Wahl in 1942

line near Bogodukhiv. A Soviet breakthrough forced further retreats to the Dnieper defensive positions.

Subsequently, he took on the role of battery chief in the SS-Pz.Art. Rgt 2 from October 1943. During this time, he suffered his second serious injury. After recovering, he served as a Rgt. Adjutant from March 10, 1944, in the newly formed 17.SS-Pz.Gren. Division "Götz von Berlichingen" (which had been established in Western France in November 1943) within its SS-Pz.Gren. Rgt. 38 which had been under the command of SS-Stubaf. Heinz Horstman.

Wahl during training of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt 38 in France during spring 1944 After the Allied invasion of June 6 ("Overlord" operation), 1944, "Götz von Berlichingen", under the command of SS-Brif.

Werner Ostendorff was the second SS division to enter combat in Normandy, facing American forces. In their Saumur area locations, the soldiers of this unit witnessed a significant increase in the enemy aerial attacks against key objectives, such as bridges and railways. As the first few hours of June 6 unfolded, the radio reports increased, which gave a clear view that a significant enemy operation was underway off the Calvados coast. With that in mind, Ostendorff issued the orders for all formations to prepare to march. A 175-mile advance through Laval and Vire was undertaken and by the afternoon of June 8th, lead elements were in the Tessay-zur-Vire area, around 10 miles south of Saint-Lo. Along the way, the troops were subjected to intense air raids,



Wahl together with SS-Untersturmführer Briegel, shortly after his promotion to SS-Hauptsturmführer, 1942.



SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. "Deutschland" in the Stepanivka area. From right: SS-Stubaf Bissinger, SS-Staf Harmel, and Wahl, September 1943

suffered their first losses, and could only move at night. By the evening of June 11, the main elements of the division had reached Périers, southwest of Carentan.

Carentan had been evacuated by Fallschirmjäger troops on June 12, but with the increasing strength of the arriving units of "GvB", they were ordered to recapture that objective. Ostendorff planned an offensive against the enemy bridgehead. However,

Allied reconnaissance had discovered the attack in advance, allowing the Americans to prepare. As a result, around 1,000 soldiers were lost. On June 16, SS-Brif. Ostendorff was badly wounded and had to be evacuated, to be operated on; he was replaced by SS-Staf. Otto Baum, two days later. After the failed assault, the SS troops switched to defense, stubbornly holding their positions and preventing the Americans from gaining further ground.

Ceremonial formation of SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment "Deutschland," June 1943: SS-Standartenführer Harmel salutes his regiment. To his right stands Wahl.





SS-Brif. Werner Ostendorff mit Oberst Friedrich August Freiherr von der Heydte, Kdr. of Fallschirmjäger-Rgt.6 during quick briefing, June 13, 1944

Their situation changed on July 6, when the Americans made a push for Sainteny (main Carantan to Periers road); over the next 20 days, the fighting ebbed and flowed and heavy losses mounted for both sides of that fight. The lead elements of the 2.SS-Pz. Division "Das Reich" arrived there in the evening. The SS-Pz.Gren. Rgt. 38 bore the brunt of this enemy pressure and during this fight Kurt Wahl distinguished himself.

Wahl took over as acting leader of the II Battalion, replacing the injured SS-Stubaf. Karl-Heinz Theobald. SS-Ustuf. Hoffmann reported on the situation that day:

The fields and hedgerows of Normandy appeared gray in the early hours of dawn on July 7. Damp strips of fog muffled sounds, and bushes limited visibility. I was already on my way to the command post of the II and III Battalions. Our regimental command post was located in La Patûre. We were concerned about the I Battalion, which was far to the right, and whose commander, SS-Stubaf. Bolte had been killed the previous day. The III Battalion was once again under enemy artillery fire. Furthermore, it was expected that the Americans would cross the Vire and the Vire-Taute Canal and continue their advance. A mes-

senger from the II Battalion arrived. I was to report to the Rgt. Kdr. immediately. The adjutant, SS-Hstuf. Wahl was already impatiently waiting for me. Wahl dryly informed me of my assignment: "A new assignment — with an oak casket and swords". Horstmann ordered the creation of a Kampfgruppe consisting of 40 men, including sappers and four Stugs. The task: break through to Taute via Rougéville with the combat group, blow up the bridge at the northeastern edge of the locality, and if lucky - return". Having successfully completed the mission, Hoffmann returned to the regimental command post and learned tragic news: When I arrived at the regimental command post, Wahl informed me that SS-Ostuf. Horstmann had shot himself, SS-Ostuf. Baldauf and many commanders had been killed, nearly the entire III Battalion was lost. It was bitter news after such a fortunate success. I left with the convoy for the division headquarters.

When Horstmann committed a suicide Wahl took over as acting commander and later led a Kampfgruppe named after him and leather assumed command of SS-Pz.Gren. Rgt. 38 itself. In this situation he was the driving force behind the resistance in de-



Photo above: Fr.l.t.r: Kdr. of SS-Pz.Gr.Rgt.38, SS-Stubaf. Horstmann; the regiment adjutant, SS-Hstuf. Wahl; and SS-Hstuf. Rettberg, probably in June 1944

Photo to the Right: The photo shows Wahl, who has just been awarded the Knight's Cross for his actions during the battles in Normandy. Note that he wore in irregular for Waffen SS Heer "Mouse Grey" wrap.



Wahl depicted in panzer wrap during a short rest during summer 1944



Soldiers from 4 Kp./SS-Pz AA 17 in Metz area, fall 1944

fensive battles along the Carentan-Periers road in the Saint-André-de-Bohon and Le Moulin sector. Despite heavy attacks from enemy infantry and paratroopers, he repeatedly organized defensive actions, inflicting significant losses on the enemy, particularly on July 8-9.

On July 11, following a strong artillery barrage, the enemy launched an attack at 13:00 with strong infantry and armored forces against Kampfgruppe "Wahl." The attack led to a breakthrough and temporarily encircled parts of the battle group in the le Port and Saint-André-de-Bohon areas. SS-Hstuf. Wahl, along with only four men and a single armored vehicle, immediately launched a counterattack, sealed off the enemy penetration, broke through the enemy lines, and reestablished contact with the friendly infantry and tank forces fighting in the Saint-André-de-Bohon sector. The enemy attempted another attack with additional troops, but Wahl, anticipating their movement, had already set up an ambush. Using a few grenades, he managed to repel the assault, forcing the enemy to withdraw with heavy losses.

It was due to Wahl's bravery and decisive actions that the enemy breakthrough was halted and subsequently repelled. SS-Staf. Baum submitted Wahl for the Knight's Cross on July 21, which was awarded to him on August 23, 1944.

"Götz von Berlichingen" continued fierce battles in the Carentan-Saint-Lô-Coutances area, primarily defending but also periodically launching counterattacks. The intensity of the fighting was reflected in the massive losses suffered by the unit. For ex-

ample, in one of the reconnaissance battalion's companies, the number of soldiers was reduced to just 20. Despite such devastating losses, there was no order to retreat. By the end of July, the division's strength had been reduced to approximately 8,500 men from its original 17,000.

On July 25, Allies began Operation "Cobra". They intended to take Saint-Lo and push to the southwest towards Coutances and also the south towards Avranches, thereby trapping the LXXXIV Armee Korps, to which the 17.SS and 2.SS Divisions were part of. General Patton's 3rd Army broke through German positions, and the 17.SS Division narrowly avoided being encircled near Roncey. Elements of "Das Reich" and "GvB" fiercely resisted, trying to break away from the enemy. Scattered units of both divisions regrouped in the Mortain area. In these combats, the divisions managed to escape encirclement, preserve most of their personnel and equipment, and inflict significant losses on the Americans. The remnants of the division were supposed to be withdrawn to the rear for rest and reinforcements.

However, the situation on the front was changing rapidly, and the battered units were instead assigned to take part in Operation "Lüttich", an offensive aimed at restoring the German position in Normandy. The Kampfgruppe of the 17.SS Division was subordinated to "Das Reich" during the advance on Avranches. Despite heavy losses, the Germans managed to assemble a formidable armored strike force consisting of 250 tanks and assault artillery, leaving other sections of the front exposed. The offensive

began on August 6 but soon stalled due to the enemy's overwhelming air superiority. Allied aircraft relentlessly hunted down the advancing German armored formations. The attack was ultimately disrupted, and the offensive collapsed due to constant air strikes and a lack of fuel.

Events were unfolding rapidly. To support the Americans in the Avranches-Mortain corridor and to tie down German reserves, Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery developed Operation "Totalize", which ultimately led to the Germans being trapped in the Falaise pocket. Wahl at that moment was tasked with supplying the units located in the staging area, dissolving and withdrawing unnecessary supply trains, as well as gathering scattered troops for the purpose of forming new battle groups. He assembled a considerable combat force with 70 armored vehicles, including units from the 1.SS Pz. Division "LSSAH", the 2nd and 116th Panzer Divisions, and 10.SS-Pz. Division "Fruntsberg". Furthermore, he incorporated the Kampfgruppe "Krehnke" and the remnants of the SS-Pz. AA 17, as well as the Kampfgruppe "Fick." The remnants of the division were eventually encircled along with other units in the Falaise Pocket. This force was later taken over by SS-Staf. Wilhelm Mohnke. Only about 1,500 men managed to break out, while the remaining forces were transferred to the Saarbrücken area for refitting.

On October 1, Wahl took command of SS-Pz. AA 17 and was promoted to SS-Stubaf. on November 9, 1944. He was awarded the Bronze Tank Combat Badge and the Bronze Close Combat Clasp.

Wahl saw his first battles as the new battalion Kdr. in defensive engagements northwest of Metz. The battalion was reinforced with soldiers from SS support units, remnants of SS-Pz.Gren. Brigade 49 (under SS-Stubaf. Markus Faulhaber), SS-Pz.Gren. Brigade 51, and graduates of the SS Signal School in Metz. By that time the most part of the division had already withdrawn to the eastern bank of the Moselle River, where it became involved in defensive fighting for the town of Dornot. It was here that Wahl would once again demonstrate his leadership and organizational skills in his role as battalion commander.

SS-AA 17 was covering the retreat of the main division remnants between October 18 and 22. What is noteworthy in the document is that Kurt is still listed as SS-Hstuf., even though he had already been promoted to SS-Stubaf. on October 1. Having formed three reconnaissance groups, a reconnaissance of the Neuburg-Dornot-Ancy sector was carried out. The task was to find a weak point in the



SS-Staf. Otto Baum during campaign in Normandy, July 1944

enemy's defense, penetrate the town (Dornot) with the support of divisional artillery, use engineers to mine the Neuburg-Gorze road (which, according to intelligence, was heavily used by enemy transport), lay mines in gaps in the defensive line, cut all telephone lines, and, most importantly, capture prisoners- As a result, three assault groups were formed by Kurt, which infiltrated the town from the western outskirts - the least guarded area. The groups were supported by an engineer platoon. From the bridgehead on the Moselle River, the groups crossed to the opposite bank using inflatable boats and began marching toward Neuburg. The engineers successfully completed their mission but encountered an American reconnaissance patrol, leading to a fire-fight. Meanwhile, the assault groups infiltrated the town and destroyed 8-9 houses. In one of the destroyed houses, an anti-tank gun was found; in another, a command post of Americans. With the support of divisional artillery, the groups were able to retreat in an organized manner under enemy machine-gun fire and reach the crossing point. In the end, Wahl successfully completed all assigned objectives, although several men were wounded. They immediately began the march to Manflingen. It remains unclear from the documents whether any prisoners were captured.



Division commander Hans Lingner taken while holding the rank of SS-Hstuf. and just awarded German Cross in Gold

On November 9, an overwhelming artillery barrage was launched along the entire front and against the division's rear area. More than 2,000 bombs fell on the Seille section and the forts around Metz. A broad encircling attack marked the beginning of the final battle for Lorraine. The retreat movements initially came to a halt at the end of November, with the main defensive effort concentrated in the Farreberviller area.

At the beginning of December, due to heavy losses in Lorraine, the division's manpower had dropped to 4,000 men with 20 armored vehicles. Under these circumstances, Adolf Hitler authorized the unit to abandon its positions around Metz and withdraw to the Maginot Line, where it was placed under the command of the 13.SS-Army Corps of SS-Gruf. Max Simon. The division was retreating toward Saarbrücken. Upon reaching the Westwall, it was reinforced with Eastern European Volksdeutsche including in the SS-Pz.Gren. Lehr Rgt. (under SS-Ostuf. Vinzenz Kaiser). Regiment based in Prosetschnitz and was sent to "GvB" to become

the new SS-Pz.Gren. Rgt. 38. It was an unpleasant surprise for 17.SS Division to find out how poorly motivated the Eastern European Volksdeutsche were. Additionally, the division was allocated a company of Panther tanks from the 21st Panzer Division and even several formidable Jagdtiger self-propelled tank destroyers. On December 6-7, the divisional KTB mentioned Kampfgruppe "Wahl", which took part in holding the division's positions in the Sargemünd and Großblittersdorf areas. The unit provided defense of the Sargemünd area against enemy attempts to cross the Saar River and maintained close contact with Kampfgruppe "Fick" and Kampfgruppe "Habel". Wahl's command post was in Bliersbach. His Kampfgruppe operated independently in the event of enemy breakthroughs, repelling American attacks and launching counterattacks. Elements of the tank battalion were assigned to the group to resist the enemy's advance. The division gradually retreated south and southeast.

During the first ten days of 1945, SS-AA 17 suffered heavy losses during Operation "Nord-Wind". "GvB", together with 36th Volksgrenadier Division, attacked the US 44th and 100th Infantry Divisions around the town of Rimling. Sixteen platoon leaders were killed in this short period. Unfortunately, the division failed to achieve significant results or advance far to the west. Attacks did not gain much ground, possibly because of the extreme weather conditions during the offensive. Only Wahl's men managed to achieve some limited successes. Despite the small size of his battalion - reinforced mostly with unmotivated conscripted soldiers - it was his unit that achieved significant success, possibly the most notable among all German units involved in the operation.

On January 3, 1945, Wahl was ordered to break through enemy lines and liberate encircled elements of the SS-Pz.AA 17 and SS-Pz.Gren. Rgt. 38 near Gros-Réderching. In a swift attack, skillfully using the terrain, he first penetrated the enemy front at Gros-Réderching, engaging in close combat with advancing Sherman tanks. He then advanced into the village, eliminated enemy forces, and reestablished contact with the encircled troops. Without delay, he pressed forward towards Aachen and briefly occupied a section of the city.

