

WAFFEN-SS



**UNIFORMS, ORGANIZATION AND HISTORY
OF THE**

WAFFEN-SS

VOLUME

4

ROGER JAMES BENDER
and
HUGH PAGE TAYLOR

4

Vol. 4



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ROGER JAMES BENDER AND HUGH PAGE TAYLOR

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Introduction



This series was conceived in 1969 to cover the uniforms, organization and history of the entire Waffen-SS in only four volumes. That ambitious project could only have been realized had the historical and organizational coverage been restricted to a bare minimum. This would have necessitated a degree of superficiality in these two all-important aspects of the study that we found unacceptable to ourselves and to our readership. So while it was possible to restrict the general subject of Waffen-SS uniforms and insignia to a single book, in Volume 2 we were only able to deal with the higher formations and the first six divisions. Increased attention to detail restricted Volume 3's coverage to seven divisions and this number has been reduced to five in the present book. As a result, rather than bringing this series to a close, Volume 4 takes our study to the 18th SS Division... more than that number remain to be examined before even embarking upon the vast and complex subject of non-divisional elements, "foreign volunteers", and so on. It is hoped that our readers will welcome the increased attention to detail and will consequently bear with us in extending the series beyond the originally intended four volumes.

Critics will doubtless seize upon the present volume's lengthy "Corrections and Additions" appendix to Volume 1 and so it should be pointed out that much of this new information is drawn from Mollo's commendable 6th volume in the "Uniforms of the SS" series... a book having the advantage of three years' additional research over our first attempt, which it can be recalled was a pioneer in the field. We appreciate that these appendices provide ammunition to those who favour destructive criticism but are heartened by the reaction of the great majority of our readers, who do obviously prefer sharing our new-found knowledge through these appendices to having to pay for revised editions.

Since the publication of Volume 3, two men who contributed to the series have sadly died. Colonel Clifford M. Dodkins, C.B.E., D.S.O., gave unselfishly of his time, knowledge and friendship to H.P.T. for over 15 years and generated the deep interest in the insignia of the Waffen-SS that ultimately led to this series. "Dodders" was the undisputed leader in the research and collecting of German insignia, medals and decorations, and

is sadly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Dipl. Ing. Otto Skorzeny, famed for his daring though now controversial liberation of Mussolini in 1943, provided useful advice and the foreword to this series. While not supporting his political views we would like to place on record our sincere appreciation for his valued assistance.

For the fourth time mere words cannot convey the very sincere gratitude we feel for Markus Anaja, Philip Buss and Friedhelm Ollenschläger. Once again they have given of their time and knowledge towards the betterment of this series. We would also like to thank:

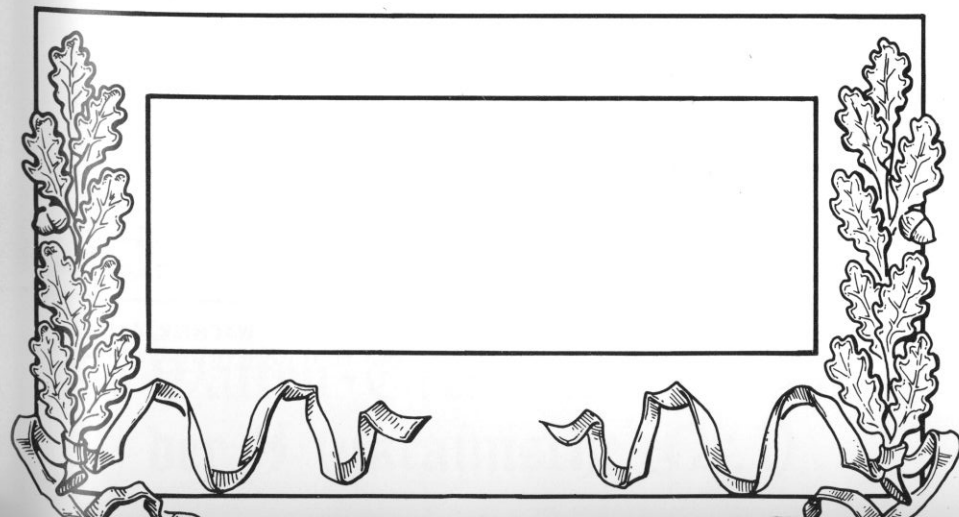
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H.P.T. would like to dedicate his portion of this book to Carlo.





HITLER, THE GOVERNOR OF THE GALIZIAN DISTRICT, DR. WÄCHTER, AND THE COMMANDER OF THE DIVISION, SS-BRIGADEFÜHRER FREITAG REVIEWING THE DIVISION IN JUNE 1944.



14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (ukrainische Nr. 1)

EVOLUTION AND TITLES OF 14. WAFFEN-GRENADIER-DIVISION DER SS
(ukrainische Nr. 1)

- SS-Freiwilligen-Division
"Galizien" (1)
- Galizische Division (2)
- SS-Division "Galizien"
- SS-Schützen-Division "Galizien" (3)
- 30 June 1943⁴ - 22 October 1943 ___ (14.)⁵ SS-Freiwilligen-Division "Galizien"
- 22 October 1943 - 27 June 1944 ___ 14. Galizische SS-Freiwilligen-Division (6)
- 27 June 1944 - 12 November 1944 ___ 14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (galizische Nr. 1) (7)
- 12 November 1944 - 25 April 1945 ___ 14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (ukrainische Nr. 1) (8)
- 25 April 1945 - 8 May 1945 _____ 1. ukrainische Division der ukrainischen National-Armee (9)

NOTES:

1. Berger referred to the formation as the "Galician Legion" ("Legion Galizien") on 2 July 1943 (see page 22). This is the only recorded instance of this misnomer having been used and it was certainly not official.
2. The word "Grenadier-" is sometimes found included in the first three official forms of this Division's title (e.g. "14. SS-Freiwilligen-Grenadier-Division (galizische Nr. 1)") and this practice began between April and August of 1944 (the Manpower Study states that it was introduced in October 1943).
3. The formation was known colloquially by the Ukrainian word for Galicia - 'Dyviziiia "Halychyna"'.
4. The adjective "Ruthenian" is sometimes found used to describe the Division.

¹Name chosen at meeting held by the Governor of Galicia, SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Otto Wächter, on 12 April 1943, and as appeared in SS-FHA, Kommando Amt der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb.Nr. 982/43 g.Kdos., v. 30.7.43, Aufstellung der SS-Freiw. Division "Galizien".

²Mentioned in a letter dated 14 April 1943 from the Chief of the German Order Police (Ordnungspolizei, or Orpo) to SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Polizei Otto Winkelmann (see note 29 below).

³Mentioned by Wächter in proclamation dated 28 April 1943 (see note 35 below and in RF-SS, HA B1, Az 9a/Galiz.Div./Br./Ba.).

⁴The exact date on which this Division came into being is not simple to determine as it was formed during the months of August and Sept-

History



No sooner had the armed SS gone to war than its grandiose racial and physical requirements for membership were lowered to allow for expansion. It has already been seen how such racially acceptable "Nordics" as Scandinavians and Lowlanders were gathered into regiments and legions and how the recruiting chief of the Waffen-SS, Gottlob Berger, fell avidly upon the millions of racial or ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) living beyond the frontiers of the Reich as an acceptable and accessible pool of manpower. But whereas the racial requirements could be interpreted to cover Norwegians, Danes, Finns, Dutchmen, Flemings and racial Germans, they were not

ember 1943. 30 July 1943 is the date of the SS-FHA order (SS-FHA, Kdo. Amt der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb.Nr. 982/43, v. 30.7.1943 Aufstellung der SS-Freiw. Division "Galizien") and that chosen by Dr. Klietmann for the actual formation of the Division (op.cit., p. 193). The Manpower Study gave 3 August 1943 (based upon OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Org. Abt. II Nr. 12435g., v. 3.8.1943).

⁵It was unofficially referred to as the 14th Division of the Waffen-SS before this was authorized by the SS-FHA on 22 October 1943 (SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.10.1943 Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS).

⁶This designation is reported to have been in use before the form "14. SS-Freiw. Div. "Galizien"". The form "Galizische SS-Freiwilligen-Infanterie-Division" is also to be found in contemporary documents and was used to describe the formation when Himmler visited it at Neuhammer on 16 May 1944. This was not official and simply a result of inaccurate reporting.

⁷Uncertainty surrounds the exact date on which the Division took on this new "Waffen-" designation, for whereas the change became known upon its publication in Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin 15.8.1944, Nr.16, Z. 476, in effect it came about some time before. Sources differ as to the effective date of redesignation and include: after 10 March 1944 (P.B.H.); April 1944 (Manpower Study); August 1944 (Tessin, Verbände und Truppen..., vol. 3, p. 313) and 4 August 1944 (Verbindungsoffizier der SS beim OKH - hereafter referred to as V.O.SS-Nr. 1848). A study of official contemporary documents shows that the change had not been made by 22 January 1944 (SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 166/44 g.Kdos., v.22.1.1944 Bezeichnung der SS-Freiw.-Rgter) but that the "Waffen-" form was in use as early as 30 June 1944 (Gesamtstärke der Waffen-SS am 30. Juni 1944 - reproduced by Klietmann, op.cit., p. 509). This situation is confused by lack of accuracy and consistency in contemporary German military terminology and probably no precise date can be found. In this study, Dr. Klietmann's conclusion has been adopted - subject to the above reservations.

dropped altogether until early 1943 when a division was formed from Yugoslav Moslems.¹⁰ The time had come for racial theory to give way to military expediency, even within the ranks of the fanatically élite SS. If losses were to be replenished in existing elements and new ones were to be raised, then the racial rule book of the armed SS, if not of the organization as a whole, had to be thrown to the winds for the duration of the war. That is exactly what happened.