On January 6, leading a weakened battalion and supported by about 30 tanks, he launched a counter-attack at the frontline near Brandelfingerhof-Ferme. The SS-Pz.AA 17, deployed as a reserve, reinforced the position. Under the leadership of SS-Stubaf. Wahl, a counterattack was immediately launched, pushing the enemy back from the Brandelfingerhof

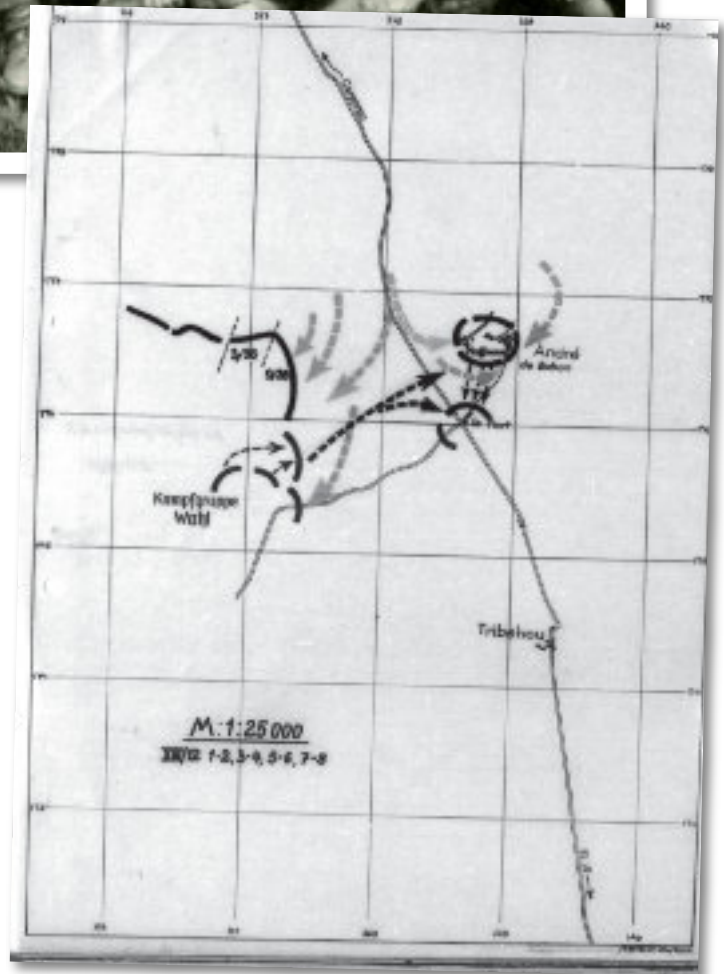


Soldiers of SS-Pz.
AA.17 during the fall
of 1944

farm eastward to higher ground. In the process, three enemy tanks were destroyed, one 7.5 cm anti-tank gun was eliminated, and two officers along with 43 soldiers were taken prisoner. This successfully thwarted the enemy's counterattacks in this area.

During the attack on Rimling on the night of January 7-8, Kampfgruppe entered the town and, in fierce house-to-house combat, captured half of the settlement from the resisting enemy. With determination, he ensured the security of his own flanks and rear while pushing deep into the enemy-held southern part of Rimling. Kurt was the driving force of the battle in Rimling—fearless and courageous, he led his men from the front. On the night of January 7-8, Wahl was wounded in the face and hands by phosphorus burns. Despite his injury, the attack he had initiated led to the complete capture of the town. Under his command, 109 enemy soldiers, including 7 officers, were taken prisoner, and 1 tank along with 2 anti-tank guns were destroyed.

We know about how Wahl was wounded from the report of the adjutant of I./SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt 38, SS-Ustuf. Siegert. On January 10, he arrived at the division's command post in Moronville-Ferme and reported to SS-Staf. Lingner: "The command post of Wahl in Rimling took a direct hit, which resulted in significant losses, as SS-Stubaf. Wahl had just gathered the command personnel of the reconnaissance battalion Pz.Aufkl.Abt.17 for a meeting. Wahl himself sustained burns to his face and hands and was already on route to Obersailbach. After a lengthy conversation, Lingner ordered SS-Hstuf.



Map of the combat operations of the battalion under the command of Wahl during Operation "Nordwind", as a result of which he was awarded the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross

Müller immediately went to Moronville-Ferme to take command of Kampfgruppe "Wahl" in Rimling. Soon he replaced Kurt who was evacuated and sent for medical treatment. On the same day SS-Staf. Lingner was captured by a patrol from the 114th Infantry Rgt. when his car overturned on the slippery



SS-Standartenführer Günther Anhalt

roads. The driver was shot on the spot; Lingner and his staff were brought to the US lines where they were interrogated.

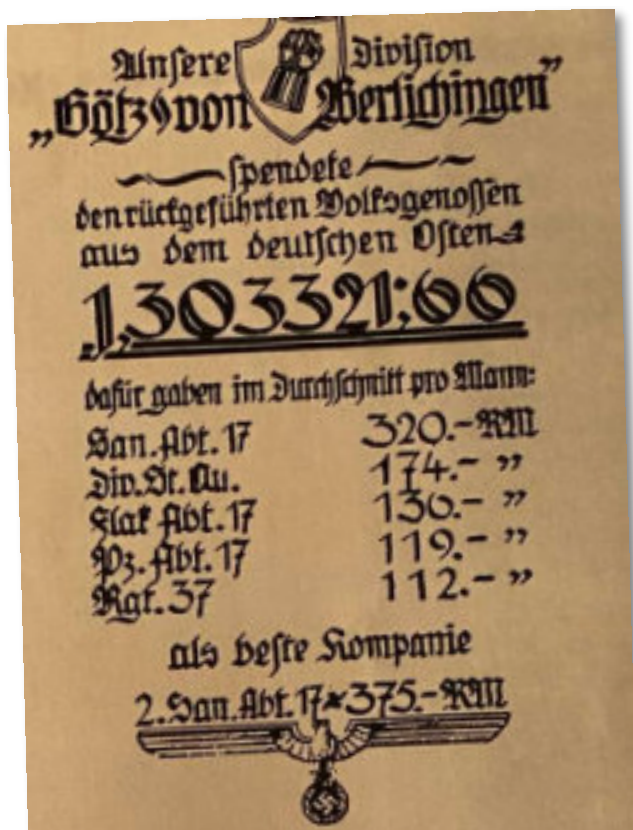
On January 11, 1945, Wahl was nominated for the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross (approved by SS-Gruf. Simon) and was awarded on February 1, as the 720th soldier of the German Wehrmacht. Hans Lingner described Kurt as the "soul of the battle" in

Rimlingen. Fearless, determined, and always in good spirits, he motivated his men by leading from the front. Judging by the available information, he was sent to a hospital in Berlin or somewhere near the capital. While in Berlin, Wahl presented Reich Minister Dr. Joseph Goebbels with a certificate for 1,303,321.60 Reichsmarks, collected by the soldiers of "Götz von Berlichingen" to support German refugees fleeing the advancing Eastern Front. Goebbels praised the division for its contribution to supporting displaced compatriots. With this certificate, Wahl presented Dr. Goebbels with a donation from "Götz von Berlichingen" in the amount of approximately 1,300,000 Reichsmarks. In April 1945, SS-Stubaf. Wahl took part in the final battle for Berlin in SS-Regiment "Anhalt". It was formed on April 23 by SS-Staf. Günther Anhalt. The regiment consisted of two battalions, with the command post located in the underground section of Potsdamer Bahnhof. Wahl, who had been in Berlin after medical treatment, was appointed HQ. "Anhalt" regiment, which consisted of two battalions: "Mrugalla" – named after SS-Hstuf. Thomas Mrugalla – and "Schäfer" – named after SS-Hstuf. Fritz Schäfer. Anhalt's command post was located in the bunker of the Goebbels villa on Hermann-Göring-Straße, south of the Brandenburg Gate.

The full assault on central Berlin began on April 25 at 5:30 a.m. with a massive artillery strike from all guns and an attack by 1,368 aircraft. The center of Berlin was engulfed in flames. Simultaneously, units from seven Soviet armies launched concentrated attacks. The attackers suffered significant losses in street combat for every house and barricade. Despite fierce resistance, the pincers around the city center were closing. The continuous artillery fire intensified.

On the morning of April 27, Anhalt drove toward the "Mrugalla" battalion on Frankfurter Allee. Due to the steadily intensifying Soviet artillery barrage, they headed toward Alexanderplatz. Near the police headquarters, Anhalt ordered the vehicle into cover and got out with Triebel. Advancing from one ruined house to the next, they turned into Blumenstraße heading east. After covering about half the length of the street, Günther Anhalt was fatally wounded by a shell explosion. He died in the presence of his adjutant, who was unable to help him. The Rgt. was renamed in Kampfgruppe "Wahl" by the name of the new commander.

The main objective of the Soviet soldiers was the Reichstag, which had symbolic importance. Stalin personally ordered that the building be captured by May 1. It was here that Wahl and his soldiers fought



their final battle. In addition to SS troops, the defense included Volkssturm fighters, Kriegsmarine sailors, and personnel from the Ministry of the Interior. On April 29, the assault on the building began. Hand-to-hand combat erupted for every staircase and room. Conditions worsened when carpets caught fire, and thick smoke filled the rooms, making visibility impossible and the air unbreathable. Wahl's men fought fiercely for several days.

As May 1 approached, the Germans still refused to surrender and continued to hold off the advancing Soviet troops. General Perevertkin, who led the assault, fully understood the consequences of failure for himself personally and therefore threw in reserve after reserve, but the time allocated to him for the assault was running out, while Wahl and his fighters continued to fight stubbornly. The general ordered around 60 guns, including tanks, to fire on the building. Rocket artillery was also brought in. Only during the fourth assault, with tank support, did the Soviets manage to reach the entrance stairs of the Reichstag. But even here they encountered a surprise—a brick wall had been built up, which had to be broken through with mortars. Many Soviet soldiers carried the banners of their units but could not break through to hoist them on the roof because, in the darkness, they had to clash with Wahl's men, who stood their ground to the death. Despite the resistance, standard-bearers Sergeants Yegorov and Kantaria eventually managed to raise the flag, though it happened in the dark. Most of the famous photographs were taken the following day.

This propaganda act came at a very high cost for the Red Army. Wahl's group and the other defenders of the Reichstag managed to kill over 2,200 Soviet soldiers. Wahl and his surviving men were captured by Soviet troops, and soon Marshal Zhukov inter-



rogated him about his combat actions (we can't confirm this information, it came from Wahl's own words after the war). After his captivity where he remained for many years, Kurt Wahl was able to return home to his family. He died on December 28, 1988, in Oberndorf am Neckar. Unfortunately we don't have information about his life after the war.

Andrii Zubkov

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Yerger M. German Cross in Gold, Vol. 1-8

Pictures credit to: own archive, Peter van Holsteijn, Tim Willemsen, Paul Turner, M. Rickmenspoel

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Fritz Freitag

A Knights Cross for Cowardice



On 30th September 1944, SS-Brigadeführer Fritz Freitag was the highly coveted and much esteemed Ritterkreuz or 'Knights Cross' for the Division's part in the battle of Brody. Somewhat unusually, according to the Galician Division's Chief of Staff Wolf-Dietrich Heike two Ukrainian civilian bodies associated with the Division the Military Board, the Ukrainian Central Committee and the former Governor of Galicia Dr. Otto von Wächter who was responsible for its formation, were notably absent from the numerous well-wishers. Why was this?

The untried Galician Division was deployed on the Eastern Front in the Brody region as part of XIII. Army Corps which was made up of regular Army formations, in the summer of 1944. It was the only Waffen-SS unit in the Corps. On the 15 July the first elements of the Division were unsuccessfully deployed to counter an overwhelming Soviet breakthrough of the German frontline which simply could not be stopped. By 25 July XIII.A.K. had been surrounded and largely destroyed.

This was the Division's first ever deployment and it was committed to action with only two of its authorised 3 battalions in its 3 infantry regiments. Having been engaged in combat without rest against vastly unequal odds, plagued by communications problems, without regular rations and with am-

munition in short supply, on 19 July some of its units began to show signs of collapse. The Galician Division's Chief of Staff Major Heike noted in his memoirs 'The commanders of the Division's troop units were increasingly reporting that their troops were no longer holding. It was clear that the Ukrainians were not yet mentally up to such heavy combat. However more could not be expected especially as numerous German troops also lost their nerve during these desperate days.'

At a conference with the Corps and other divisional commanders SS-Brigadeführer Freitag received the news of these developments with increasing alarm and at this critical moment lost his nerve and resigned his command. Major Heike wrote 'In the evening, when the withdrawal movement was to begin there were again several breaches in the Corp's sector, the most decisive of which was in the Division's area. The situation was extremely serious but could still be restored by the Division with help of external support. At this time the Commanding General [Hauffe] called the Division and asked the Commander [Freitag] to inform him of the situation. He reported that he was not in a position to retain command of the Division as he no longer had control of the troops. I overheard this conversation and was deeply shocked by his statement. Freitag

had never discussed this crucial decision with his closest tactical staff officer beforehand but had made it completely independently. In my opinion he made this decision hastily under the influence of a current crisis and immediately reported it.'

General Hauffe accepted Freitag's abdication and called him in for duty with his staff. The Galician Division was now subordinated to the Knights Cross holder and very capable commander of the 361st Infantry Division, Generalmajor Gerhard Lindemann who took control over all units in the Galician Division's sector. Under his command he successfully restored the front, prevented the collapse of the defensive line and ultimately allowed some 15,000 soldiers trapped in the so-called 'Brody Pocket' to break out. This included Freitag who whom SS-Freiw.-Sturmmann Mychailo Kormylo who witnessed him escape, not at the head of a battlegroup like the other divisional commanders but crawling on his stomach alone accompanied only by his driver. In the immediate aftermath of the battle as the survivors were retreating to the west Freitag met with Dr. Wächter to whom he gave a grossly biased summary of the Division's failure in battle, denigrating the moral and soldierly fortitude of the Ukrainian soldiers in the harshest terms. In August 1944, Himmler having taken the decision to rebuild the Galician Division for 'political considerations', summoned Freitag for a conference to discuss the matter whereupon Freitag claimed the Ukrainians had failed him and recommended the Division be dissolved and that he be appointed as commander of a German formation. Himmler dismissed his objections and once again much to his displeasure, appointed him as commander based on his previous experience with the Ukrainians. To mollify him Himmler awarded him the Knights Cross. To this end it appears that the commander of the 3rd Panzer Army Generaloberst Raus was solicited in order to provide the recommendation. Evidence for this can be found in the short introductory note in which Raus seeks to exonerate himself for having had any part in it, stating that 'In view of the short period during which the [14 Galician] Division] was part of the 1st Panzer Army, it is not possible for me to make a definite and exhaustive assessment' [authors emphasis]. Moreover it contains obvious mistakes such as the date of that the Division 'was placed at the decisive position' which Raus himself would certainly have known, as well as repeating the contents of Freitag's earlier rabid report submitted in the immediate aftermath of the battle.

Michael James Melnyk



Killed at Kursk – SS-Untersturmführer Rudi Weitzel

These photographs originate from a private memorial album compiled by Rudi Weitzel's mother after his death. Rudi, who was born in Potsdam on January 5, 1920, served as a platoon commander (Zugführer) in 11./SS-Panzergranadier-Regiment 2 (LSSAH).

He was killed in action on July 12, 1943, during the II. SS Panzer Corps' assault at Prokhorovka - the climax of the Battle of Kursk and the largest tank battle in history. (Collection Paul Turner)







SS-Bataillon “Nürnberg”

The Real Asphalt Soldiers

The Dachau training camp (SS-Übungslager Dachau) was a former munitions factory that, under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles following the First World War, was to be demolished. In 1934, the large factory building initially served as accommodation for the so-called “Austrian Legion,” later the SS Legion, and subsequently the 2nd Battalion of SS-“Germania.”

Among veterans of SS-Btl. “N” after the war, the term “Dachau” gradually fell out of use, and they in-

stead referred to their quarters as “Prittzbach” when speaking about them. Prittzbach itself was the artificial lake located in the southeastern part of the area and included, among other facilities, the diving tower and swimming facilities of the SS-Übungslager Dachau.

The company buildings of the later 1st to 4th Companies SS ‘N’ were converted into regular and, for that time, modern troop accommodation in 1934 and 1935 with the help of all the men of the



Ernst Deutsch greets Führer Adolf Hitler, while Adolf Ax and Reichsführer-SS Himmler look on.

SS Legion. In the summer of 1936, the camp was vacated by II./ SS, "D". The battalion moved into the new regimental barracks in Munich-Freimann. At this point in time, the plan had already been conceived at the highest level to relocate a battalion of the SS-Verfügungstruppe to the city of the Nazi Party Rallies, which, in addition to its military training, would also have to fulfil representative and security tasks. At the same time as the formation of this battalion was ordered in the Prittlbach camp, the construction of the new barracks in Nuremberg-Langwasser was commissioned. Fate would have it that the men of the SS 'N' battalion never saw their barracks. Whether these barracks had been planned by Adolf Hitler himself, or by one of his architects, is no longer known today. But it is still considered to be one of the most beautiful and modern military accommodations in Germany and was occupied by the American occupying power since 1945, as the cold war ended and that Germany reunited early in the 90's the US Troops left the Barracks in Nürnberg in 1922. Since 1996, the refurbished barracks have been the headquarters of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

When the formation of the Waffen-SS is written and spoken about today and when the units of the SS-Verfügungstruppe are described from a historical point of view as the parent units of the entire Waffen-SS, the SS 'N' battalion in particular can be included. As already mentioned in the prehistory, it was planned at the highest level to station a battalion of the Waffen-SS in the city of the Reich Party Rallies. Since there was apparently a lack of suitable troop accommodation in Nuremberg, the battalion was set up and stationed in the Prittlbach training camp near Dachau until the new barracks in Nuremberg-Langwasser were completed. The veterans of the SS-Btl. "Nürnberg" never mentioned that they actually was stationed at the SS-Übungslager Dachau, they preferred to use "Prittlbach" which is an area of the SS-Übungslager and the bath that the SS build at the SS-Übungslager name was Prittlbach. I guess that in the postwar Germany in wouldn't have been the best to say that the Battalion stationed at Dachau. In the SS-Übungslager, or the SS-Standort Dachau was direct connected to the KL Dachau which was located south west of the compound. But SS-Btl. "Nürnberg" never saw any guard duty at the camp, the only connection they had with the Camp was that they were stationed at the same area.

Although there were enough interested parties for the commander position from the officer cadre of the old Reichswehr and the police, who had



**SS-Hstuf Adolf Ax Kp.Fhr of the 2./SS-Btl."N"
He was considered the battalion's finest officer.**

transferred to the SS-Verfügungstruppe, this position was given to a relatively young officer of the SS-V.T. from the Leibstandarte. The deciding factor for this appointment was the right of nomination, which at that time was held by SS Group Leader Sepp Dietrich, leader of the Leibstandarte, and had been approved by the Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler.

The commander of the battalion, SS-Sturmbannführer Ernst Deutsch, was still young by the standards of the time. He was the youngest battalion commander of the SS-Verfügungstruppe, the SS-TV, and had been Sepp Dietrich's adjutant. He approached his new task with vigour and drive, well supported by the company commanders, the platoon leaders and junior officers, as well as the military sergeants who, in August and September 1936, arrived at the training camp in Prittlbach as the permanent staff for the new battalion. They all came from the units that already existed at the time: the Leibstandarte SS-Adolf Hitler and the SS-Deutschland, SS-Germania and SS-Nachrichtensturmbann



Above: The main entrance to the SS-Übungslager Dachau was guarded by soldiers from SS-Battalion "Nürnberg".

To the right: SS-Ustuf Herbert Oeck, served in SS-Btl."N" as Platoon leader in the 3./SS-Btl. "N" under the command of SS-Hstuf Otto Paetsch. Oeck later became Kdr of the SS-Pz.Jg.Abt.5



Unna regiments. With the young battalion commander and his equally young company commanders and platoon leaders, all of whom had been trained at the Junkerschulen Braunschweig and Bad Tölz, the battalion had an excellent officer corps at its disposal, imbued with the spirit of this young force and able to convey this spirit to a young, enthusiastic team.

When the battalion was formed, this young team was recruited from all the regions of Germany at that time. There were Westphalians, Silesians, East Prussians, Swabians, Berliners, Rhinelanders, Bavarians, Holsteiners and Saarbrückners. There were also a few Austrians who had come to Germany before 1938. There was hardly a region or part of the country that was not represented in this battalion. It was a good mix of the entire German people. This good mix was also present in the social structure. The farmer's son stood next to the trained merchant, the high school graduate next to

the craftsman and the industrial worker next to the miner, just like the son of a nobleman next to the son of an industrialist. And they were the sons of parents who, before Adolf Hitler's seizure of power, had been members of one of the many political parties in Germany, whether right, left or centre.

Despite this amazing and probably unique composition, a camaraderie prevailed that passed its test in the difficult war years in a unique and outstanding way and continues unabated today, after 50 years. This phenomenon of a troop is incomprehensible to most people who have not served, lived, fought and suffered in this troop themselves. The official formation date of the SS 'N' Battalion is 1 October 1936. For administrative purposes, the SS 'N' Battalion was subordinate to the SS Regiment 'Deutschland' in accordance with the training guidelines of General Command VII in Munich, Major General Walter von Reichenau.

Guard of Honour

For the soldiers of the SS-Btl. "Nürnberg" it was a special honour when they were assigned as a guard of honour at the Feldherrnhalle, at the temples of honour on the Royal Square or at the Brown House. In addition to standing guard at the "Feldherrenhalle", SS-Btl. "Nürnberg" had a few other standing assignments, one of which was to be a guard at the "Brown House" in Munich. But also to take care of the guarding of the Munich Reime airport, as well as the barracks for the SS-Standarte "Deutschland" at Munich Friemann. An assignment that the veterans of "Nürnberg" did not talk much about was the assignment to guard the "Blood Banner", the standing guard was Jakob Grimminger but the unit that followed him and was the constant companion at various ceremonies was SS-Btl. "Nürnberg", the one who was always one step behind Grimminger was SS-Ostuf Franz Six, who himself was a bearer of the Blood Order.

Structure

The SS-Btl. N was organised as an infantry battalion with a staff, communications platoon, a music and marching band, a motor pool, three rifle companies and a machine-gun company, a pure infantry unit.

Despite the large number of volunteers who wanted to join the SS-V.T., initially only the 2nd and 4th companies could be filled up with recruits, and drilling and weapons, shooting and terrain training could begin. It would have been possible to bring the battalion up to its full strength within



SS-Hstuf Franz Six Holder of the Blood Order, served in SS-Btl."N" as Hstuf bei Stab



SS-Ostuf Ernst Deutsch - the Battalion Commander from the beginning to the end, the youngest Bataillon Kdr in the whole SS-VT

SS-Bataillon Nürnberg

three to four months if the extremely high demands made by the personnel at the registration and admission offices of the SS-V.T. and the examining physicians had not been made.

Service

Some of the more notable operations in which SS Battalion "Nürnberg" took part included the annexation of Austria in March 1938. However, this operation was not carried out by "Nürnberg" as a cohesive unit; instead, its companies were dispersed and attached to SS Regiment "Deutschland." The only operation that "Nürnberg" actually conducted as a unified battalion was the annexation of the Sudetenland in the autumn of 1938.

Battalion Reorganisation

On 1 November 1938, SS Battalion "N" was reorganised in accordance with official orders. Up to that point, the battalion had been a horse-drawn infantry unit. From then on, drivers and their vehicles became increasingly important, as the unit was instead designated to become a motorcycle battalion. This training continued until the spring of 1939, when the various platoons were finally distributed among the different companies.

The end of the Battalion

In November 1938, a regimental staff z.b.V. had been set up in Ellwangen. It was a temporary set-up. The following were subordinated to this regimental staff: SS-z.b.V.Btl. I: the SS-Kradschützen- Btl. SS-, 'N' in Prittlbach and SS-z.b. V. Btl. II: the SS-Krad-



The future Knight's Cross recipient Walter Kniep, shown here as a member of the SD, later served as a platoon leader in 3./SS-Battalion "N".

The officer corps of SS-Battalion "N" during an exercise.



schützen- Bataillon in Ellwangen. The Krad-
schützen-Btl. II was formed from the IV.Btl. in the
SS-Rgt. "Deutschland" stationed in Ellwangen. In
June and July 1939, the units were reorganised once
again. The two motorcycle battalions were reorganised
into new units. The majority of the leaders,
non-commissioned officers and enlisted men of the
former Kradschützen-Btl. SS-, 'N' formed the anti-
tank division of the SS-Verfügungstruppe. Parts of
the battalion were assigned to the reconnaissance
and anti-aircraft artillery divisions of the SS VT,
while others were transferred to the 1st Artillery Re-
giment of the SS VT, which was being formed in Jü-
terbog, near Berlin, where they were deployed as am-
munition drivers for the 10.5 cm guns. Thus the SS-
N battalion ceased to exist.

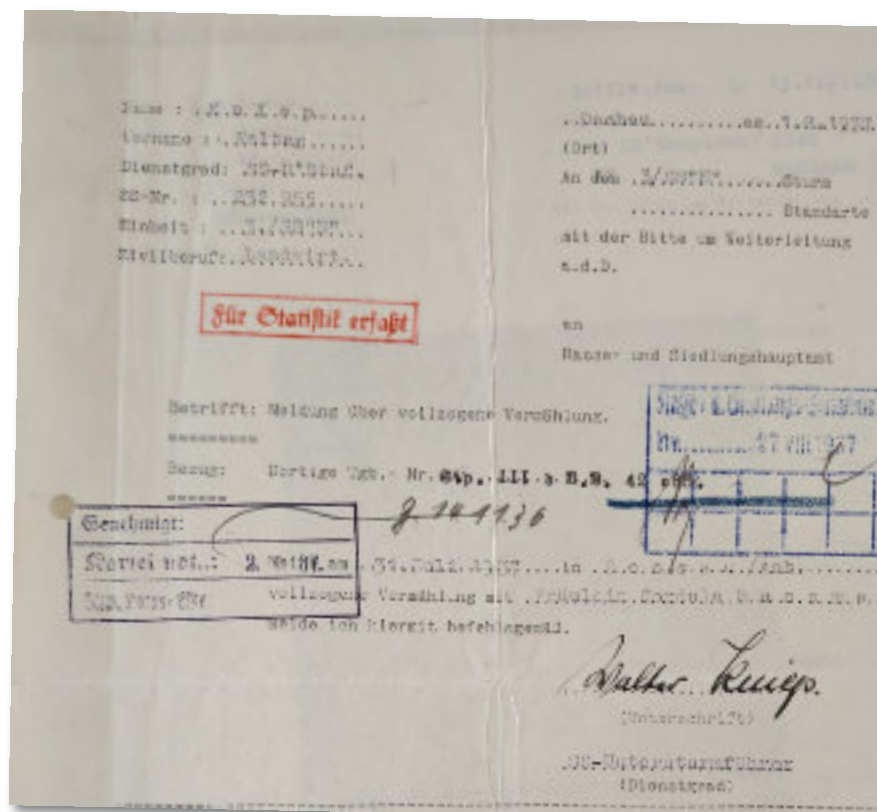
"Führernachwuchs"

From 1 January to 14 April 1939, a leadership train-
ing course was held in Ellwangen. This course was
led by Ustuf. Herzig. After completion of the course,
which was also attended by the Btl. SS-, 'N' suitable
men and under-leaders db- course, those who had
passed the course were assigned to the Junker School
in Braunschweig. The training of suitable officer ca-
dets took place in the NCO schools in Braunsch-
weig and Bad Tölz. During the course of the war,
highly decorated troop leaders and NCOs emerged
from the 'SS-, 'N' battalion. At this point, it should
be noted that outstanding individuals came from the
'SS-, 'N' battalion. Since it is not possible to
list all the former leaders, subleaders and men
of the SS-N battalion who were decorated for
outstanding leadership and great bravery, refer-
ence is made in this context to the book
'Die Ritterkreuzträger der Waffen-SS'
(Knights Cross Holders of the Waffen-SS).

Regardless of this, the number of soldiers
who later went on to become officers in the
Waffen-SS was remarkably high. Also note-
worthy is the number who subsequently re-
ceived high decorations, such as the Knight's
Cross or the German Cross in Gold or Silver.
In the course of our research, we have been
able to identify nine soldiers who had previ-
ously served in "Nürnberg" and who were
awarded the Knight's Cross during the
Second World War. In addition, to date we
have identified fourteen men who later re-
ceived the German Cross in Gold. The
sources for this article are SS-Btl. "N" 1936-
1939 - Eine Dokumentation, as well as an as
yet unpublished manuscript on SS Battalion
"Nürnberg", written by G. Schwab and F.
Rehn.



The future Knight's Cross recipient Albrecht
Krügel.



Heimat 27

HQ SS-Sta. "Kurt Eggers"

Heimat 27 is the address in Berlin where SS-Standarte "Kurt Eggers" had its headquarters during the war. I visited the site a few years ago and also had the opportunity to enter the building. Behind the main structure there was once an open field where "Kurt Eggers" maintained barracks for enlisted men and non-commissioned officers. These no longer exist today. However, the main building and the barracks immediately to the right of it are still standing. The smaller barracks are now part of a kindergarten, while the large building houses a pastoral mission. The front of the building and the garden look exactly as they did during the war. The only feature missing is the flagpole; other-

wise, everything appears unchanged, even the hedges are still in place. On the façade of the building, traces of combat can still be seen in the form of filled-in bullet holes, which remain clearly visible.