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland and was followed on the 17th of that month by her rather uncertain Russian ally. The Second World War fell as a cloud over Europe. The greatly outnumbered and ill-equipped Polish Army was soon defeated and the first campaign of the war ended in a resounding German victory. "Blitzkrieg" certainly worked in practice as well as in theory and while the German forces rested from their exertions for the next campaign, Adolf Hitler put his plans for the Poland he so despised into effect. On 12 December 1939, he ordered that part of the country be organized as a "General Government"¹¹ and divided into four districts - Cracow, Lublin, Radom and Warsaw. As General Governor¹² he chose the ruthless Minister and Commissioner for German Law, Dr. Hans Frank. SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger was nominated as Higher SS and Police Leader (HSSPF) with his seat in Cracow and under him each district had its own SS and Police Leader (SSPF)¹³.

Such was the unenviable fate of Poland under the Third Reich from her fall in the autumn of 1939 until the summer of 1941. Then a dramatic change in world events brought another part of Poland into the General

⁸The adjective "Ukrainian" replaced "Galician" before 12 November 1944 (V. O. SS Nr. 862, v. 12.11.1944) and was in use by 15 January 1945 (Tessin, op.cit., vol. 3, p. 312). Ukrainian sources maintain that no such change was in fact made at that time and that as late as 19 April 1945, Shandruk had to insist to Freitag that the title be changed - this being authorized by Divisional Order Nr. 71 of 27 April 1945. Possibly the change authorized in Berlin had not been passed on to the men in the field. See page 43.

⁹The men of the Division took a new oath between 25 and 30 April 1945, and Freitag handed his formation over to Shandruk's U.N.A. on 27 April 1945 - see page 43.

¹⁰The 13th Division of the Waffen-SS, named "Handschar" (see volume 3).

Government. The event was Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union and the part of Poland was Galicia.

When German troops turned on their bewildered former allies in the early hours of 22 June 1941, Galicia was amongst the first areas to be "liberated from the Bolsheviks". Galicia had been that part of Poland which Hitler had handed over to Molotov at the conclusion of the Polish campaign as a result of the Moscow Pact of September 1939. Hitler harboured little but hatred and contempt for Poland and the Poles in general but looked more favourably upon the Polish minorities and so saw to it that they were afforded preferential treatment to that reserved for the Poles. Of these minorities, the so-called Galicians were held by the German racial theorists to be partly German and so racial superiors to the rest. Hitler and his followers recalled how the area had become an Austrian "Crown Land" (Kronland) in 1772 (confirmed with slight frontier adjustments in 1814) and had thus become the largest province in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was convinced that, to quote a contemporary Nazi author, Galicia had "benefitted from the influx of German culture for 150 years prior to 1918"¹⁴. The fact that Galicia had been ruled for a century and a half by the Führer's beloved Austrians prompted him to mete out a kinder fate than that inflicted upon the remainder of the Ukraine, for in reality, the "Galicians" Hitler was thinking about were nothing other than western Ukrainians¹⁵. The remainder of the Ukraine had become a Reichskom-

¹¹"Generalgouvernement" in German, which was the name given to occupied Russian Poland in the First World War.

¹²"Generalgouverneur" in German.

¹³Krüger held the post from 1939 until 1943. In May 1944, he took command of the 6th SS Mountain Division "Nord" (see vol. 2, p. 151) and in February 1945, became general commanding the Vth SS Volunteer Army Corps (ibid, p. 39). He should not be confused with SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS Walter Krüger who was commanding the "Das Reich" Division at the time.

¹⁴du Prel, Das Generalgouvernement, p. 363. Galicia became very influenced by Austria and its capital Lvov (Lviv in Ukrainian, Lemberg in German and Lwow in English - the Polish form "Lvov" being used exclusively in this book) even became known as the "Little Vienna of the East" (Klein-Wien des Ostens - ibid, p. 371).

¹⁵While being that part of Poland on the northern slopes of the Carpathians (Council of Ambassadors, 15 March 1923), Galicia is in fact Western Ukraine. Hitler also detached Galicia to weaken the Ukraine as a whole.



DR. HANS FRANK



ERICH KOCH

missariat under the brutal and merciless control of the Gauleiter of East Prussia, Erich Koch, but Hitler had ordered that Galicia should become the fifth district of Frank's General Government even before the opening of his war on Russia¹⁶.

On 1 August 1941, Generalleutnant Franz von Roques¹⁷ handed "Land Galizien" over to Frank as "Distrikt Galizien" of the General Government with SS-Brigadeführer Dr. Otto Wächter as its governor¹⁸. Frank made a speech in which he thanked the German soldiers for having freed Galicia from the Bolsheviks and in which he also referred to the Hungarian and Slovak troops who had taken part in this "liberation".

¹⁶ Hitler had stated that he would detach Galicia from the Ukraine and add it to Frank's General Government at a meeting held at Angerburg on 16 July 1941.

¹⁷ Commander of Rear Army Administration District 103 (Army Group "South") (Kommandeur rückwärtiges Heeresgebiet 103 (Heeresgruppe "Süd")).

¹⁸ Wächter was attached to the staff of the SS Main District "East" (SS-Oberabschnitt Ost) and was Governor of Galicia from 1941 to 1944. On 9 November 1939, he had been promoted to the purely SS rank of SS-Brigadeführer and did not hold simultaneous rank in the Police. On 16 May 1944, he was promoted to SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Polizei. He was not a soldier and never held a rank in the Waffen-SS - his ignorance of military matters will be seen in the story of this Division.

Thus, in the late summer of 1941, Galicia came under the not-so-tender mercies of Hans Frank's General Government. What was the reaction of the so-called Galicians when they found themselves under German rather than Russian rule? To answer this question one needs to establish just who these "Galicians" were.

On the eve of the First World War, the population of Galicia was close to eight million, four and a half of whom were Poles and three and three quarter million were Galicians (=Ruthenians) or Ukrainians¹⁹. Whereas the Polish majority had little doubt as to their coming fate under German rule, there were many Ukrainians who looked to a German victory in the East as a step towards Ukrainian unity. They were in for a bitter disappointment. Whatever concessions Hitler was prepared to afford Galicia as recompense for their past submission to Austrian rule, he still looked on the Ukrainians with the loathing he reserved for all Slavic races. In Hitler's perverted reasoning, the Slavs were one of the lowest forms of humanity and an arch-enemy of the Third Reich. His motives behind giving Galicia to Frank's Poland included a reduction in the size and importance of the Ukraine and he had no intention of reversing this policy.

Cheers from the Ukrainian nationalists for their German "liberators" soon faded when they discovered how ill-disposed their new masters were to their ambitions²⁰. When Ukrainians, serving with the German armed forces²¹ during the capture of Lvov in July 1941, took over the town's radio station and broadcast a proclamation of the forming of a Ukrainian Government under Stepan Bandera, they were promptly arrested and their

¹⁹ The exact figures were 7,980,477 - 4,672,500 - 3,208,092 respectively.

²⁰ Not all high-ranking members of the N.S.D.A.P. were so strongly against allowing the Ukraine some degree of unity. Before the invasion of Russia, Alfred Rosenberg had suggested the establishment of a number of states around Russia in collaboration with Nazi Germany and one of these was to have been a free Ukrainian state. But Hitler would hear nothing of it and soon after made his point by stating that Galicia was to be detached from the Ukraine.

²¹ After September 1939, the Abwehr formed a unit called "Nachtigall" (nightingale) from Ukrainian prisoners-of-war who had been in the Polish Army. Likewise they formed a second unit called "Roland" from Ukrainians in Austria.

leaders dispatched to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp²². Another Ukrainian Government was set up at Kiev under Andreas Melnyk without the Germans' knowledge or permission, but this fared little better than the first and was soon suppressed. German policy towards the Ukrainians was thus not very helpful to those who looked on them as a plentiful and willing source of fighting manpower for Germany.



GOTTLob BERGER

Gottlob Berger had made plans for a Ukrainian SS element as early as April 1941, when he had gathered together Ukrainian prisoners-of-war in Poland. It was considered too early for such action, however, and Himmler scotched the idea "on racial grounds". By so doing the Reichsführer-SS was toeing the official Party line of the period, but there were Germans in high places who were not prepared to throw away the very real willingness on the part of the Ukrainians to fight the Russians. The German security forces helped arm and equip such movements as the Ukrainian People's Self-Defense (U.N.S.), which numbered some 180,000 men by the summer of 1942²³ and was part of Stepan Bandera's "Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists" (O.U.N.-B)²⁴.

Those who opposed the use of Ukrainians in the armed forces were obliged to change their minds in time and the worsening German military situation in late 1942, culminating in the loss of the 6th Army at Stalingrad, brought home the real need to ignore racial and political considerations. Ukrainian manpower was needed to make up for losses at the front yet still a fear of encouraging Ukrainian nationalism persisted in the German leaders' minds. Even more reason to use the Ukrainians was the fear

²²Reports vary as to exactly who arrested them - some say by members of the Wehrmacht, while other reports state that it was men of the SS-Einsatzkommandos. The Ukrainian nationalists had some support from the Wehrmacht. The survivors of the Lvov operation were transferred to Germany and some of these were formed into Schuma-Btl. "Roland-Nachtigall", which was later redesignated simply as Schuma-Btl. 201.