During my visit, while I was standing outside taking photographs, some local residents became curious about why I was taking so many pictures. When I explained the reason, they were aware that the building had once served as an SS office, but not which one. They became noticeably more interested when I told them exactly what kind of SS office it had been.





For those of you visiting Berlin, I can recommend a visit to Heimat 27. The street itself is somewhat difficult to find, as it is a dead end and is now located in a residential area with many villas and apartment buildings. As can be seen in the photograph, it was

winter when I visited, but I intend to return on a warmer day to try to locate any remaining traces of the former barracks.

Georg Schwab





Part II

Erich Olboeter

The LSSAH in 1941–1943: Erich Olboeter and the Reconnaissance Battalion

The LSSAH was transported to the Brünn-Wischau area in the Reichsprotektorat Böhmen und Mähren (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), in what is now the Czech Republic, arriving during the first week of June 1941. Following LSSAH's outstanding performance during Operation Marita, Himmler ordered that it be upgraded to divisional status.

On the morning of 30 June 1941, Erich Olboeter and his 15th Company crossed the border into Poland and the Soviet Union, marking the beginning of the battle against the ideological enemy for the Leibstandarte. By 1 July, Olboeter was again listed in the personnel roster of the Leibstandarte as Kompaniechef of the 15th (Heavy) Company.

At the northern entrance to Kurne, a village northwest of Zhitomir in Ukraine, the commander of the 13th Company, SS-Hauptsturmführer Walter Hempel (SS-Nr. 23 807), was killed on 13 July. Olboeter was assigned as the new company commander, while command over the 15th Company passed to SS-Hauptsturmführer Jakob Hans Hanreich (SS-Nr. 10 512).

The war diary recounts: "The LAH is to attack to the north, striking the enemy's flank and rear. During the night, the reinforced III Battalion arrived from its deployment around the bunker line near the Standarte and began preparations to relieve the re-

connaissance division. At 1000 hours, the relief was carried out under heavy enemy fire. On this gray Sunday morning, the groups advanced in deep formation through the kilometer-long village of Kurne, which was under intense artillery fire. The positions of the reconnaissance division lay about fifty meters behind the runway, in a row of bushes. They had repelled several attacks in the previous days, partly in close combat, as the tall grain fields favored the approach. The Rollbahn—a key German Army route—was a prominent target and under constant fire. SS-Schütze Tittel (replacement in Schöllschütz) from our group was wounded. Russian reconnaissance planes (Henschel 126) circled overhead and appeared to control artillery fire with remarkable accuracy. Our company command post was located in a homestead to the right, behind us. There, our chief, Hauptsturmführer Hempel, was killed by a direct artillery hit. This was a great shock to our company, which we first had to overcome. Command was then assumed by Obersturmführer Erich Olboeter, who had previously led the Heavy Company (15.I/LSSAH) in the battalion. Hstuf. Hempel had been our company commander since 20 January 1940. In the Berlin barracks, we experienced this North German officer as tolerant and understanding, with an open ear for the concerns of his men, making decisions objectively and thoughtfully. Under his leadership, the company became a cohesive and presentable unit across various branches of

service and on representative occasions. Apart from the brief wartime deployment in Greece, his early death on the first days of the Russian campaign prevented him from proving himself as a frontline officer and troop leader. We deeply regretted his early loss.” — Kriegstagebuch Nr.1, 13./III Btl. – LSSAH (pp. 119–120)

Erich Olboeter was awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class on 26 July 1941. On 21 October 1941, Hauptsturmführer Ludwig Lamprecht (SS-Nr. 31 436), commander of the 2nd Motorcycle Company, was wounded, and Olboeter replaced him as company commander. The division’s casualty list stated that he was wounded by shell fragments, but former SS-Rottenführer Karl Münter provided a different account during an interview with researcher Timo Worst:

Lamprecht, the tactics instructor, had a valet who always wanted to open doors for him and was constantly standing on the running board. I told him to get down there. Lamprecht was too much of a theoretician. Once, they were lying together behind a car studying a map. He could not even attend to himself without the valet. Before Taganrog, Lamprecht was hit in the cross by a beam inside a house, and a few days later the valet

was gone as well. The valet knew how to communicate with the regiment.

SS-Obersturmführer Olboeter left the company at the end of October and was transferred to the Aufklärungsabteilung (Reconnaissance Battalion) of the LSSAH. Hauptsturmführer Klaus Dingeldey (SS-Nr. 272 745) became the new company commander. According to the divisional history, Olboeter was wounded on 26 October 1941 and was replaced as commander of the 2nd Company by SS-Obersturmführer Weiser. On 29 October, Olboeter was wounded again but refused to leave his company.

Rostov-on-Don, November 1941

General Eberhard von Mackensen’s III Corps, with the Leibstandarte under his command, began the attack on Rostov-on-Don on 17 November 1941. Facing temperatures of -30°C, the Aufklärungsabteilung advanced along the Sultan-Sali road. Olboeter’s company, with Wawrzinek’s platoon in the lead, encountered a well-prepared system of defensive positions just outside the town. Roads were heavily mined, and the enemy defended with infantry, grenades, and artillery. Despite these obstacles, Wawrzinek’s platoon fought forward meter by

**Erich Olboeter (wearing an helmet)
among fellow officers**





meter, eventually breaching the defensive positions, though Wawrzinek was wounded in the left arm by 13 shell fragments.

The 2nd Company (Olboeter) was positioned in Nizhne-Gnilovskaya, southwest of Rostov-on-Don, along the railway line connecting the town to Taganrog and located near the banks of the Don River. On 25 November 1941, the positions of the Aufklärungsabteilung were attacked at 05:20 and bombarded by Russian artillery. Casualties were initially light, but out of the gray dawn, waves of singing and shouting Russian infantry advanced across the ice of the river. Mines tore large holes in the ice, forcing gaps in the advancing chain, yet the mass continued rolling forward like a machine. In the middle of the river, the first lines were caught in grenadier crossfire and many were killed, but following units climbed over the fallen and pressed the attack. Three complete Soviet divisions—the 31st and 343rd Infantry Divisions and the 70th Cavalry Division—attacked the 300 remaining men of the reconnaissance battalion, spread out along an 8,000-meter-wide defensive line. Two battalions of the 1151st Rifle Regiment penetrated Olboeter's company positions, threatening the entire front. The 177th and 248th Rifle Regiments attacked the center of the division sector, nearing a breakthrough.

Immediate counterattacks repelled the invaders, resulting in six officers and 393 Red Army soldiers captured, with 310 Russian fatalities in this sector alone. Prisoner testimony indicated the attack aimed to cut off Rostov from the west. Wounded grenadiers were bandaged and evacuated by truck to Taganrog.

The Russian assault continued at 16:00 on 27 November, with artillery and rocket support. Superior enemy forces penetrated Olboeter's positions, but Hauptsturmführer Erich Olboeter led a counterattack that captured more than 250 prisoners, despite being wounded by shell fragments and suffering severe frostbite in both feet. Obersturmführer Hermann Weiser temporarily assumed command of the 2nd Company. Weak Russian units that breached the Bremer Company's section at 19:50 were surrounded and eliminated. After receiving first aid, Olboeter was transported to a field hospital in Taganrog, and three days later moved to the military hospital 2./606 in Nikolayev, southern Ukraine, arriving around 4 December 1941. He had shrapnel in his left thigh, lower left leg, and thorax. On 18 December, he was transferred by hospital train to Reserve Lazarett I Lemberg, and continued on to Germany, arriving at Reserve Lazarett Hirschberg on New Year's Eve, 31 December 1941.

Formation of the 12th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Hitlerjugend"

Olboeter's return date to the LSSAH is unclear, but by January 1943, he is listed as Kompaniechef of the 5th (Heavy) Company of the Aufklärungsabteilung. Following the recapture of Kharkiv, a major reorganization took place: the foundation of a new SS Corps and a Waffen-SS Division, the 12th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Hitlerjugend," would consist primarily of LSSAH personnel. A large contingent of the Aufklärungsabteilung, including Olboeter, was transferred to Belgium to establish and train the division.

Olboeter was assigned command of the future Aufklärungsabteilung 12. With an Aufstellungsstab, he moved from Beverloo to Turnhout, occupying the Kazerne Major Blair, formerly the 8th Line of the Belgian Army. The staff prepared the barracks to receive over 1,000 recruits for the new Hitlerjugend

Division. The SS Panzer-Nachrichten-Abteilung 12 was also accommodated there. Turnhout and its surroundings became the spearhead and training ground for the new division. The SS Sanitäts-Abteilung 12 was housed in various locations across the town, while the staff and Divisionkommandeur, SS-Oberführer Fritz Witt, took residence in several villas and castles in Old Turnhout. The first official formation of the Aufklärungsabteilung began on 4 September 1943.

To be continued...

Jan Willem Stokkers

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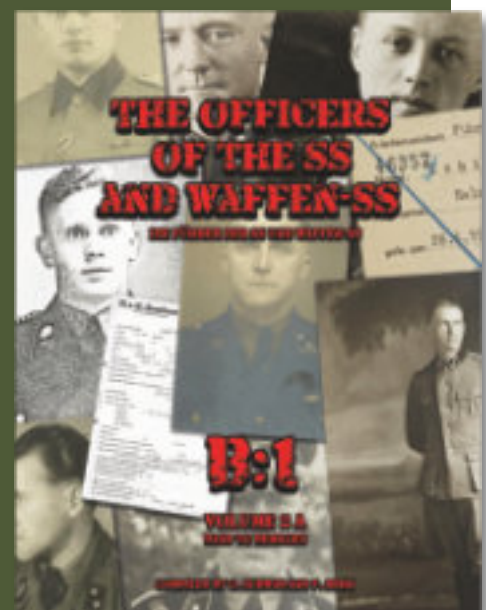
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Dr Bruno Wille

The Devil and the Judge: The Story of Dr. Bruno Wille

Horst Bender, Günther Reineke, Kurt Mittelstädt, and Wolfgang Wetzling are notable figures from the history of the wartime Hauptamt SS-Gericht (Main Office of the SS Courts), which served as the central and ministerial jurisdiction for the entire SS-Verfügungstruppe, later Waffen-SS, and Polizei in special deployment from 17 October 1939 to 29 April 1945.

Another prominent figure associated with this highly secretive HA SS-Gericht is Dr Bruno Wille, a former Austrian SS judge. In December 1944, he visited the notorious SS-Oberführer Dr Oskar Dirlewanger, to investigate why he had failed to grant clemency to deserving probationers from the Polizei, Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht Heer.

Dr jur. Bruno Adelbert Maria Wille was born on 16 May 1912 in the maritime city of Pola, Austria (now known as Pula, Istria in Croatia). He was the son of Mattighofen-born Adelbert Franz Rudolf Czihäk (1884), a professor at the Bundesrealgymnasium Wels, Oberösterreich, who later changed his name to Wille, and his wife, Anna Maria Leopoldine (née Zadro), born in 1861 and had Italian ancestry. Anna and Adelbert married in the coastal city of Trieste in 1891.

Wille's education began at a Volksschule in Wels in 1919. He transitioned to Mittelschule in Wels in 1922 but required hospitalisation in 1924 due to typhus. After graduating, he studied law at the Universität Graz and Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck for a total of eight half-year terms, even-

tually obtaining his law doctorate on 15 December 1934 from Innsbruck University. Innsbruck Alumni who went on to serve as senior SS judges included Dr Walter Dillersberger (1904), Dr Ludwig Duftner (1909), Ulrich Dümichen (1908), Helmut Fuchs (1907), Dr Norbert Pohl (1910), Dr Günther Reinecke (1908), Dr Hermann Uhlik (1906) and Dr Herbert Zolly (1910).

Keen on sporting activities, in the autumn of 1938, Bruno enrolled in the anti-Semitic and nationalist Deutsch-Völkischen Turnverein Wels. According to Wille's SS dossier, he holidayed in Switzerland and Italy.

In 1934, Wille began working as a Rechtsberater at Kreisamt Innsbruck, where his grateful superiors arranged his promotion to Regierungsrat. He started practising as a Rechtsanwalt in the Landesgericht Wels on 15 January 1935. Interestingly, Dr Franz von Kocevar (1908) worked as a public prosecutor at this court in 1938. However, in May 1936, Bruno and his SS comrades were detained for ten months due to their membership in an illegal organisation, the SS. Following the 11 July 1936 agreement between Adolf Hitler and Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg, the Austrian government ordered the release of Wille and his SS comrades from detention with a police warning. Wille found himself unemployed until December 1936, when he secured a position as a business lawyer in Wels, which he held until 1938.



The head of the SS Gericht, Paul Scharfe, visits KL Dachau. (Yad Vashem)

Like many Austrian and German layers, Wille was radicalised on campus, deciding to join the Innsbruck Nazi Party on 19 June 1933 and brawled with the brown shirted Sturmabteilung from September 1933 until December 1934. After the war, he claimed no knowledge of his NSDAP membership number, as noted in his SS personnel file.

In September 1936, Wille transferred his allegiance to the Austrian Allgemeine-SS and joined SS-Sturm 5. / II. / 37. SS-Standarte (headquartered in Linz), receiving membership number 309.491. This formation represented 'Österreich-Westgau', and covered the regions of Salzburg, Tirol, Vorarlberg, and Oberösterreich. Wille's superiors regularly promoted him; to Rottenführer on 20 April 1937, Unterscharführer on 9 November 1937, and Oberscharführer on 30 January 1938.

On 1 April 1938, Wille accepted a Referent (consultant) position with SD-Unterabschnitt Oberdonau (Linz) for a six-month probation under the oversight of Linz-born SS- Sturmbannführer Heinz Korb (1911) - Stabsführer SS-Abschnitt VIII in 1938. Upon completing his probationary period to Korb's satisfaction, Wille worked as a salaried Abteilungsleiter until 15 November 1938. A valued leader, he earned a promotion to Untersturmführer

on 11 September 1938. Wille joined the Stab SS-Abschnitt VIII in Linz on 28 October 1938 and became a part-time member on 10 December 1938 of the 37. SS-Standarte. He served as Rechtsberater for this formation from January to March 1939, providing free assistance as a legal advisor to comrades and then moved to the 87. SS-Standarte, with its headquarters in Innsbruck.

Engaged to the daughter of a merchant since 10 April 1938, Wille was married on 11 December 1938 to his fiancé Liselotte 'Lotte' Prischneegg (b. 23.2.1920, Marburg). A member of the Bund Deutscher Mädel from December 1932, she was employed with the Gmunden Deutsche Jungmädel with the rank of Untergaueführerin from May 1938. The couple had two children until 1947 and lived in Bad Ischl, Austria.

When World War Two began on 1 September 1939, Wille enlisted for active military service with the Kriegsmarine military judiciary and eventually attained the rank of Marineoberkriegsgerichtsrat. In the armed forces of Nazi Germany, a Kriegsgerichtsrat was a military jurisdiction official who was appointed for life, having met the qualifications required to hold a judicial position.

On 27 March 1940, Wille transferred from the

Kriegsmarine for military service with the Waffen-SS. Surviving wartime and post-war records do not reveal where he deployed or pinpoint when he joined the HA SS-Gericht as a judge. In the spring of 1943, Wille's SS personnel record indicated that he had the rank of SS-Rottenführer d. Res.

On 1 January 1934, the Nazi regime established a military jurisdiction to maintain cohesion within the German armed forces for future battles. This judiciary operated independently of the Allgemeine Justiz (civil administration of justice) and its judges conducted trials and enforced strict disciplinary punishments on undisciplined soldiers. These measures ranged from fines to imprisonment, based on the Militär-Strafgesetzbuch für das Deutsche Reich, or MStGB (military penal regulations) and the Reichsstrafgesetzbuch, or RStGB (national penal legislation).

Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler (1900-45) foresaw that the SS-VT would be crucial in Adolf Hitler's future military operations and fight alongside the Wehrmacht Heer. To prepare for this, he and SS-Gruppenführer Paul Scharfe (1876-42), the Chef des SS-Gericht, the office responsible for coordinating ensuring the balanced implementation of SS disciplinary regulations, spent much of the second half of the 1930s advocating for establishing an SS-und Polizeisondergerichtsbarkeit (special judiciary), which would operate independently of the existing German civil and military legal framework during wartime.

Acknowledging that SS men had faced legal repercussions following the weakening of the SA in 1934, Adolf Hitler, who shared Heinrich Himmler's concerns - particularly regarding the risk of prosecution for those involved in violent actions against Europe's Jewish population - refused to issue an order to establish a distinct SS jurisdiction through a Führer edict. This decision forced the Reichsführer-SS and Paul Scharfe to argue his case to the Akademie für Deutsches Recht and the Reichsjustizministerium. At first glance, this decision may seem unusual. However, Hitler likely intended to create an SS judiciary that would last beyond the successful conclusion of the war. After years of negotiations with the Nazi legal authorities, Scharfe achieved this objective with a ministerial decree announced on 17 October 1939. In anticipation of an implementation directive, General Paul Scharfe, established the Hauptamtes SS-Gericht in München on 1 June 1939 with state funding to cover its costs, and his staff began organising a system of justice as the superior legal department responsible for discipline and appeals.

Published on 1 September 1939, the Verordnung über eine Sondergerichtsbarkeit in Strafsachen für Angehörige der SS und für Angehörige von Polizeieinheiten mit besonderen Aufgaben (Decree Relating to Special Jurisdiction in Criminal Matters for Members of the SS and Police Units with Special Duties) came into force on 17 October 1939. This edict allowed the HA SS-Gericht to prosecute and punish disobedient and criminal members of the SS and Polizei in courts composed of SS judges, applying what Heinrich Himmler referred to as 'National Socialist suitable punishments.' The Council of Ministers for the Defence of the Reich has decreed for the territory of the Greater German Reich with legal force:

§ 1: A Special Judiciary in criminal cases is established for 1. the full-time members of the Reichsführung-SS, 2. the full-time members of the staffs of those Higher SS and Police Leader whose command organizations are listed under numbers 3 to 6, 3. the members of the SS-Verfügungstruppe, 4. members of the SS Deaths Head Units including their reinforcements, 5. members of SS Cadet Schools, 6. the members of Police units on special deployment.

§ 2: (1) The persons specified in § 1 Nos. 1 to 5 shall be subject to the Special Judiciary for all offences to which the Armed Forces Judiciary is competent. The persons referred to in § 1 Nr. 6 are subject to the Special Judiciary for these offences only insofar as they are committed in the area of Special Deployment. (2) The Judiciary of the Armed Forces Courts remains unaffected.

§ 3: (1) The provisions of the Military Criminal Code and the Military Criminal Court Code as well as their introductory laws shall apply correspondingly to this Special Judiciary unless otherwise provided; in all other respects for non-military offences, the general ministers are joined by the Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police. He determines the Gerichtsherrn and the local scope of their jurisdiction.

§ 4: (1) The courts of war shall be replaced by SS courts and, if the jurisdiction of the courts also extends to proceedings against members of the Police units, SS and Police Courts. The Upper War Court shall be replaced by an SS and Police Upper Court. (2) Special provisions shall be made regarding which court is to perform the duties incumbent on the National War Court in

Armed Forces matters.

§ 5: (1) Judicial Military Civil Officials shall be replaced by SS Justice Leaders who are qualified to hold the office of judge. They are appointed by the Führer and National Chancellor and are directly subordinate to the Reichsführer-SS in disciplinary matters. (2) Members of the SS shall be appointed as lay judges if the proceedings are directed against an SS member; otherwise, the lay judges shall be appointed from among the Police. (3) The post of Certifying Official is replaced by SS Certification Leader. (4) Further regulations concerning the legal status of SS Justice Leaders and SS Certification Leader remain reserved.

§ 6: The regulations of the military penal code concerning the SS Honour Punishment against soldiers are not to be applied. They are superseded by regulations which include the penalty of dishonourable discharge and dismissal from the SS.

§ 7: The Reich Minister of the Interior and the Reichsführer-SS, each for their respective areas of responsibility, shall be authorized, in agreement with the National Minister of Justice and the National Minister of Finance, to enact the provisions necessary for §§ 4 and 5 as well as the implementing provisions for this Ordinance. This edict takes effect on the day of its proclamation. Berlin, dated 17 October 1939.

Der Vorsitzende für die Reichsverteidigung Göring, Generalfeldmarschall Der Generalbevollmächtigte für die Reichsverwaltung Frick Der Reichsminister und Chef der Reichskanzlei Dr Lamers [...]

Although Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party, and his loyal paladin, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, held little respect for democratic processes and the German civil judiciary - often expressing disdain for the legal profession - they still required trained lawyers to serve as judges at both static and mobile SS tribunals. It wasn't until the successful conclusion of the Polish campaign on 6 October 1939, and after the publication of a Reichsführer-SS edict eleven days later, that SS-Gruppenführer Paul Scharfe received the necessary order to assign judges to newly established static and mobile courts-martial.

On 3 March 1939, General Scharfe started identifying and selecting qualified personnel for the

SS judiciary from Allgemeine SS and SS-VT members. He sought 'young, fresh SS leaders, not over-aged and senile jurists,' whom he deemed a distinct class of jurists to serve as judges. Although seven years of peaceful Nazi governance had created a pool of such candidates, the demands of wartime military courts and the prohibition against Jews practising law in Germany limited the availability of qualified judges for the HA SS-Gericht.

As a result, Scharfe had no choice but to select jurists based on technical criteria. He ended up accepting potential judges from the SA, SS-VT, the armed forces, members of Nazi-sponsored organisations, and former employees from both state and private sectors. Initially, Scharfe excluded qualified lawyers from the Polizei who had not affiliated with the pre-war Allgemeine SS. Among the 30 active judges recruited to the HA SS-Gericht in the summer of 1939, a small group - including Dr Hans Brauße, Rudolf von Brocke, Rudolf Hoffmann, Wilhelm Schultz, and Wolfgang Wetzling - had not sought prior membership in the Allgemeine SS. Despite this omission, these individuals held senior leadership positions in the first courts and judged cases according to Heinrich Himmler's brand of Nazi law.

To meet his requirements and ensure the ideological reliability of newly recruited judges, potential candidates gathered at the SS-Führerschule in Dachau for lectures in early May 1939. SS-Sturmbannführer Fritz Grau (1890), a Ministerialrat in the Reichsjustizministerium, was assigned to re-orient them. Grau emphasised that these candidates needed to abandon their previous legal training. He taught them to question everything instead of accepting information at face value, focusing on the nuances of military law while stressing the importance of adhering to the Nazi worldview. He also outlined the political mission of the SS ethos and encouraged the potential judges to see themselves as educators for leaders and troops. From 5 August 1939, Grau continued this orientation for over eight days, instructing the potential judges to commit fully to the future SS jurisdiction.

After the outbreak of the war, the competition to attract qualified legal personnel intensified. To recruit suitable judges from the SS-VT, Polizei, or the armed forces, General Scharfe and his senior leaders offered transfers to their service as active or reserve judges, regardless of the candidates' service rank. In a notable move, the HA SS-Gericht addressed the shortage of available lawyers by appointing candidates as judges with the service rank of Oberscharführer. These individuals performed many of the

same tasks as senior judges. NCO judges fulfilled their responsibilities until they completed their probation period; at this point, the HA SS-Gericht arranged their promotion to leadership ranks. To complicate matters, the SS-Personalhauptamt (Personnel Main Office), responsible for overseeing personnel issues related to all SS members, restricted the number of qualified lawyers Paul Scharfe could recruit from the troops as a judge. In addition, the SS-PHA insisted on a system of reciprocation, requiring the exchange of fit staff for those who were wounded or incapacitated. As a result, the general had little choice but to recruit jurists born outside the 1938 borders, known as Volksdeutsche, as well as military retirees and Polizei who were members of the Allgemeine SS before the war.

In mid-1943, during a period of rapid expansion and recruitment within the SS judiciary, SS-Unterscharführer d. Res. Bruno Wille was assigned for his orientation to the Stab HA SS-Gericht in München. Before beginning his practical training with Neumünster-born SS-Sturmabführer Volkmar Burmeister (1908) on 1 July 1943, the Chefrichter at the SS- u. Pol.-Ger. XXIII, Salzburg, Wille's superiors permitted him to take a leave of absence. As was customary, the HA SS-Gericht granted staff designated for deployment at the front with Feldgericht (mobile tribunal) a short leave of absence. Bruno stayed in Salzburg until he went on home leave on 1 September 1943. The SS-PHA acknowledged Wille's qualifications in the SS judiciary by promoting him from SS-Oberscharführer d. Res. to SS-Untersturmführer d. Res. on 9 November, 1943.

In late 1942, the SS-Führungshauptamt, which was the operational headquarters of the Waffen-SS, issued orders to expand the motorised Begleit-Bataillions Reichsführer-SS into the SS-Sturmbrigade Reichsführer-SS under the leadership of SS-Obersturmbannführer Karl Gesele (1912-68), primarily using ethnic German recruits. Establishing this fighting formation on 23 February 1943, its troops trained in Ostpreußen before moving to the Truppenübungsplatz in Rennes, eventually deploying to Corsica in mid-1943. When the SS-FHA decided to expand the SS-Sturmbrigade RF-SS into a divisional-sized force, the formation relocated to the Italian mainland, and was activated under the command of SS-Gruppenführer Max Simon (1899-61) on 3 October 1943.

Recognising the necessity for a Feldgericht for this new division, the HA SS-Gericht ordered Wille to Corsica on 3 October 1943 to serve as the deputy to fellow Austrian Brigadierrichter and SS-Hauptstur-

mführer Dr Alfred Sammer (1906), who had received orders to leave the Stab HA SS-Gericht and establish and take charge of this tribunal on 15 August 1943. Wille's role at this new service post was to assist Sammer at what the judiciary described as the SS-Panzergranadier-Brigade Reichsführer-SS.

On 25 August 1943, SS-Unterscharführer und Beurkundungsunterführer Karl-Heinz Treichel left the SS- u. Pol.-Ger. VIII, Prag, to join Sammer's command. Treichel remained with this tribunal until 3 January 1945, when he reported to Fürth bei Nürnberg-born SS-Obersturmbannführer Werner Pfau (1910), the Armeerichter for the 6. Panzerarmee, fighting in the Ardennes. SS-Obersturmbannführer Christian Jochum (1911) succeeded Pfau as Armeerichter on 15 January 1945. On 4 February 1944, Pforzheim-born jurist SS-Unterscharführer d. Res. Arnold Mau (1921) left the chancellery of the SS- u. Pol.-Ger. XVI, Riga, for the Feldgericht of the 16. SS-Panzer-Grenadier Division Reichsführer-SS. Once the brigade had converted into the 16. SS-Panzergranadier-Division RF-SS, Wille became its Divisionstabsrichter (division staff judge). On 20 April 1944, the personnel office of the HA SS-Gericht successfully persuaded the SS-PHA to promote Wille to SS-Obersturmführer d. Res.

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler on 20 July 1944, at his headquarters in Ostpreußen, Hitler replaced Generaloberst Friedrich Fromm (1888-45) with Heinrich Himmler as the Oberbefehlshaber der Ersatzheer (Commander of the Replacement Army). This military organisation was responsible for recruiting and training new troops. In this capacity, Himmler was accountable for tens of thousands of military convicts and tasked with reviewing court judgments and death sentences against uncommitted officers and troops within the Ersatzheer and the newly formed Volks-Grenadier-Divisionen. His authority was further expanded on 2 August 1944, when Hitler appointed Himmler as a Reichsbevollmächtigter (Reich Plenipotentiary), granting him the responsibility of reforming the armed forces. Although Adolf Hitler may have had confidence in Heinrich Himmler's ability to manage the legal affairs of the Ersatzheer, this task proved to be beyond his capabilities.

Overwhelmed by his new responsibilities, the SS leader appointed SS-Standartenführer Dr Hans Brauße (1908) as his deputy for Ersatzheer affairs on 16 August 1944. The war's end was just days away when Adolf Hitler stripped the Reichsführer-SS of all his responsibilities regarding disciplinary matters in the Ersatzheer on 27 April 1945 and transferred

these powers back to the Wehrmacht Heer. Recognising the potential of military convicts, Himmler implemented a policy in the autumn of 1944 that allowed recruiting Zuchthaus (hard labour) inmates to serve with SS- Sonderregiment. This policy also enabled the commutation of death sentences for certain military felons considered suitable for front-line duty. After reviewing the records of hard labour and life-long sentences inmates, Himmler and his judges selected around 500 individuals to fight with the SS-Sonderregiment in Warsaw, a probation unit led by the notorious SS-Oberführer Oskar Dirlewanger (1895-45). The considerable influx of military paroles, along with a continuous flow of volunteers from concentration camps, enabled Dirlewanger - who had by then was notorious for assaulting young girls, committing racially motivated crimes, extorting businesses for protection, and devastating numerous villages in Belorussia - to establish an SS-Sturmbrigade consisting of two regiments.