²³Littlejohn, op.cit., p. 303.

²⁴Andreas Melnyk also led a part of this organization - the O.U.N.

that some of their youth might go over to the underground movement against the Germans. A decision simply had to be taken and at last it was.

The key figure in the story of the Ukrainian SS division was certainly the Governor of Galicia, Dr. Otto Wächter. He had been in Lvov since 1941, knew and understood the people and was anxious to obtain from his fellow Germans a better understanding of the Ukrainians and a closer collaboration between Germany and the Ukraine. He saw the raising of a Ukrainian division fighting Bolshevism alongside the Germans as a step in the right direction. This would doubtless gain prestige for the Ukrainians in German eyes and at the same time channel the necessary additional manpower into the disastrous eastern front. So Wächter set about raising a military element from Ukrainian youths on an anti-Bolshevik theme, mentioning the idea to Himmler on 1 March 1943 - just one month after the 6th Army had surrendered at Stalingrad.



WÄCHTER TALKING WITH LOCAL GALICIAN LEADERS OF HIS DISTRICT.

Himmler would normally have considered such a suggestion totally out of the question for not long before the very idea of allowing Slavs into the élite ranks of his SS empire would have been unthinkable. But the Waffen-SS were having more than their fair share of losses at the front and

only a short time before he had taken the hitherto unimaginable decision of allowing Yugoslav Moslems to be formed into the "Handschar" Division. This done, little remained to hinder the raising of other similar formations and this is how there came to be a Ukrainian division of the Waffen-SS.

Himmler consequently did not reject Wächter's proposal out of hand and less than a week after hearing of it, on 4 March 1943²⁵ to be exact, was shown a draft of an appeal the Governor of Galicia intended making to the Ukrainian people of his District. Himmler studied the draft and mentioned it to Hitler. Both agreed on the wisdom of raising a Ukrainian military force in Galicia, provided it be financed by the Galician people and referred to exclusively as "Galician" rather than "Ukrainian". On 28 March 1943²⁶ Himmler told Wächter that he could go ahead with his plan.

Wächter's success in gaining the approval from no lesser men than Hitler and Himmler was marred by the insistence on the formation being called "Galician" rather than "Ukrainian". He knew this would be a blow to the national pride of his subjects and feared that it could endanger the whole project. But the Ukrainians, with little alternative, accepted the condition and the idea was supported by most Ukrainians in the General Government as well as by the Chairman of the Ukrainian Central Committee, Prof. Dr. Volodymyr Kubiiovych. Wächter then proceeded to face the many complex and technical problems facing the raising of the formation. He held various meetings and two of these are worth recording. On 4 April 1943, he went through the details with Krüger, the Higher SS and Police Leader in the General Government. Two days later, he did the same with the man responsible for the forming of so many other divisions of the Waffen-SS, Gottlob Berger, who was not only interested in his capacity as recruiting chief of the Waffen-SS but also as he was Head of the Policy Department of the Reich Ministry for Eastern Territories²⁷.

Wächter was forging ahead with great enthusiasm and remained undaunted even when he received a note from Himmler's secretary, SS-Ober-

²⁵

Wächter to RF-SS, Lvov, 4 March 1943.

²⁶

RF-SS to Wächter, Field Command Post, 28 March 1943.

²⁷

Chef Führungsstab Politik, Ostministerium.

sturmbannführer Dr. Rudolf Brandt, urging that he should proceed with more caution²⁸. He invited SS, police and Party officials to a conference on 12 April 1943, and it was on this occasion that the detailed plans were made. The salient decisions taken were as follows:

1. The formation was to be called the SS Volunteer Division "Galicia".
2. Although to be set up by the police, it was considered unwise to include the word "police" in its title (29).
3. Like other foreign volunteers in the Waffen-SS, the Division's members were to wear a sleeve shield. To counter the revival of Ukrainian nationalism this shield was to carry the lion and crowns of Galicia rather than the trident emblem of the Ukraine as a whole.
4. The formation was to be an infantry division along the lines of the German type. While Galicia was to provide horses and wagons, Germany was to contribute towards the cost of supplying equipment unavailable in Galicia and the cost of training.
5. The Division's officer corps was to be made up of 600 officers, 50 doctors and 20 veterinary surgeons. 300 of these were to be recruited from amongst former Ukrainian officers of the Austro-Hungarian Army. 100 were to come from former Ukrainian officers of the Polish Army, 100 from Ukrainian intellectuals who had served in the Polish armed forces but who had been denied commissions for political reasons, and 100 from former officers of the Ukrainian Army of the First World War.
6. The 2,000 NCOs required were to be selected from former soldiers of the Polish Army with preference going to those who had been in the Austro-Hungarian Army.
7. No ceiling was to be set for the recruiting drive.
8. The plan was to be made public in Lvov on 28 April 1943, at a meeting to which representatives of all the interested parties were to be invited.
9. Recruiting was to begin on 1 May 1943.

²⁸ Brandt to Wächter, Field Command Post, 10 April 1943. Brandt was promoted to the rank of SS-Standartenführer on 20 April 1944.

²⁹ Himmler was against the formation being a police division ("Polizei-Schützen-Division") as had originally been intended. When he found out about it, a change in orders resulted which the Chief of the Order Police, SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer und Generaloberst der Polizei Kurt Daluge, communicated to the Chief of his HQ Office, SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Polizei Otto Winkelmann, in a letter dated 14 April 1943 (it had no reference). Here it was clearly stated that the new division was to be a "front division of the Waffen-SS", formed from Greek-Catholic Ukrainians from Galicia and would be called the "Galician Division". Those of Greek-Orthodox faith from the Lublin area were not to join the Division but could enter the independent SS-Police regiments that were to be formed. Finally, Ukrainian nationalists were expressly barred from the new Division.

The emphasis of "Galician" rather than the more accurate "Ukrainian" was thus brought out under points 1 and 3. The fact that Wächter was no soldier and ignorant of military matters (he held only an Allgemeine SS commission it should be remembered) is evident from his exaggerated impression of the number of officers required under point 5³⁰. The fact that this error was not corrected by those present suggests that no officers with military experience attended the conference.

While these plans were being made and decisions taken, Gottlob Berger saw fit to confirm his impression that the Ukrainians would react favourably to the recruiting drive by doing some market research of his own in the form of a trial run. Word was put out that volunteers were needed for a Galician police regiment³¹ and the response was so great that Berger was able to record no less than 12,000 volunteers in a letter dated 20 March 1943 - a figure more befitting an entire division than a mere regiment³².

In spite of his own conviction that the recruiting drive would be a success, Wächter had to wait for Himmler's authorization. For a time, it seemed that Himmler might even have changed his mind for on 16 April 1943, his office instructed Wächter to proceed no further. The latter was naturally unhappy with this development and immediately begged Berger to counsel Himmler that the time was ripe for the announcement³³. Three days later Wächter wrote to Himmler asking for his agreement to the proclamation going out on 28 April as planned, to be followed by an intensive propaganda campaign³⁴.

Finally Himmler, ever conscious of the adverse trend of the war for Germany and no doubt having sought Berger's opinion, agreed and the pro-

³⁰ An infantry division (1944) required 387 officers, of whom 71 were officials, and a Volksgrenadierdivision needed 342.

³¹ Polizei-Schützen-Regiment "Galizien". Reported by Ukrainian sources to have been called "Ukrainian Police Regiment" (Ukrains'kyi Politsiinyi Polk).

³² Whether in fact this regiment was ever formed remains uncertain. Tessin does not mention it in his exhaustive study of the German Order Police (see bibliography). An unsupported report, however, states that it was formed at Rowne and led by General Anatol Stupnytskyi.

³³ Berger to RF-SS, Berlin, 16 April 1943.

³⁴ Wächter to Grothmann, Lvov, 19 April 1943.

clamation was made on 28 April 1943. The main points of Wächter's proclamation, which was printed and distributed throughout Galicia and which can be taken as the first step in the launching of the Division, were as follows³⁵:

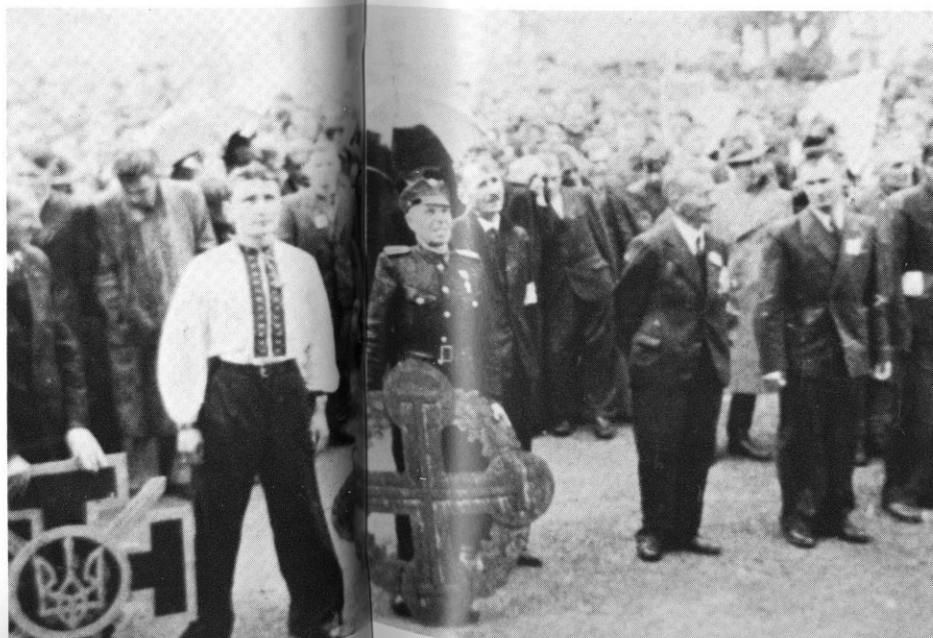
1. Hitler had decided to give Galicia the "privilege" of fighting alongside Germany in the war ("the great European defensive front against Bolshevism") and for this purpose had authorized the establishment of "SS-Schützen-Division "Galizien"".
2. The men of the Division and their families were to be afforded the same privileges as enjoyed by their German comrades.
3. The Division was a purely volunteer formation.
4. Sons of soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian Army would be given preference insofar as places in the Division were concerned.