What would become the SS-Sonderbrigade Dirlewanger was established in the third week of March 1940 to allow convicted German and Austrian poachers to leave prison and fulfil their military service requirements according to the same terms and conditions as non- German Legionaries. On 15 June 1940, the first group of paroled felons undertook training as sharpshooters of the newly established Wilddieb-Kommando Oranienburg (Poacher Command). By September 1940, this probation unit was renamed Sonderkommando Dirlewanger. To maintain military cohesion and ensure that soldiers followed orders, Dirlewanger, acting as a Disziplinarvorgesetzte (disciplinary superior), imposed punishments on non-commissioned officers and other ranks referring to the Disziplinarstraf-und Beschwerdeordnung der SS (Disciplinary and Complaints Regulations), or SS-DBO, for offences not covered by criminal law, following § 16a KStVO – the punishment guidance for disciplinary superiors. Those leaders and probationers who committed offences beyond Dirlewanger's judicial competence were subject to prosecution before the nearest SS static tribunal. After evaluating his misconduct, character, and past behaviour, the DBO allowed disciplinary superiors like Dirlewanger to impose punishments that ranged from reprimands to restrictions on privileges. The DBO reserved short periods of detention or more extended imprisonment for probationers for whom a lesser sentence would have little impact (which could be served in the Arrestgebäude of KL Sachsenhausen). In cases of severe disciplinary breaches - excluding offences for which regulations prohibited imprisonment - the HA SS-Gericht man-

dated a minimum sentence of one month of Gefängnis (prison) for offenders or a period of detention lasting no longer than two to three weeks.

In the latter half of 1942, the Reichsführer-SS instructed the concentration camp commandants to offer prisoners the chance to volunteer for frontline service with the Sonderregiment in Belorussia. As commander of this unit of criminal parolees, Dirlewanger was solely responsible for the disciplinary punishment of men recruited from the concentration camps. In July 1943, Heinrich Himmler began selecting disgraced SS leaders for parole to join this formation and encouraged his courts-martial to convert the Zuchthaus judgements of SS and Polizei criminals to terms of Gefängnis, allowing these felons to leave SS-Straflagern and civil goals to undertake frontline service with Oskar Dirlewanger.

In response to the concerns of senior judges of the HA SS-Gericht that the leadership of the SS-Sturmbrigade Dirlewanger was effectively failing to supervise the rehabilitation of probationers from the Polizei, Waffen-SS, and the Wehrmacht Heer, in mid-October 1944, the Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler issued orders to SS-Obergruppenführer Franz Breithaupt (1880-45), the Chef des HA SS-Gericht, to send a judge to the brigade in Slovakia to assess the situation and report on his findings. When it was discovered that the Chefrichter of the SS- u. Pol.-Ger. XXX. Kopenhagen, Elberfeld-born SS-Richter und Obersturmbannführer Horst Kaminski (1908), was unavailable for this duty - the preferred choice of SS-Oberführer Oskar Dirlewanger, who knew the judge from his previous deployment in Belorussia - General Franz Breithaupt ordered Wille in late November 1944 to audit the Sonderbrigade. He was not assigned to this formation as its Brigaderichter.

After the war, Wille recounted how this assignment came about and what he discovered about the brigade:

I was the second judge with the provost court of the 16. SS Armoured Infantry Division, when in November 1944, I received from my superior at the Hauptamt SS- Gericht the order to transfer to the Storm Brigade Dirlewanger. Before that, I only knew this unit from hearsay as being a poacher rehabilitation battalion, whose only connection with the SS was that the commander Dirlewanger had been admitted into the troops of the SS because the brigade was directly under Himmler personally, but not in his capacity as Reichsführer-SS. I could also not obtain precise information regarding this outfit from the



Dr Oskar Dirlwanger

Hauptamt SS-Gericht. Standartenführer Burmeister, the head of the probation department, told me that the Storm Brigade, on special order by Himmler, also contained, to a limited extent, convicted SS riflemen on probation and that he was sending me there to handle the rehabilitation cases of these riflemen, as up to now cooperation between the Hauptamt SS-Gericht and Dirlwanger could not be achieved in this respect.

I learned from the chief of the Hauptamt SS-Gericht, SS-Obergruppenführer Breithaupt, that an SS court, to which I could have attached as SS judge, did not exist with the Storm Brigade, that instead, the nearest SS and Police Court was competent to deal with new cases of SS members and former SS members. In contrast, for all other brigade members, the commander SS-Oberführer Dirlwanger had supreme authority over life and death, granted to him by the Reichsführer in a 'secret' order issued as 'confidential'. The brigade, as such, therefore, is not subordinated at all to SS and Police Jurisdiction. Since the

Hauptamt SS-Gericht believed to have cause to suspect irregularities, I was directed to the brigade to study the legal situation and to persuade the commander, Dirlwanger, to give up his absolute right over life and death or at least to limit it to very few of the severest cases, and that he should request the Reichsführer-SS to establish a regular provost court at the brigade within the framework of the SS jurisdiction. The Hauptamt could not, because of the present order, establish a provost court on its own, nor did I have any jurisdictional or even prosecuting authority in the described position with the brigade. Considering the favoured position that Dirlwanger enjoyed with the Reichsführer-SS, I should act with the greatest discretion.

Forearmed to carry out his mission with the utmost caution, Wille arrived at Dirlwanger's headquarters on 2 December 1944 in Deviaky, in Western Slovakia. This unit of probationers and paroled concentration camp prisoners was finishing an anti-partisan sweep and preparing to deploy to the frontline at Ipolysag in Hungary. Upon discovering the atrocious state of discipline within the unit, Wille felt that he could not justify acting slowly and discreetly in what he described as matters of 'humanity and justice.' He recalled: The administration of justice in the brigade was shocking, and no SS or Police Court received any submissions of evidential reports. Instead, Dirlwanger handled everything himself by far exceeding his authority over life and death, regardless of whether he dealt with men with or without previous criminal records, with former concentration camp inmates or with members of the Armed Forces or the SS. There were only two sentences, corporal punishment or death, as command of the entire unit was built upon whipping. Dirlwanger announced the sentences after cursory insufficient investigations and then carried them out without giving the accused a decent chance to defend himself.

On his third day in Deviaky, Wille encountered the brigade's notorious leader, SS-Oberführer Oskar Dirlwanger, and brought what he described as the 'deplorable conditions' to his attention. Listening to Wille's complaints and suggestions for improvement, Dirlwanger declared his intention to seek authority from Heinrich Himmler to manage all rehabilitation decisions. These matters were typically the responsibility of the HA SS-Gericht Amt III. This office was responsible for supervising SS prisons, handling pardons, rehabilitation issues, and repleves and ensuring the implementation of sen-

tences. Wille later recalled:

The unit was neither its composition nor in its leadership an SS unit, few wore an SS uniform, Dirlwanger regulates all matters concerning him directly with Himmler, or his intimate friend Gruppenführer Berger, who did everything for him. The application of justice in the brigade was shocking, Dirlwanger handles this himself and responsible for the discipline of the entire unit, he based this only on beating. When I pointed Dirlwanger that what happened at the brigade, he threatened murder, I was then transferred for reasons of my own personal safety, to another place.

Wille wrote this after the war about his bruising experience with Oskar Dirlwanger. Dissatisfied with Dirlwanger's response to his findings, Wille took the opportunity during a visit to SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr Erich Klahre (1910) at the SS-Gericht des Deutsch Befehlshabers in der Slowakei (Preßburg) to write and submit a critical report to his superiors. Here, Wille learned that the local HS-SuPF, SS-Obergruppenführer Hermann Höfle (1911-62), had already complained to the SS leadership regarding Dirlwanger's behaviour. In January 1945, Wille met with the SS-Richter beim RF-SS, SS-Oberführer Horst Bender (1905), an East Prussian-born judge, to discuss his findings. In this role, Bender assisted the Reichsführer-SS in his Gerichtsherr duties. As high justice of the SS jurisdiction, Himmler was responsible for determining the legality of sentences. Horst Bender and his small team of case workers provided the SS leader with legal opinions to guide him in his decision making.

During his discussion with Bender, Wille emphasised this unique formation's unusual circumstances and the need for changes. Due to threats made by Dirlwanger during their meeting, which posed risks to his safety, Wille was not selected to take charge of the SS- Sonderbrigade tribunal and in January 1945 returned to his former position at the RF-SS Feldgericht. On 30 January 1945, Wille's superiors arranged for his promotion to SS-Hauptsturmführer d. Res. After reading Wille's report, Horst Bender convinced Heinrich Himmler to assign a judge to the Feldgericht for the SS-Sturmbrigade and selected Horst Kaminski to restore order within Dirlwanger's command. On 15 January 1945, the HA SS-Gericht ordered the experienced judge Kaminski to take command of the Feldgericht of the 36. Waffen- Grenadier-Division der SS on the Eastern Front. At that time, this division served as the

primary repository for nearly all military and civilian convicts accepting front probation, and it absorbed recruits from the Bewährungsbataillon, Arbeitsbataillon, SS and military gaols, and concentrations camps. These individuals participated in the desperate final battles to defend the Oder Front.

However, when Kaminski received this news, the judge decided against leaving his family in Copenhagen and avoided accepting the challenging assignment of serving as Divisionsrichter for the 36. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS. As a result of Kaminski's intransigence, another senior SS judge took on this role in late February 1945. Interestingly, despite the activation of a Feldgericht, on 24 April 1945, SS-Sturmbannführer Dr Konrad Morgen (1909-82), Chefrichter of the SS- u. Pol.-Ger. XV, Bad Warmbrunn, punished the drivers of two omnibuses from the 36. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS for causing a road traffic accident.

In January 1945, the 16. SS-Panzergranadier-Division RF-SS, also known as the Auffrischungsguppe 13. SS-Division and the Ergänzungs-Staffel 13. SS-Panzergranadier-Division - code names used by the formation to confuse enemy intelligence during their movement to Hungary, assembled in the Nagykanizsa area. On 6 March 1945, Operation Frühlingserwachen, the German offensive on Lake Balaton, began - the RF-SS initiated its attack on Kaposvár from Nagybjom but encountered a stalemate against the deeply entrenched Russian defence system. After advancing just four kilometres and reaching Kisbjom, the division left the front line and moved to Marczali. From there, it prepared to launch an attack along Lake Balaton.

Alfred Sammer remained in charge of the RF-SS Feldgericht until 1 March 1945, when he received orders to transfer to the SS- u. Pol.-Ger. VII, Wien, where he succeeded SS- Sturmbannführer Wilhelm Schultz (1907) as Chefrichter. The HA SS-Gericht designated Bruno Wille the RF-SS Divisionsrichter in Sammer's absence.

On 9 May 1945, remnants of the 16. SS-Panzergranadier-Division RF-SS surrendered to American soldiers near Klagenfurt and west of Graz in Austria.

After surviving the war, Wille surrendered to US Army troops. Detained as a prisoner of war, he was questioned by the Counter Intelligence Corps of the US 7th Army at the former Außenlager Bad Ischl, Oberösterreich. On 28 June 1946, he prepared a brief appraisal of the SS-Sturmbrigade Dirlwanger for the Nuremberg Tribunal. The Austrian authorities prosecuted Bruno Wille on suspicion of high treason but released him from internment when the court determined his level of culpability regarding

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war crimes from 1933 to 1938. Once the Bezirkshauptmannschaft Gmunden withdrew its objections, the Präsidentschaftskanzlei approved Wille's denazification on 23 November 1948, allowing him to work as a Rechtsanwalt. He continued working in this profession until 4 April 1975.

His wife, Lotte, passed away at the age of 70 on 20 April 1989. Four months later, on 28 August 1989, Bruno Wille died and was laid to rest alongside her in the Stadtfriedhof Bad Ischl.

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Spruchkammerakte - Österreichischen Staatsarchiv: Bundesminister für Inneres.

Dr Bruno Wille Nuremberg Affidavit dated 28 June 1946.

Stuart Emmet

III. (germanic) SS-Panzer-Korps, Vol. 2: 1944–1945

This volume chronicles the brutal battles on the Eastern Front, from the retreat through the Baltic states to the final, desperate defense of Berlin in 1945. Based on new sources and decades of veteran interviews, it offers:

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the serious historian.**







The SS School System From Junkerschulen to Specialized Training

For most of us, when SS education is mentioned, we immediately think of the SS-Junkerschulen in Bad Tölz and Braunschweig. These schools were certainly an important part of the various stages of officer training, which we will discuss shortly.

However, before these schools existed, the first leadership training held by the SS took place in Munich, even before Hitler came to power. The SS placed great importance on the training of its soldiers and officers. What were the requirements to attend officer training with the SS? One of the most important prerequisites was that the candidate had absolutely no registered convictions. There were a few exceptions, but usually a candidate's prior life in the SS was entirely free of convictions.

The SS also established a new standard in officer recruitment. For the first time in any country or organization, even ordinary farm boys or sons of industrial workers could become officers. Previously, in the Wehrmacht, only members of the nobility or upper-class families were considered for officer positions. This was revolutionary and later influenced the Wehrmacht to change its own guidelines for officer eligibility.

One year after Hitler came to power, the SS-Junkerschule in Bad Tölz opened. This school was specifically designed to educate officers and set a

higher standard than other officer schools. Even after the war, Western Allied officers expressed admiration for the school's facilities. Although the first course at Tölz could not use all the buildings, as they were still under construction, the students were temporarily housed in a nearby castle. Nevertheless, the courses conducted before the war were called the Friedens-Junkerlehrgang, and they lasted for over a year. The first candidates who arrived in Tölz in 1934 took their officer exams in April 1935.

A year later, the second SS-Junkerschule opened in Braunschweig. This school was dear to the heart of the later SS-Obergruppenführer Paul Hauser, who designed and established the school. Although Braunschweig did not have all the facilities available in Bad Tölz, the school used other buildings to conduct its training. The SS-Junkerschule in Braunschweig was destroyed during a bombing raid in the autumn of 1944. The remaining courses were relocated to other schools, primarily in Posen-Treskau.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, the courses were shortened, though they continued to be held as full-year courses between 1940 and 1941. After this period, the courses were shortened initially to six months, and in the final years of the war, the courses lasted just over four months. The remaining time for students was spent as SS-Standartenober-



junker at a unit to complete their training. Were the SS-Junkerschulen alone sufficient for training? Absolutely not. The SS invested heavily in various training courses, some well-known and others less so. In addition to the Junkerschulen, there was the Nachrichtenschule der SS in Metz, which trained officers and non-commissioned officers in signal troops technology. Graduates of this school were designated NO (Nachrichtenoffizier, Signal Officer). There was also the Kraftfahrtechnische Schule der SS in Vienna, which trained officers and

soldiers in vehicle-related roles, including mechanics. This school also trained TFKs (Technische Führer Kraftfahr, Technical Vehicle Officers). The SS Administration School, initially located at SS-Standort Dachau and later moved to SS-Standort Arolsen in 1944, trained NCOs and officers in administrative roles. Later, it also trained officers exclusively, essentially becoming a Junkerschule. Officers trained here were given the designation IVa, indicating they were active administrators.