Wächter ended his proclamation by appealing to the Galician youth to join the Division to fight Bolshevism for their country, their families and for a "new Europe". Soon after, on 4 May 1943, the Chairman of the Ukrainian Central Committee, Prof. Dr. Volodymyr Kubiyovych, addressed the Ukrainian population on the subject and urged them to volunteer for the Division. A Military Committee was formed under Oberst Alfred By-sanz to look after the affairs of the Division and maintain close liaison with the Ukrainian Central Committee. Responsible for such liaison was Waffen-Hauptsturmführer Dmytro Paliiv whose official function was to act as adviser to the Ukrainian officers.

The recruiting campaign that followed was a great success. At first it is difficult to appreciate fully why these men should have been so willing to volunteer in such numbers for what was really nothing more than a German-controlled formation, another division of the Waffen-SS, especially after the treatment their leaders had received at the hands of the very same Germans and the latter's obvious resistance to Ukrainian nationalism and unity. The motives were undoubtedly mixed and in many cases confused - the following were some of them:

- a. The Ukrainian youths who volunteered were leaderless, misinformed, misguided and had little idea of what the Germans had in mind for them. They mistook the Division's very establishment as a sign of change in German policy towards the Ukraine and were encouraged when their leaders were released from

³⁵ Generalgouvernement, Der Gouverneur des Distrikts Galizien, Tgb.Nr. 104/43 g., v. 28.4.1943.



VOLUNTEERS FROM THE LVOV DISTRICT IN MAY 1943.

the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in April 1943 - some of whom then volunteered for the Division themselves.

- b. They did not appreciate the significance behind the Germans naming the Division "Galician" rather than "Ukrainian" and looked on their formation as Ukrainian rather than Galician. They saw its coming into being as a strengthening of the Ukrainian position in Galicia and even the birth of a regular Ukrainian national army (36).
- c. Some were urged by their hatred for the Russians to join a Division planned and destined to fight on the eastern front (37).
- d. Sympathizers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army³⁸ could have joined merely to be trained and to lay their hands on arms - or even to infiltrate the formation.
- e. Immaturity.
- f. Fear of being forced to work in Germany.
- g. The search for adventure.

While the recruiting campaign was a great success, accounts vary as to the actual numbers that stepped forward and most rely on sparse and vague

³⁶This may have sounded far-fetched at the time but did in fact come about some two years later.

³⁷The recruiting propaganda implied rather than stated categorically that the Division would be engaged against the Russians and not against the Western Allies.

³⁸This Army, known as the U.P.A., developed as an offshoot of the O.U.N. in 1941, and fought both with and against the Germans. It operated as an anti-Soviet underground organization until late 1950 or early 1951 and minor activities by small U.P.A. elements were reported as late as 1956 (P.C. T.V.).

statistics. It would be as well, therefore, to go into a little more detail in this study.

12,000 had volunteered for the "Galician Police Regiment" by 20 March 1943 and 20,000 are said to have volunteered at once as a result of the anti-Russian theme. By 8 May 1943, a week after the recruiting campaign for the Division proper had begun (and exactly two years to the day before it was to surrender), 32,000 had volunteered, from which number 26,000 had been accepted. The drive was going so well that the situation began to get out of hand and Krüger asked Berger on 11 May 1943, for instructions. A German radio broadcast of 1 June 1943, gave a total of 60,000 recruits, while by the 21st of that month, 26,436 men had been raised for the Division³⁹. The total number accepted had risen to 28,000 by 2 July 1943⁴⁰, and on the following day Berger announced that volunteers for the "Galician Legion"⁴¹ totalled 80,000 - of whom 50,000 had been provisionally accepted and of these, about 13,000 were being examined. On 11 July 1943, a further German radio broadcast boasted of 70,000 recruits.

From these reports it appears that considerable numbers of "Galicians" stepped forward to join but it is not altogether clear in all cases whether these figures refer to the Division itself or to the independent SS-Police regiments that were formed from the excess of available men over the Division's requirements⁴². Whatever the exact figures may have been, it is now possible to see that the reports of 30,000 men having been accepted from a total nearing 100,000 volunteers were not so far from the truth, but probably took into account men who volunteered for the Division but who did not enter it at that time. It is safe to say by way of a summary that the original recruiting drive produced some 80,000 applicants, of whom only the fittest 13,000 were accepted for the Division⁴³.

³⁹On 24 June 1943, Hitler forbade the recruiting of Poles for the Division but gave his approval for the recruiting of Galicians.

⁴⁰Berger to RF-SS, Berlin, 2 July 1943.

⁴¹See Note 1 under "Evolution and Titles..." on page 8.

⁴²These SS-Police regiments will be discussed later in detail.

⁴³Heike (see bibliography, Ukrainian edition, p. 247) states that in May 1943, nearly 80,000 Ukrainians volunteered for the Division, of whom 27,000 were found to be fit for military service, 19,000 were enlisted and 13,000 actually used for the Division.

UKRAINIAN DIGNITARIES
REVIEWING A MARCH
PAST OF NEWLY RE-
CRUITED MEN FOR THE
DIVISION.



UKRAINIANS RIDE PAST
THE REVIEWING STAND
CARRYING HOME-MADE
NAZI FLAGS.

So far we have only dealt with the total numbers of men involved and now is the logical point at which the all-important officers, NCOs and specialists should be considered. For whereas there was anything but a shortage of willing soldiers for the Division, there was a need for Ukrainians in its officer and NCO corps.

To try and find the prescribed quotas, a circular was sent out on 1 July 1943⁴⁴ to all replacement bureaux (SS-Ergänzungsstellen) in Germany asking for the names of any former Ukrainian officers and NCOs - six bureaux were also asked for lists of suitable Ukrainian doctors. On the day following the release of this circular, the required 300 officers⁴⁵, 48 doctors, 1,300 NCOs and 800 NCO candidates with secondary school education had been signed on and on 5 July 1943, Himmler ordered that these men should commence their training within ten days. On 18 July 1943, the first group of volunteers set off for their training - 350 to officers' schools in Germany⁴⁶, 2,000 for NCO training and a further 2,000 to the SS Training Area "Heidelager", where it had been decided to form the new Division⁴⁷.

Although adequate numbers of Ukrainian officers and NCOs were eventually found to lead the Division, it was to be a characteristic of the formation, and according to some, one of its greatest failings, that all important posts were reserved for Germans. Such a policy was naturally un-

⁴⁴RF-SS, HA B1, Az 9a/Galiz.Div./Br./Ba., v. 1.7.1943.

⁴⁵And not 600, as mentioned at Wächter's conference of 12 April 1943 (see above on page 17).

⁴⁶One report states that all 350 went to the SS Officer Cadet School at Bad Tölz in southern Bavaria. Landwehr (see bibliography) states that the Ukrainian officer candidates not only went to Bad Tölz but also, as would have been logical, to the SS- und Waffen-Junkerschulen Braunschweig (Brunswick), Klagenfurt and Posen-Treskau. The circular provided that the 48 Ukrainian doctors were to have an 8 weeks' introductory course and a 3-4 weeks' medical officers course and so presumably this was held at the SS Medical Academy at Graz (SS-Ärztliche Akademie Graz).

⁴⁷SS-Truppenübungsplatz "Heidelager". This SS Training Area had been established east of Debica in the General Government in June 1940, and was at first known by its location - "SS-Truppenübungsplatz "Debica"". On 15 March 1943, it was renamed SS-Truppenübungsplatz "Heidelager" (*Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS*, 4. Jahrgang, Berlin, 15.3.1943, Nr. 6, Z. 107).



HEINZ STUTTERECKER

SS-BRIGADEFÜHRER FRITZ FREITAG AND HSTUF. PALIJIW AT THE NEUHAMMER TRAINING CAMP.

popular amongst the Ukrainian soldiers and so was the man placed in command over them. According to the Division's chief of staff and post-war author of their formation's history, Major Wolf-Dietrich Heike, divisional commander Fritz Freitag was "self-seeking, unpleasant and bureaucratic"⁴⁸ - "a preening bureaucrat who did not trust anyone"⁴⁹. Freitag's unpopularity with the Ukrainians (and with their champion, Major



HEINZ STUTTERECKER

SS-BRIGADEFÜHRER DR. OTTO WÄCHTER AND HIS Ia, SS-STURMBANNFÜHRER WOLF-DIETRICH HEIKE, WALKING WITH GERMAN AND UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS.

⁴⁸Heike, see bibliography: Ukrainian edition, p. 253.

⁴⁹ibid, p. 248.