Fahr and Reiterschule Göttingen

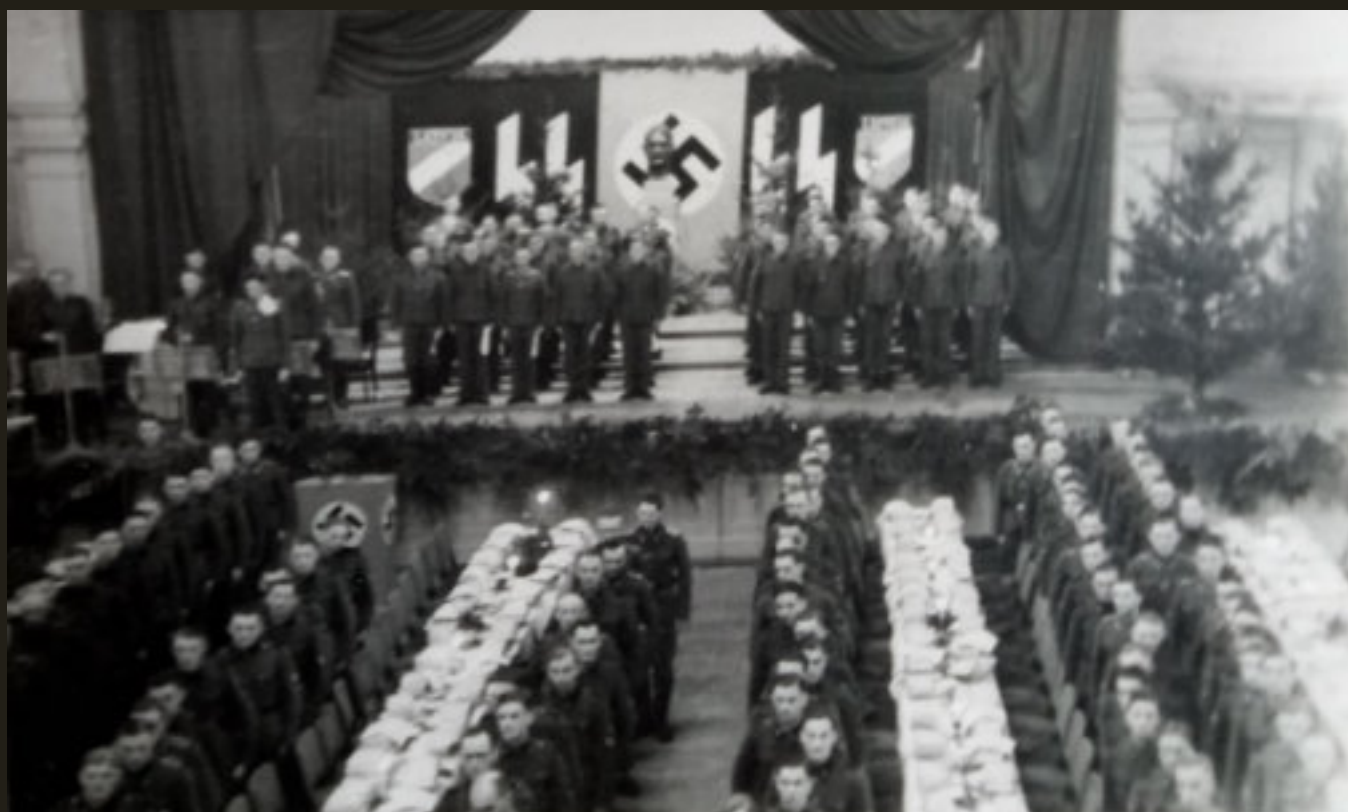




Other less-known schools included the SS Cooking School in Dachau, which trained personnel to cook for SS soldiers, and the School for Weapons Technology, also in Dachau, which trained NCOs and officers in weapons technology. Graduates received the designation TFW (Technische Führer Waffen, Technical Officer for Weapons). In Oranienburg, just north of Berlin, there was the SS Interpretation School, where foreign volunteers were trained as interpreters, and Germans were also

trained to assist during interrogations at the front. Oranienburg also housed KL Sachsenhausen, the first concentration camp, where future commandants and Schutzhaftlagerführer were trained. Additionally, there was a school for handling dogs.

Non-commissioned officer training was conducted in schools such as Radolfzell, SS-UFS Lauenburg, SS-UFS Lublinitz, SS-UFS Laibach, and SS-UFS Posen-Treskau, which prepared future NCOs for the SS and Waffen-SS. Before the war, the SS



maintained dedicated Sports Schools in Sternberg and Treptow. Physical training was central to SS ideology, and Junkerschule candidates were required to engage in activities such as boxing, fencing, and horse riding. Later, more sports schools were established, including one in Prague.

Medical training for SS personnel was provided in Berlin and later moved to Graz in the early 1940s, becoming the *Ärztliche Akademie der SS*. Even foreign doctors had to complete this training to qualify as SS medical officers. A notable graduate was Dr. Erwin (Ding) Schüler, later known for Eugen Kogon's book on KL Buchenwald.

In addition to these schools, there were *Ausbildungs- und Ersatzabteilungen (SS-AuE.Abt.)* across Germany and occupied Europe, responsible for training *Waffen-SS* recruits. For example, the *SS-Kradschützen AuE.Abt.* in Ellwangen trained motorcycle and reconnaissance units, while armored schools coordinated with army training locations in Wünsdorf, Pütlos, Bergen, and Fallingbostal. Pre-war SS recruit regiments, such as the 14th *SS-Totenkopf Standard* stationed at *SS-Standort Weimar-Buchenwald*, also contributed to training.

In occupied Czechoslovakia, artillery schools existed in Beneschau and Glatz, a *StuG (Sturmgeschütz)* and *Panzerjäger* school in Janowitz, and a pioneer school in Hradischko. The first pioneer school was established in Dresden in the mid-1930s.

After the outbreak of war, schools were also established for wounded or disabled soldiers, including those who had lost limbs or vision. The *Junkerschule*



SS men in training at the High Mountain School (Hochgebirgsschule).

Below: Officer candidates from one of the Bad Tölz classes are conducting a field exercise





Gottlob Berger visiting the SS-School in Sennheim.

in Tölz even offered courses for these individuals, preparing them for officer positions and administrative roles.

By the end of the war, the demand for officers had increased dramatically due to losses and the expansion of the SS. New Junkerschulen were created, including SS-Junkerschule Prague and Kienschlag, previously a Panzergrenadier school. Various other schools across branches were tasked with officer

training to fill these gaps. Plans existed for a Junkerschule in the Baltic states for Baltic and other foreign volunteers, but this never materialized due to the course of the war. Additional schools included the mounted troop school in Göttingen (SS-Reit- und Fahrschule Göttingen), mountain schools for SS-Gebirgsjäger in the Austrian Alps, including the Hochgebirgsschule, and the SS Music School affiliated with the Braunschweig Junkerschule.





Tactics course at the SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz.

SS training areas were established in Dachau and other SS-Standort locations, as well as AuE units. Notable recruitment areas included Debica (for Scandinavian volunteers) and Sennheim (France) and Graz.

The SD (Sicherheitsdienst) maintained a school in Bernau (Brno) for future SD officers, while the police had a school in Köpernick, just outside Berlin.

In conclusion, the SS placed great emphasis on personnel training. Although the war eventually forced course durations to shorten, and many recruits received inadequate training, experienced soldiers often served as mentors. This article scratches only the surface, as fully documenting the SS training system would require several books.

Georg Schwab



The entrance to the SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz.



SS on Trial

Central Office of the State Justice Administrations

The Holocaust genocide against European Jewry by the Nazi regime has been and is the subject of in-depth international research. Less well known are the extensive efforts carried out over sixty-five years by German prosecutors, judges and criminal police officers at the federal agency "Zentrale Stelle" in Ludwigsburg for the coordination of preliminary investigations and prosecutions of the mass murderers behind the Holocaust. A preliminary assessment shows both successes and failures in the complicated legal processing of the mass crimes of the Holocaust.

After Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party seized power in Germany on January 30, 1933, the deadly violence of Hitler's dictatorship against political and ideological opponents escalated step by step. This occurred on a broad front based on National Socialism's political, racial, and religious images of the enemy. To understand the character and dynamics of National Socialism, we should view the seizure of power in 1933 not merely as a political transfer of power but as a socially comprehensive revolution of unprecedented radicalism and intensity.

The rapid consolidation of Hitler's regime was accompanied by a continued centralization of, above all, the German police and security services, with their important executive powers. At the same time,

a legislative and personnel policy alignment in the Nazi spirit of the state and municipal administration, including the judiciary and the prosecution service, took place.

Under Heinrich Himmler's dynamic SS (Schutzstaffeln), the dreaded concentration camp system was established and rapidly expanded. In accordance with the increasingly radicalized anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich, the way was gradually prepared for gas chambers and crematoria in the The Holocaust of European Jewry. This process was intensified by Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. In Hitler's and Himmler's ideological world, this campaign was not a normal interstate armed conflict but an ideologically motivated war of race and extermination of an almost apocalyptic nature in which, among other things, the "Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia" was to be eliminated. The mass murder of European Jews by the SS and other bodies and the planned establishment of a Greater Germanic Empire in Western and Northern Europe in combination with a colonial Lebensraum ("living space") in the east as far as the Urals for the new racial elite, constituted different sides of the same coin in Hitler's and Himmler's worldview.

It was this incomprehensible cluster of mass



Former SS-Obersturmführer Willi Schatz, who was acquitted during the Auschwitz trials of 1963–1965 due to lack of evidence.

murders, often already camouflaged during the war years as “anti-partisan operations in the East” or “euthanasia”, that the Allied occupation authorities after the end of the war and then the judicial authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany would be confronted with. In addition to six million murdered people of Jewish descent, the Nazis’ “Action T 4” alone resulted in over 200,000 murdered disabled German citizens.

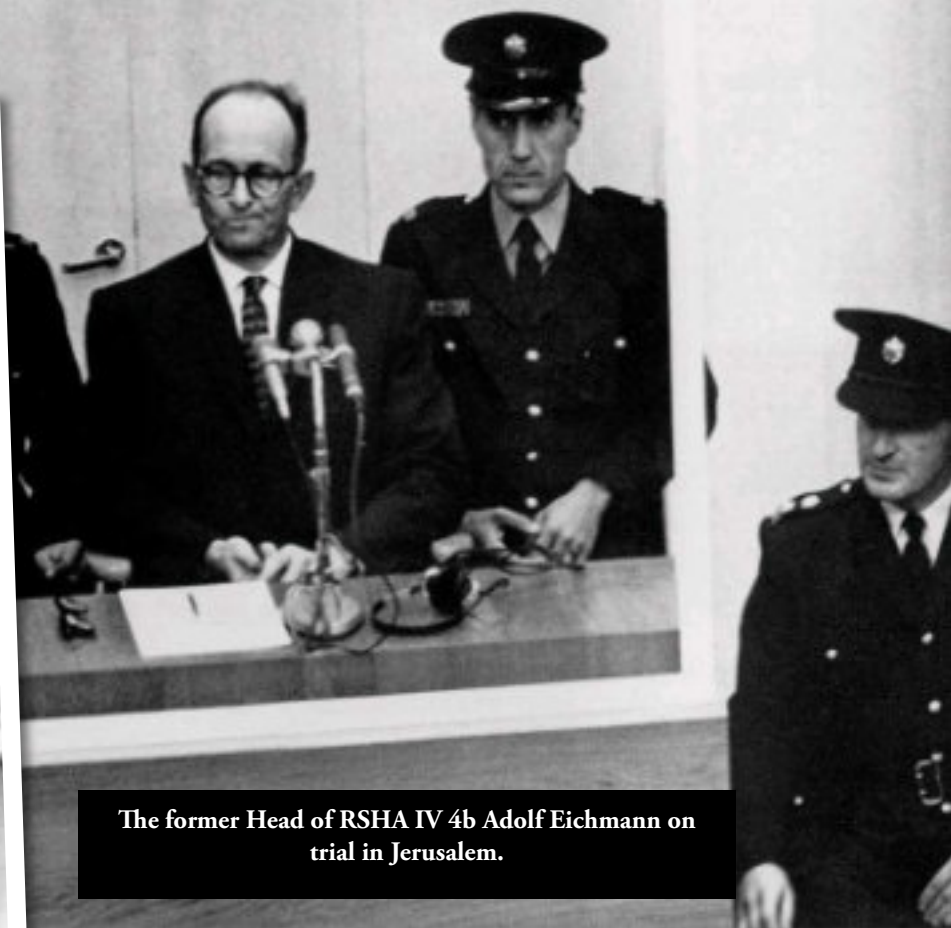
The collapse of the Third Reich and its capitulation on 8 May 1945 meant that the remaining Germany was divided into four Allied occupation zones, which until 1949 were administered by the nominal victorious powers, the USA, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and France.

At the same time, the International Military Tribunal was established in Nuremberg. What was not realized was that the Nuremberg trials and several subsequent Allied trials only skimmed the surface. Many mass crimes committed by the SS so-called task forces in the East and in the extermination camps would remain unsolved for decades.

There were several reasons for this. Many German archives had been deliberately burned by the Nazis before the end of the war, destroyed during Allied bombing raids, or seized by the Soviet NKVD and the Western Allies. The German legal system was in shambles; millions of Germans had died in the war, been imprisoned, or had been expelled from the eastern German provinces. The immediate post-war period, die Stunde Null, was dominated by the German population's struggle to find food, work, and shelter for their survival. Interest in the Allied trials in Nuremberg or in bringing their own mass murderers to justice was almost nonexistent among the broad masses. The German people's massive repression of any personal guilt for Hitler and

Nazism's throwing of Germany and Europe into a factual and moral abyss created collective denial mechanisms that would survive well into the 1960s. The German historian Volker Ullrich has summarized this phenomenon as follows: “For the immeasurable suffering they had inflicted on the peoples of the conquered and occupied countries, most Germans could muster no interest and absolutely no compassion.”

The Cold War meant that a large number of former Nazis, as well as lawyers, doctors, police officers and even former Gestapo officers who had been charged with the Holocaust, resumed leading positions in the administration and the judicial system. The government era under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer from 1949 to 1963 was characterized by restorative policies and a marked unwillingness to come to terms with Germany's charged past. The unexpected West German paradigm shift to more energetically investigate and prosecute the Third Reich's mass crimes from the late 1950s was almost a coincidence. In 1956, the former police chief of Memel, *SS-Oberführer* Bernhard Fischer-Schweder, initiated an employment dispute against the state of Baden-Württemberg for reinstatement as police chief. The authorities became suspicious of Fischer-Schweder when it emerged that he had been living under a false identity after 1945. A closer investigation by West German police revealed that during the initial stages of Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in late summer 1941, Fischer-Schweder, as an SS and police officer, had been head of the *Einatzkommando Tilsit*, one of the mobile murder commands behind the German Eastern Front which was directly subordinate to the RSHA in Berlin and had strict orders “from the highest” to liquidate en masse all Jews and the Red Army's political commis-



The former Head of RSHA IV 4b Adolf Eichmann on trial in Jerusalem.

sars

After reasonable suspicion of mass murder in the Latvian-Lithuanian border regions in the summer-autumn of 1941, Bernhard Fischer-Schweder was arrested and sentenced in 1958 by the Ulm City Court to ten years in prison. The trial came as a shock not only to the West German public, but above all served as an important reminder to the young Federal Republic's political and legal elite that a large number of National Socialist mass crimes, primarily committed in Eastern Europe, had never been prosecuted and tried.