Heike) stemmed from the fact that he saw in the Ukrainian Division merely a means of achieving another formation for the Waffen-SS. He cared nothing for the political rôle the Ukrainians sought for their Division, did not try to understand the psychology of the Ukrainian soldier and refused to allow Ukrainian officers to fill staff and command positions - in fact, he did his best to reserve even company and platoon commands for Germans according to Major Heike. While the Ukrainians hoped for a Ukrainian formation led by their own officers, Freitag proceeded to raise another German division, which just happened to be made up of Ukrainians. In short, the men of the 14th SS Division were mainly Ukrainians from the Lvov region and the officers and NCOs were mainly national and racial Germans⁵⁰.

The self-deception in calling the new division "Galician" rather than the far more accurate "Ukrainian" has already been mentioned. Used to keep thoughts of rebirth of Ukrainian unity and power from the minds of its members and from those of the Nazi leaders, it was nonetheless to create friction in high SS circles soon after the Division was formed. On 30 June 1943, Himmler ordered that the adjective "Galician" was to be used exclusively when referring to the Division and that its members were to be called "Galicians" ("Galizianer") - anyone breaching this rule was liable to be punished. While the Division's opponents welcomed the line Himmler was adopting, the Governor of Galicia, Dr. Wächter, saw the folly in this and sensing danger took up the cause of his "subjects". He raised the matter with Himmler and when the required number of volunteers had come forward, dared to suggest that the name of the formation be changed from "Galicia" to "Ukraine". Whatever his personal feelings on the matter, Himmler was afraid of upsetting an already touchy Hitler by what could have been interpreted as blatant encouragement by a senior SS officer of the much-feared Ukrainian nationalism that haunted some of the Nazi leaders and so denied his subordinate's request. Wächter insisted and pointed to the fact that there was no such people as the "Galicians"

⁵⁰ A number of the Division's officers were veterans of the Austrian Army of the First World War. After the annexation of Austria in 1938, all Austrians automatically took on German nationality. 10,000 racial Germans had left Galicia for Germany during the winter of 1939/1940, together with a number of Ukrainian activists.

as the word "Galicia" had nothing but political and geographic origins. On 14 July 1943, Himmler forbade the use of the term "Ukrainian Division" as well as mention of Ukrainian nationality at all in connection with the formation⁵¹. The dauntless Wächter wrote to Himmler again on the matter on 30 July, 5 August and other dates, repeating his point of view in that refusing to call the Division Ukrainian would only have an adverse effect on the morale of its predominantly Ukrainian soldiers - it might even encourage some of them to go over to the Russian side. Faced with a practical (though unlikely) danger, Himmler gave way a little and agreed that no charges would be brought against anyone referring to the Division as "Ukrainian" but when Wächter persisted, the Reichsführer-SS closed the argument by refusing to discuss it further. The Division was thus officially denied its true national identity until November 1944 - the Ukrainians apparently even then not learning of the change until April 1945 - when both Galicia and the remainder of the Ukraine had fallen back under Russian domination and it was all too late anyway.

Having received Himmler's approval for the raising of the new Division, the SS-FHA ordered the formation of "SS-Freiwilligen-Division "Galizien"" on 30 July 1943⁵². This document provided that the Division was to be formed at SS Training Area (SS-Tr. Üb. Pl.) "Heidelager", east of Debica and close to Cracow in the General Government. Here a nucleus was to be provided by an SS Special Purpose Training Battalion⁵³ to which Galician volunteers, including those already in schools and training units as well as NCOs and specialists, were to be added. Members of the division were permitted to converse in their native tongue but words of command had to be given in German. A special form of the SS oath was authorized, which is given below with its English translation:

⁵¹ RF-SS to Heads of SS-Hauptämter, 14 July 1943 (RF-SS Microfilm 267). According to Dmytryshn in an article on the Division appearing in The American Slavic and East European Review, the order was issued to all company commanders in charge of training and forbade them "for all time to speak of a Ukrainian division or of a Ukrainian nation in connection with the Division "Galicia"". Himmler sent a message to the SS-Kriegsberichter-Abteilung on 30 June 1943, in this connection (Fernschreib RFSS, RF/Br. - T-175, Roll 70, Frame 2586531).

⁵² SS-FHA, Kdo. Amt de Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb. Nr. 982/43 g. Kdos. v. 30.7.1943 Aufstellung der SS-Freiw. Division "Galizien".

⁵³ SS-Ausbildungs-Bataillon z. b. V. (SS-Freiw. Div. "Galizien").

"Ich schwöre bei Gott diesen heiligen Eid, dass ich im Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus dem Obersten Befehlshaber der deutschen Wehrmacht, Adolf Hitler, unbedingten Gehorsam leisten und als tapferer Soldat bereit sein will, jederzeit für diesen Eid mein Leben einzusetzen."

"I swear by God this holy oath, that in the struggle against Bolshevism I will give the C-in-C of the German Armed Forces, Adolf Hitler, absolute obedience and as a fearless soldier if it be his will I will always be prepared to lay down my life for this oath."

On the basis of this order the Division was raised at Heidelberg, with its infantry regiments, artillery regiment, support elements and services being raised there during the months of August and September 1943.

No sooner had the Division been formed than on 1 August 1943, it was decided to reorganize it as a "new-style infantry division"⁵⁴. An appropriate order was issued by the SS-FHA on 22 September 1943⁵⁵ and conversion began, involving detachment of the third battalions from the three infantry regiments and using them to provide an infantry reconnaissance battalion and a field replacement battalion⁵⁶, which were completed in January 1944. The resultant weakening of the Division's infantry was to have been made up soon afterwards, but as events would have it this was not done in time and the Division encountered the enemy for the first time with a distinct disadvantage.

The decision to renumber all Waffen-SS divisions in the sequence in which they had been formed was put into effect by an SS-FHA order dated 22 October 1943⁵⁷ and so the "14." that had preceded the formation's title almost from the beginning finally became official. The title itself was also modified, so that the name "Galicia", that had previously appeared

⁵⁴Infanterie-Division neuer Art, or Inf.Div. (n.A.). A new type of division introduced in late 1943 to economize on troops. The main difference was that this type of division had 8 infantry battalions (including a Fusilier-Bataillon) whereas its predecessors had 9 infantry battalions plus a reconnaissance unit. Further savings were made in the divisional services and Hiwis were used. The strength of this "new type" of division was 10,708 plus 2,005 Hiwis, totalling 12,713, which can be compared with the former type of division's total of between 15,000 and 17,000.

⁵⁵SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Org. Tgb. Nr. 1300/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.9.1943, Neugliederung der SS-Freiw.Div. "Galizien".

⁵⁶SS-Füsilier-Bataillon, formed from the IIIrd Battalion of the Division's 1st Infantry Regiment (SS-Freiw.Rgt. 1 (Gal.)), and SS-Feldersatz-Bataillon.

within inverted commas at the end of the title, was changed to an adjective placed at the beginning, immediately after the now official ordinal. The formation was thus retitled from "SS-Freiw.Div. "Galizien"" to "14. Galizische SS-Freiw.Div.".

The same order of 22 October 1943⁵⁷ re-numbered all divisional infantry regiments in a single sequence and so those of the 14th SS Division were re-numbered thus:

| From: | To: |
|--|-----------------------|
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 1 (Galizische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 29 |
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 2 (Galizische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 30 |

Not long after, on 12 November 1943, the SS-FHA published a further order⁵⁸ which showed the Division as having three rather than two infantry regiments, with the third of these being re-numbered with effect from that date:

| From: | To: |
|--|-----------------------|
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 3 (Galizische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 31 |

The rather curious omission of the third regiment from the SS-FHA order of 22 October 1943 has not been explained, it was possibly an error, and its insertion in the sequence in the subsequent order necessitated the renumbering of the remaining infantry regiments then in existence.

In Volume 3 it was seen how important a rôle religion played in the Moslem "Handschar" Division - this was also to be the case with the Eastern Catholic 14th SS Division. Whereas "Handschar" had its Imams and Mullahs, the Galician Division had nine chaplains. Of these, Dr. B. Laba was the Dean, D. Kovalyuk was a Regimental Chaplain and Major Mykhailo Levenets a chaplain⁵⁹. Onlookers were no doubt surprised by the sight

⁵⁷SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.10.1943 Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

⁵⁸SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/9542/43 geh., v. 12.11.1943 Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

⁵⁹Shandruk's autobiography, pp. 261-262 (see bibliography). The Germans classified Deacons as clerks in the same way they had the Imams' assistants in "Handschar" (SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/10788/43 geh., v. 21.12.1943).

of Catholic religious paraphernalia accompanying these members of the SS on the parade ground⁶⁰.

The remaining months of 1943 and the first half of the following year saw formation and training continue in the General Government under the C-in-C of the Replacement Army⁶¹.

It has been seen how the recruiting drive in Galicia had met with great success and how many more men had stepped forward for the Division than could possibly be accepted. Rather than lose the additional manpower so welcome in 1943, the Order Police gathered them in a further five infantry regiments, numbered, in continuance of the sequence at first used by the three divisional infantry regiments, from 4 to 8⁶². On 31 January 1944, the 6th and 7th of these were disbanded and provided an additional 1,200 and 745 men to the Division respectively. These were duly sent to join the formation at the "Heidelager" training area.

The SS-FHA ordered on 22 January 1944, that the Division's infantry regiments should be redesignated to fit in with an overall standardization of foreign regiments' nomenclature⁶³. This involved adding such regiments' nationality in brackets after their titles, followed by a progressive numeration within that nationality. Advantage of the occasion was not taken to correct the inappropriate national adjective that so riled the Ukrainians and so the regiments took on the titles: "SS-Freiw.-Gren.Rgt. 29 (30 und 31) (galizisches Nr. 1 (2 und 3))".

Two of the three infantry regiments⁶⁴ were considered ready by February 1944, and, organized into a battle group (SS-Kampfgruppe), were sent into action against partisans with the dual purpose of gaining combat experience and lending a hand to the hard-pressed security forces⁶⁵. This

⁶⁰ A clear photograph of mass being celebrated by men of this Division is to be found in Hausser, Waffen-SS im Einsatz, 2. Aufl., facing p. 108. A photograph of poorer quality but of considerable interest showing a camp-service (Feldgottesdienst) of SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 31 faces p. 272 of Klietmann, Die Waffen-SS - Eine Dokumentation.

⁶¹ Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres (B.d.E.).

⁶² Galizisches SS-Freiw.Rgter. 4 - 8 (Pol.).

⁶³ SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb. Nr. 166/44 g.Kdos., v. 22.1.1944 Bezeichnung der SS-Freiw.-Rgter.

⁶⁴ Presumably the 1st and 2nd.

battle group was led by SS-Obersturmbannführer Friedrich Beyersdorff, who later commanded the Division's artillery regiment. According to Field Marshal Model, the troops fought gallantly, but other reports suggest that desertions outnumbered casualties in this anti-partisan fighting⁶⁶.

In mid-April, the Division's formation and training was transferred from Heidelager to another training area at Neuhammer in Silesia. Here the unsatisfactory situation continued with progress being obstructed by a number of problems, which can be summarized as follows:

- a. the Ukrainians resented the lack of their own officers and NCOs and the fact that key positions were all going to Germans;
- b. divisional commander Fritz Freitag and his policy were unpopular;
- c. there was a shortage of good German instructors;
- d. and there were inadequate arms and unsatisfactory living quarters.

Back in the Galician capital, Dr. Wächter decided to describe his feelings on the Galician Division to Himmler in a report of 3 May 1944. While criticizing the way the Ukrainian volunteers had been handled by the Germans, he confessed to certain misgivings he had had at the beginning of the "Galician" Division venture. In spite of these initial doubts he told the Reichsführer-SS that in his view it had all been worth while, even if only because the formation had channelled a number of young Ukrainians who otherwise might well have joined the nationalists in the underground movement. Upon examination, Wächter's reasoning can be faulted as the very existence of the Galician Division allowed the Ukrainian nationalists to stock up on arms, equipment and intelligence by raiding its stores, depôts and offices.

Training in Germany was to end in May 1944, and Himmler visited the Division at Neuhammer before its departure for the Eastern Front. On 16 May, he addressed the officer corps, which as we have seen consisted mainly of national and racial Germans⁶⁷. Himmler was careful in

⁶⁵ U.S. Intelligence mistook this battle group for the Division as a whole and so reported the formation as being on the central sector of the Eastern Front in March 1944.

⁶⁶ Dmytryshyn, op.cit., p. 8 records Model's comment - Landwehr, op.cit., refers to the desertions.

⁶⁷ Rede des Reichsführers-SS auf dem Appell des Führerkorps der Galizischen SS-Freiw.-Infanterie-Division in Neuhammer am 16. Mai 1944, RF-SS/T-175/Roll 94/frame 2614567ff.

choosing his words and while inculcating the usual racial hatred against Bolsheviks and Jews, he made no mention of the "sub-human Slav". He did admit at last that the Galicians were really only Ukrainians after all and that the Division should more correctly have been called Ukrainian. Even so, the misnomer in the formation's title was not to be rectified at that time. The speech ended with an appeal for comradeship between the two principal groups making up the Division - the Germans who commanded and Ukrainians who obeyed.



THE RF-SS OBSERVING THE GALICIAN DIVISION DURING FIELD EXERCISES.

Shortly after Himmler's visit, the Division was again redesignated, this time to comply with an order that the racial characteristics of Waffen-SS divisions should be included in their titles. The Galicians/Ukrainians were given the lowest form of title, that of "Waffen-" or "non-Germanic" and the Division assumed the following title: "14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (galizische Nr. 1)". The exact date of this renaming is not known for whereas the relative order was published on 15 August 1944, it is known to have been implemented some time before⁶⁸.

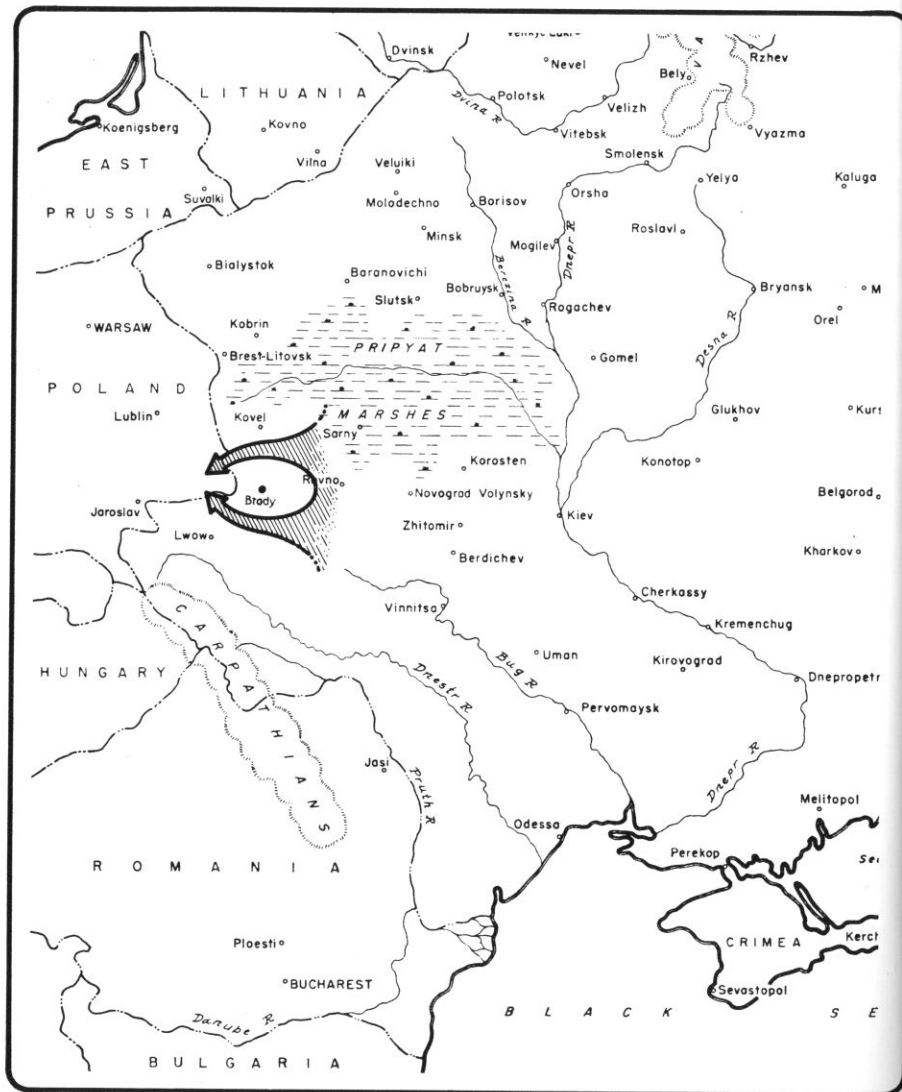
The Division was then sent to the Eastern Front to face the Russians for the first time. As all three of its infantry regiments were still short of their third battalions and some held the view that training was still unfinished, the formation was considerably weakened and unfit to take on the enemy in an all-out fight. Wächter and the divisional staff begged Field Marshal Model, C-in-C of Army Group "North Ukraine", to assign the Division to a relatively quiet sector of the front for completion of training and acquisition of battle experience. Model agreed and the formation was stationed at Stanyslaviv, a town occupied by the 1st Armoured Army. On 13 June 1944, the Division is reported to have been on the Pidhirtsi-Zolotschiw road⁶⁹. On 28 June, however, it was alerted and transferred by rail to the Brody area in the Western Ukraine, where it came under the 1st Armoured Army of Model's Army Group "North Ukraine"⁷⁰. Far from being a "quiet" sector of the front where the Ukrainians could train in peace and acclimatize themselves to the rigours of Eastern Front fighting, this was the very center of the expected Russian main advance. At first, the Division was held in reserve, but on 13 July 1944, it took on vastly superior Russian forces near the Galician capital of Lvov⁷¹ and attempted to hold the center of the Russian offensive. In the process, the

⁶⁸Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin, 15.8.1944, Nr. 16, Z. 476. A document dated 27 June 1944, gives the Division as "14. SS-Freiw.-Gren.Div. (galiz. Nr. 1)" while a strength return of three days later gives the "Waffen-" form (Gesamtstärke der Waffen-SS am 30. Juni 1944). As in so many cases, the Germans were not so thorough in the terminology of their military elements as one would be led to believe.

⁶⁹Der Freiwillige, Nr. 8, 1957, p. 20.

⁷⁰Some sources state that the Division was a part of the XIIIth Army Corps (along with three Wehrmacht divisions) of the 1st Armoured Army at the time of the Brody battle and even that its main purpose became the covering of that Corps' retreat. While XIIIth Army Corps was certainly a part of the 1st Armoured Army at the time there is no evidence that it contained the Galician SS Division, which was given "available for further employment" (zur Verfügung) within the 1st Armoured Army itself (then known as "Armeegruppe Raus" after its commander) on 15 July 1944 (Tessin, Verbände und Truppen..., vol. 2, p. 7). In any event, the Division was not under the XIVth Armoured Corps as stated by Stein (op.cit., p. 186) and Reitlinger (The SS - Alibi of a Nation, p. 203), as this Corps was near Florence at the time of the Brody battle.