That realization was a significant factor in the establishment in 1958 of the federal coordinating special authority for the preliminary prosecution of NS crimes, which was located in the town of Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart. The new authority was called the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen*, and its first federal directive was limited to initiating preliminary investigations into National Socialist mass crimes committed in places outside the territory of the Federal Republic. This primarily referred to the SS *Einsatzgruppen* in Poland and the Soviet Union, as well as the concentration and extermination camps in the east.

The Central Office in Ludwigsburg does not have the status of a regular prosecutor's office and therefore does not have any executive powers such as ar-

rest and search warrants or to bring charges. Instead, the authority has an investigative and coordinating role by systematically inventorying and evaluating all relevant German and foreign archives from an evidentiary point of view, as well as identifying various Nazi crimes, including perpetrators who are still alive. Based on the suspects' geographical residence in the Federal Republic, the Central Office then hands over its material for more detailed police interrogations and prosecutions to the respective local German prosecutor's offices.

In 1964, its mandate was extended to also cover Nazi crimes that occurred on what later became West German territory. This important addition made it possible for the so-called desk murderers at the Third Reich's Berlin-based Reich ministries, party and SS headquarters, including the all-important Reich Security Office (*RSHA*), to be subject to preliminary investigations by the *Zentrale Stelle*. The establishment of this special agency in 1958 was a significant driving force in significantly increasing the pace of prosecution of the mass crimes of the Holocaust.

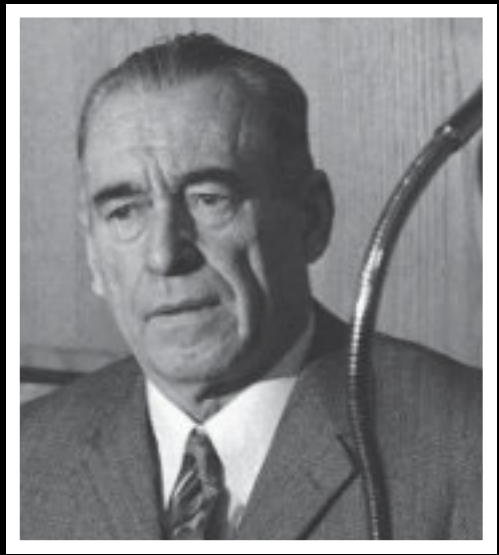
In addition to the Ulm trial in 1958, another almost catalytic event contributed to a West German realization that something radical had to be done from the point of view of the rule of law to compensate for previous neglect. It was Israel's spectacu-

lar kidnapping in Argentina in 1960 of the former SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, one of the SS's leading desk assassins in the RSHA, who had fled to South America, with his subsequent trial, death sentence and execution in Jerusalem.

Prosecutors and criminal investigators at the Zentrale Stelle have described how the establishment of their authority in Ludwigsburg met with several negative reactions from both local authorities and residents. When the former head of Hitler's Praetorian Guard Leibstandarte in the Waffen-SS, *SS-Oberstgruppenführer* (Colonel General) Sepp Dietrich, was buried in Ludwigsburg in 1966, nearly 5,000 former SS men attended the ceremony. Afterwards, they were allowed to parade past the Zentrale Stelle offices and loudly chant: Und euch nehmen wir einmal auch! ("And we'll get you too someday!").

A complication in the postwar period was that several wanted mass murderers lived under false names both in West Germany and abroad. This was facilitated by the fact that many German population registration archives were destroyed during the Allied bombing raids or during the final battles in 1945. Many senior SS officials were provided with false identity papers by the Reich Security Main Office before the collapse of the Third Reich in 1945 and were able, especially in South America and the Middle East, to successfully avoid extradition to the Federal Republic of Germany. The most notorious cases have been Walter Rauff (Chile), who in 1941–42 was responsible in the RSHA for the construction of the mobile gas vans; the camp doctor in Auschwitz-Birkenau Josef Mengele (Paraguay) and Eichmann's collaborator Alois Brunner (Syria).

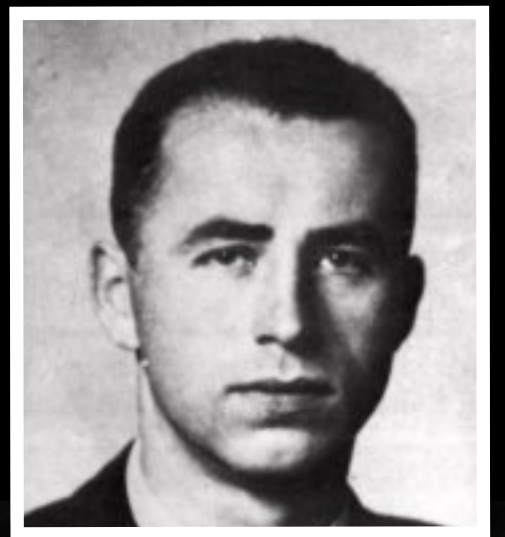
In some cases, it has been possible to extradite suspects to West Germany for prosecution and trial: for example, SS lawyer Dr. Gerhard Bohne ("Aktion T4") from Argentina; camp commander Franz Stangl from Brazil; concentration camp doctor Dr. Horst Schumann from Ghana; and the female SS guard chief at the Majdanek extermination camp, Hermine Ryan-Braunsteiner from Canada. While the investigators in Ludwigsburg had relatively easy access to evidence seized at the end of the war in Soviet and Polish archives, the East German authorities throughout the GDR's existence consistently refused to hand over important archives of SS origin. The reason was that the civilian foreign intelligence service of the East German security police (Stasi) unscrupulously exploited this material to blackmail West German citizens accused of spying for the GDR. After the fall of the Wall and the dissolution of the GDR in 1989–90, the Zentrale Stelle finally



Franz Stangl
Former Kdr of Treblinka



Walter Rauff
The inventor of the gas waggons



Alois Brunner
Adolf Eichmann's right hand

SS on Trial

gained access to the Stasi's extensive wartime SS archives.

A long-forgotten complex was the Third Reich's discrimination and later mass murder of primarily German and European Roma. The fact that the Allied trials in Nuremberg excluded these crimes was probably due to the fact that the previous "selection" of Roma and their deportation in March 1943 to Auschwitz was not carried out by the Gestapo but by the Kripo, the German criminal police, where the deportations and murders of Roma were camouflaged as a "police matter".

After partly animated debates in the Bundestag in the 1960s, the statute of limitations for murder was suspended and completely abolished in 1979. However, the statute of limitations had already been set in 1960 for murders committed before 8 May 1945. The majority of the suspected perpetrators of the Holocaust can be divided into two groups. One con-

sists of the often senior officials in the RSHA who formulated (Befehlsgeber) or at the same level communicated (Befehlsmittler) the deportation decisions to the extermination camps. The other group was the "near-death" perpetrators (tatnahe Täter): SS men or police officers in the execution squads; the personnel of the extermination camps or the drivers of the mobile gas vans.

End of Part I

Lennart Westberg

Member of the Swedish Military History Commission. The original of the article "SS on Trial" was published in the Swedish Journal of Law (*Svensk Juristtidning*) 2024:11.

Archive Research!

R. u. S.-Fragebogen

(Den Frauen sorgemäß auszufüllen.)



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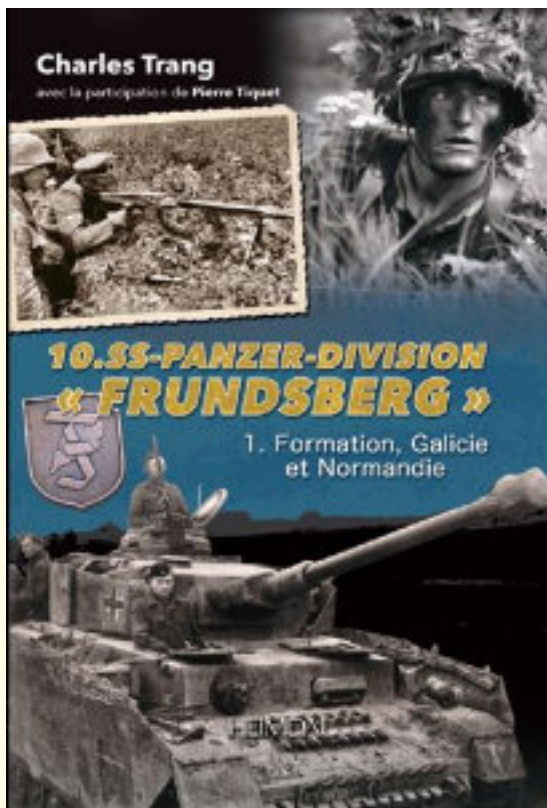


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Title: 10. SS-Panzer-Division Frundsberg
Author: Charles Trang & Pierre Tiquet
Publishing Co.: Heimdal
Total Number of pages: 416
Rating: Four EK I of Five possible

During the autumn, Charles Trang, in collaboration with Pierre Tiquet, released a new book dealing with the 10th SS Panzer Division “Frundsberg.” The book covers the division’s history from its formation in 1943 up to D-Day in 1944. In total, it comprises 415 pages in A4 format and is packed with photographs.

Those of you who are familiar with Charles’s books know how much detail he manages to fit into his works. He proceeds thoroughly and wants the reader who seeks complete understanding to have access to all the information they might need—and this book is no exception. We learn how each battalion was formed and who commanded the various units, which is of great help even to someone like me, who enjoys digging obsessively into details. When We talked to Charles he also told us that in this volume you will find a photo on each Regimental and Battalion Commander, something which have never been done before.

If I am to voice any criticism at all, it is only that the book is written in French, which is a drawback. Gemini has had to work hard translating the texts. While I have begun to learn a few

French words myself, it is far from sufficient to read an entire book in French. Fortunately, with today’s tools, this problem can be resolved fairly quickly.

That said, the photographs alone make the book well worth buying, and that leads to my final verdict: Buy it.

It receives four out of five Iron Crosses. Had it been published in German or English, it would have earned five Iron Crosses.

Georg Schwab.



Title: Oskar Dirlewanger: The Infamous War Criminal and His SS Sonderkommando

Author: Soraya Kuklińska

Publishing Co.: Schiffer

Total Number of pages: 464

Rating: Four EK I of Five possible

About a year ago, a book on Oskar Dirlewanger was published in Polish, written by Soraya Kuklińska. If my French is limited, my knowledge of the Polish language is even worse. Fortunately, the book has since been translated and published in English by Schiffer Publishing.

The volume runs to 464 pages, and the biography of Oskar Dirlewanger is very well written and highly detailed—at present, in my view, it is by far the best work on the subject. What truly sets it apart is that Soraya does not attempt to portray Dirlewanger as a sexual monster, as post-war literature so often tends to do. Certainly, Dirlewanger commanded a penal unit that committed major war crimes, but attempting to score points with pseudo-historians by inventing things that are not historically substantiated is, in my book, hardly worth the effort. Correct information should always be presented as such, regardless of how dry or unexciting it may be.

I repeat this point constantly, and you are free to disagree, but the fact remains that if one were to believe post-war stories about, for example, sexual orgies allegedly held at Dirlewanger's headquarters in Warsaw in the autumn of 1944, I can guarantee that, had this come to the attention of the Reichsführer-SS, he would have dealt with Dirlewanger swiftly. The SS maintained very strict standards regarding with whom an SS man could associate, and not even the well-connected Gottlob Berger would have been able to

save Dirlewanger in such a case. Returning to the book itself, the biography of Oskar Dirlewanger is of a very high standard. Unfortunately, Soraya has made a few errors in her description of the unit itself. These do not ruin the book, but the reader should be prepared to double-check certain facts—not everything, but a few details. The only thing that has slightly irritated me is the recent flood of books and information about Dirlewanger. That said, so far this remains the best book written about him, and that is a fact.

In any case, major criminals inevitably attract attention, and considering what the SS Sonderregiment did during its existence, it is hardly surprising that Dirlewanger continues to draw such interest. The book is available from all major booksellers worldwide at a price of around €45. Is it worth reading? Absolutely—if you are interested in an individual and his history, it unquestionably deserves a place on your bookshelf.

This book also receives four out of five Iron Crosses. Its strong writing, level of detail, and generally accurate historical presentation justify such a high rating. Had the small errors regarding the unit's history been avoided, it would have earned five Iron Crosses.

Georg Schwab



Uniforms of SS-Hauptsturmführer Hans Flügel 5. SS-Panzer-Division “Wiking”

Collection J.B.



Hans Flügel's Hauptsturmführer uniform. This is not an ordinary storeroom uniform, but a tailor-made piece specifically for Hans Flügel, as was common practice among officers. According to the owner, J.B., the decorations were added later; the cap and belt are original and belonged to Flügel himself.



SS-Hstuf. Hans Flügel
Born: 13.2.1919 in Arzberg
Died: 1.3.1989 in Naila
Knight Cross – 16.10.1944
German Cross in Gold – 8.12.1942
Last Command – Kdr of the II./SS-Pz.Rgt.5

CLASSIFIED ADS

SS-Pz.Aufkl.Abt.12

For a book project about SS-Pz.Aufkl. Abt.12, I am seeking information, photographs, and documents related to the unit.

Any assistance in documenting its history would be sincerely appreciated.

Contact
Jan Willem Stokkers
j.w.stokkers.1@kpnmail.nl

Estonians & Latvians in the Waffen-SS

For a long-term book project, I am seeking information, photographs, and copies of documents related to Estonians and Latvians who served in the Waffen-SS.

Any contributions to help document their history would be greatly appreciated.

Contact: petter.kjellander@gmail.com

Waffen-SS Knight Cross holders.

Looking for images and personal documents of SS Knight Cross holders for my future articles and possible book project. Always able to support other historians and exchange scans. Please mail me: guntir@ukr.net (Andrii Zubkov)

Collector/Historian looking to purchase /trade scans of Waffen ss Panzer officers. Wanting portrait, field and group shots. Top top prices paid.

Contact Tim Willemsen at willemsen.timothy@gmail.com

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Div. HJ in General

Lennart Westberg

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volunteers, Waffen-SS in general

Andrii Zubkow

Email: guntir@ukr.net

Interest: RK and DKiG Holders of
the Waffen-SS

Unless otherwise stated, all photos
come from our personal archive.

**Next planned issue? As
soon as possible**