⁷¹Along the Busk/Ozydiw/Oleski/Pidhirtsi/Huta/Majdan/Opoky/Buda/Chrylezkyk/Kniasch/Krasne line according to Klietmann (op.cit., p. 195)



THE BRODY POCKET.

formation was entirely surrounded and cut off from the German forces during the 19th/20th of July in what was known as the "Brody Pocket"⁷². The pathetic attempt to try and stem the mighty Russian advance had failed and those left alive in the pocket prepared to break out. About one man in five managed to escape during the night of the 21st/22nd of July but not all made for the German lines as will be seen later.

⁷²"Kessel von Brody".

The first serious combat engagement was a complete disaster and some attempt should be made to find the cause. While part of the blame can be laid on the Division's inexperience in the field, one can hardly say that a formation with a year's training behind it went into battle "inadequately trained"⁷³. A better assessment could be that its prolonged training was perhaps unsuited to the tough defensive warfare encountered at Brody, for the fact should not be ignored that originally it had been intended as a police division and its initial training had been for police duties.

While the possibility of poor German leadership and the certain lack of understanding on the part of the Germans in handling the Ukrainians should not be ignored, undoubtedly the one factor that contributed most to the Galician SS Division's ineffectual showing and near annihilation at Brody was the superiority enjoyed by the Russians both on the ground and in the air⁷⁴. The Division went into battle with its three infantry regiments only two battalions strong⁷⁵, vastly outnumbered, insufficiently armed and with no air support at all. As well as from material, manpower and tactical disadvantages, the formation also suffered from low morale before the battle had even begun. Disenchanted by the attitude of their commander and his German cadre of officers, its volunteers had seen the tide of war turn relentlessly against what they had thought to be the invincible Axis in a series of defeats and withdrawals. Also, their country was about to fall again to Russia and partisan activity was having its unnerving effect.

Those trapped in the Brody pocket still fit enough to contemplate escape, were faced with two alternatives... each seemingly as bleak as the other. They were cut off from the Germans and could expect neither help from them nor any fate better than death at the hands of the Russians or partisans. They could either try and make their way back to the German lines

⁷³Littlejohn, op.cit., p. 322.

⁷⁴According to Tys-Krokhmaliuk (see bibliography:p. 73) the Russians had 43 divisions, 1,800 tanks and 2,500 aircraft against the Germans' 17 1/2 divisions, 50 tanks and no aircraft.

⁷⁵The order of 1 June 1944, to provide the missing third battalions from the divisional training and replacement regiment, had not been put into effect by the time the Division was transferred to the Eastern Front (SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/8602/44).

and then be expected to carry on risking their lives in a struggle that had ceased to be their own, or they could escape for their own account and carry on fighting for survival and the Ukrainian cause without the assistance of the all but beaten Third Reich.

Those who ran the gauntlet of escape from Brody and lived did choose one or the other of these alternatives. One group set out on foot and passing through Sambor and the Uzhotsky Pass in the Carpathian mountains reached Carpatho-Ruthenia, a region occupied since 1939 by the Hungarians. There they rested at Seredne before being returned to Germany to be used for a reformed 14th SS Division. Others also headed for the Carpathians but chose to continue fighting in Poland. This they did for some years after the Second World War came to its end and when the Polish government sent large numbers of troops to suppress them in the autumn of 1946, they managed to force their way through Czechoslovakia and eventually found themselves in the American zone of occupied Germany. It was by then the Cold War and the incredulous ex-soldiers of the 14th SS Division received a warm welcome from their former enemies.

While some of their comrades were fighting on behind the Russian lines, others had returned via Hungary to the rapidly shrinking Third Reich. Freitag was not impressed with the Ukrainian's showing at Brody but Himmler, doubtless for political reasons, preferred to accept more favourable reports and instructed Freitag to reform the Division at Neuhammer. So the reforming of the near-annihilated Ukrainian Division was entrusted to the unpopular Fritz Freitag, the man some held at least partly responsible for the first failure of the Division itself. His attitude did not change and he proceeded to keep Ukrainian officers out of staff and command positions, reserving these for young German officers who are reported to have been inexperienced⁷⁶. Naturally, Freitag's popularity amongst the Ukrainians did not improve as a result.

At first sight, the reforming of the Division may seem to have been an ambitious project considering the heavy losses sustained at Brody and the relatively few survivors who managed to get back to Germany. One should not forget, however, that volunteers had stepped forward in 1943

⁷⁶ Heike, *op. cit.*, Ukrainian edition, p. 250.

in such large numbers that there were too many for the Division's needs and so the remainder had been organized into independent SS-Police regiments of three battalions each. These men were still available and in addition, there were the 8,000⁷⁷ men of the divisional training and replacement regiment and the third battalions of the three annihilated infantry regiments, which had not been formed in time to serve with the Division at Brody. To this reserve of untried volunteers, the 3,000 survivors of the Division's first and fatal battle were added to make up a completely new division⁷⁸.

Of the eight infantry regiments originally raised in Galicia, only the first three had been taken intact into the Galician Division in 1943. Then on 31 January 1944, the 6th and 7th had been disbanded and provided 1,945 additional young men for the formation at the "Heidelager" training area. On 9 June 1944, the 4th and 5th were likewise broken up and their men made available for the Division, but like the new infantry third battalions were not ready in time to suffer the crushing defeat at Brody. These were the men who made the reforming of the Division possible - if they had all been at Brody the outcome of the battle would doubtless have been the same and the Division's history would have stopped there in late July 1944. Instead, its rather uninspiring story was to be prolonged until the very end of the war in Europe.

The manpower was available and Himmler set the wheels into motion by writing to Hans Jüttner, Chief of the SS-FHA, on 7 August 1944⁷⁹. The Reichsführer-SS ordered that the 14th SS Division be reformed without delay at the Neuhammer training area in Silesia. The soldiers of the Division were to come from the survivors of the Brody battle, the divisional training and replacement regiment⁸⁰ and the untried third battalions of

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Der Reichsführer-SS, RF/M, Tgb.Nr. 111/1294/44 g.Kdos., v. 7.8.1944. The relative SS-FHA order was not published until the first week in September (SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 2880/44 g.Kdos., v. 5.9.1944, Neuaufstellung der 14. Waffen-Gren. Div. der SS (galizische Nr. 1)).

⁸⁰ SS-Waffen-Grenadier-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-Regiment 14 was transferred from Heidelager to Wandern near Frankfurt/Oder and then in September to Neuhammer.

the three divisional infantry regiments. To make up for German losses amongst the NCO corps, some 1,000 German NCOs were to be transferred to the formation⁸¹. Contemporary German documents show that the 14th SS Division was reforming under the C-in-C of the Replacement Army from August until November 1944.

Soon after work on rebuilding the Division had begun at Neuhammer, a crisis broke out in Slovakia. Faced with the impending Russian invasion, a revolt against the pro-German government of President Joseph Tiso was planned at Neusohl in the Carpathians and put into effect on 23 August 1944, by members of the Cabinet under Defense Minister General Catlos, backed by a group of the Army under General Golian. Russian agents had been instrumental in bringing about the revolt and two Russian airborne brigades were flown in and dropped behind the German lines to reinforce the rebels. The situation was very serious for the already disillusioned Germans - it threatened the very retreat of the 8th Army from Galicia.

If the revolt was to be put down effectively, it had to be done at once and without suitable troops in the immediate vicinity, the Germans had to improvise. While the SD hunted the leaders, the immediate need for armoured fighting troops was met by forming an ad hoc armoured regiment from a Waffen-SS school and a training and replacement battalion in the neighbouring Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia⁸². The Regiment moved on the center of the revolt at Neusohl and managed to take the town and capture many of the leaders. In the meantime, it had been decided to call in other Waffen-SS troops and reinforced battalion groups from the 14th Galician and 18th "Horst Wessel" Divisions were ordered to Slovakia⁸³. A battle group was ordered on 22 September 1944, made up of a reinforced infantry battalion. To this base provided by the IIIrd Battalion of Waffen-

⁸¹These were probably Luftwaffe groundcrews and if they did join the Division, they did not do so immediately (P.H.B.)

⁸²Staff and cadets from the SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Schule in Kien-schlag and SS-Pz.-Gren.-Ausb.-u. Ers.-Btl. 10 in Brno (Brünn). The Regiment was SS-Pz.-Gren.-Rgt. "Schill", reported variously as having been formed on 20 July 1944, as an "Alarmeinheit"; September 1944 (W.A.St.) and October 1944 as a garrison for Bratislava (Pressburg).

⁸³Part of Slovakia was then being referred to by the Germans as a "protection zone" (Schutzzone Slowakei).

Gren.Rgt. der SS 29, were added a light infantry gun platoon and a medium anti-tank gun section⁸⁴. The battle group was led by the commander of the divisional artillery regiment, SS-Obersturmbannführer Friedrich Beyersdorff⁸⁵, and thus was known as SS-Kampfgruppe "Beyersdorff". It arrived in Slovakia from the east.

precisely what part Beyersdorff's men played in the quelling of the Slovak uprising is unclear and as the rebels were fellow Slavs it is possible that their rôle was purely nominal, perhaps merely releasing German combat troops from routine duties. After a short time, Beyersdorff and his men rejoined the rest of their Division, which had been transferred to Žilina in Slovakia in the latter part of September 1944⁸⁶, to complete its combat training, keep order and clear the region of the remaining partisans.

It is of interest to note in passing that Himmler appointed Gottlob Berger as C-in-C of Slovakia on 31 August 1944⁸⁷ as he felt him capable of restoring some semblance of order in the Slovak puppet state after the revolt. But Berger was only in command for two weeks⁸⁸ before being re-

⁸⁴P.H.B. Heike, German ed., p. 141, states that the battle group was somewhat stronger, being composed of a battalion from Waffen-Gren. Rgt. der SS 29, supported by a light battery, two sections of the anti-tank battalion, two engineer platoons, part of the signals battalion and supply troops.

⁸⁵Heike, German ed., p. 141, gives SS-Obersturmbannführer Karl Wildner as commander of the battle group, but this is unconfirmed. Wildner commanded the IIIrd Battalion of Waffen-Gren.Rgt. der SS 29 that formed the basis for the group and so presumably came under Beyersdorff. A further report states that the divisional elements that took part in the suppression of the Slovak revolt were grouped into SS Battle Group (SS-Kampfgruppe) "Wittenmeyer". No confirmation has yet been found to support this version and in fact no officer by the name of Wittenmeyer has been identified as having served with the Galician Division...although there was SS-Hauptsturmführer Willemayer who at one time commanded the IInd Battalion of the 31st Regiment. Possibly Willemayer served under Beyersdorff in SS-Kampfgruppe "Beyersdorff" at the time of the Slovak revolt.

⁸⁶The Division was ordered from Neuhammer to Slovakia for continuation of its reforming and training on 28 September 1944 (SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 3411/44 g.Kdos., v. 28.9.1944). Heike (op.cit., Ukrainian edition, p. 250) says it moved in early October and Tessin does not show the Division in Slovakia until December 1944 (due to delays in field post number allocation probably: op.cit., vol. 3, p. 314).

⁸⁷After the war, Gottlob Berger stated (Interrogation Summary 1086) that he was placed in charge of Slovakia in August 1944.

placed by SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS und Polizei Hermann Höfle. The latter became the Higher SS and Police Leader in Slovakia with his seat in Bratislava and succeeded in pacifying the country with the help of Einsatzgruppe "H" under SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr. Josef Witiska⁸⁹ and other units.

The Division's numbers were further made up by using former members of the Schuma⁹⁰ battalions and refugees. It is to be noted that these men came from the Ukraine as a whole, not just from Western Ukraine or Galicia. It was not long before the Galician/Ukrainian problem would be resolved for once and for all.

During October and November 1944, the Division continued its seemingly endless reforming under the C-in-C of the Replacement Army (nominally under Army Group "A") and on 1 November 1944, its training and replacement regiment was also transferred from Neuhammer to Slovakia, there being stationed in Žilina. Also in that month, the vexed question of national identity was brought up again and at long last resolved. By that late stage in the war, the Nazi's old fears of Ukrainian unity had given way to more important and pressing problems and in any case the Germans had been driven out of both Galicia and the Ukraine by the Russians. On such safe ground, Germany made the then meaningless gesture of recognizing the Ukraine and to supply a much needed boost to Ukrainian national pride, the 14th SS Division was finally recognized as being a Ukrainian rather than a Galician formation and was renamed as such by 12 November 1944. The change was officially noted by the SS Liaison Officer at the High Command of the Army⁹¹ on that date but apparently was never

⁸⁸Interrogation Summary 667 (Berger).

⁸⁹Witiska is also reported to have commanded five commandos of security police while in Slovakia. Whereas Berger denied the participation of Einsatzgruppen (Interrogation Summary 1086), SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr. Werner Kirchert of Einsatzgruppe "H" said he was with this unit in Slovakia in late December 1944 (Interrogation Summary 975). According to Summary 1085, the unit was known as Einsatzgruppe "8" and as "H" is the 8th letter of the alphabet there is little doubt that they were one and the same.

⁹⁰Abbreviation of "Schutzmannschaften" which were auxiliary police raised by the Germans in the conquered eastern territories. The Ukrainian (i.e. including Galician) Schuma battalions raised in the General Government were numbered in the 200+ series and wore a circular yellow and blue cockade on their caps bearing a trident.

communicated or confirmed to the Ukrainians, who had to wait for this satisfaction until April. As far as the Germans were concerned, the Division's title now ended with "(ukrainische Nr. 1)" rather than the previous "(galizische Nr. 1)".

The Division had suffered one crushing defeat and its reforming, which had begun in August 1944, was not completed - as Himmler had demanded in an order dated 29 September 1944 - by the end of the year. This peaceful inactivity, while the Third Reich was collapsing in ruins, was not to remain hidden from Hitler for long, but as 1945 opened, the Ukrainian SS Division was still reforming in Slovakia under the control of the SS-FHA⁹² and on 15 January was still near Žilina. On 26 January 1945, orders were received for the Division's transfer to Southern Steiermark and Slovenia and in February it passed through Bratislava and Vienna⁹³. The following month it arrived at Marburg and was ordered to Yugoslavia to assist in the fight against Tito's partisans. After a forced march, the Division arrived towards the end of February and, taking up positions on both sides of the former Austro-Yugoslav frontier, was immediately ordered against Tito's partisans with instructions to secure the area and complete its training. Such plans were cancelled, however, and the very existence of the Ukrainian SS Division placed in jeopardy on 23 March 1945, when Adolf Hitler at last discovered that the formation was 14,000 strong, well armed⁹⁴ and yet had been inactive since Brody. He was furious that while his other SS divisions had been fighting almost to the last man or boy in the death throes of what he had planned to be the Thousand Year Reich, the Ukrainians had been reforming for five months far away from the fighting. In a rage, he ordered the Ukrainians to be disarmed

⁹¹Verbindungsoffizier der SS beim OKH - abbreviated as V.O.SS.

⁹²Between August and November, the reforming had been carried out under the C-in-C of the Replacement Army. From December 1944 to March 1945, it was supervised by the SS-FHA which signified that it was once again ready for operations.

⁹³On 1 February 1945, the Division's training and replacement regiment was at Cadca in Slovakia. The OKW war diary entry for 2 February confirms that the "14. SS-Division (Galizien)" was to be transferred to Vienna (Lagebuch 2.2.1945, Slowakei, KTB/OKW, IV, 1065), yet the same source for 1 March still showed it as being in Slovakia.

⁹⁴Hitler said the formation had enough arms for two divisions. See Stein, op.cit., pp. 194-195.

at once⁹⁵ and on 4 April 1945, an order was given that the Division and its equipment should be incorporated into the newly-formed 10th Parachute Division of the Luftwaffe⁹⁶. The decision was reversed, however, on 15 April and the Ukrainian SS Division absorbed some 3,000 to 4,000 Luftwaffe ground crew, men who had presumably been intended for the parachute division. Charts show the Division in Steiermark under the 1st Cavalry Corps, 2nd Armoured Army in April 1945, with its training and replacement regiment at Deutschlandsberg near Graz in Austria.

Rather than disband the formation, Hitler decided to hand it over to the recently organized Ukrainian National Army (U.N.A.)⁹⁷ under General-Poruchnyk* Pavlo Shandruk⁹⁸. This seemingly magnanimous gesture was merely a device to bolster Ukrainian morale and try and keep them fighting alongside the Germans to the bitter and pointless end.

Shandruk had planned on gaining control of the Division in March 1945, and had decided to name it the "First Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army"⁹⁹. He visited the formation for the first time on 19 April and is said to have exchanged harsh words with Fritz Freitag, demand-

*Equivalent to Major General rank (British and U.S.).

⁹⁵Heike (op.cit., Ukrainian edition, p. 251) says that the order to disarm the Division "temporarily" (his quotation marks) was received on 20 March 1945, but was not carried out as the Red Army had broken through the front around Gleichenberg-Feldbach. He adds that the Division was placed under the 2nd Armoured Army on 31 March 1945.

⁹⁶Formed in March 1945 in the Krems, Brunn, Graz, St. Püllen, Melk area from men of the 1st and 4th Parachute Divisions. It was forming in Austria under the C-in-C "South" during April 1945.

⁹⁷As has already been seen, Hitler finally recognized the Ukraine in early 1945. The U.N.A. was set up to become the army of the new Ukrainian Republic.

⁹⁸Born on 28 February 1889. A former staff officer of the Polish Army and before that a soldier in the Ukrainian Republic of 1919-1921. Various authors have attributed Shandruk with SS rank and have even credited him as being commander of the 1st Division of the U.N.A. (i.e. what had previously been the 14th SS Division). There is no evidence to support Reitlinger's statement that he "wore the uniform of an SS-Gruppenführer" (The House built on Sand, p. 365), nor Duprat's that he was an SS-Standardartenführer (op.cit., p. 357 - it would have been a "Waffen-" rather than an "SS-" prefix to the rank in any case). In his autobiography, at least Shandruk makes no mention of having been in the Waffen-SS. He was the overall Ukrainian leader and head of the Ukrainian National Committee and appointed General-Khorunzhyi (equivalent to Brigadier General) M. Krat to command the 1st Division of the U.N.A.

ing that the designation "1st Galician" should be changed at once for the more correct "1st Ukrainian" and that a written order should be issued to that effect. It has already been seen above how this decision had been taken in Germany, the previous November, and had been noted by the SS Liaison Officer at OKH on the 12th of that month. It would appear that either nothing had been done about it or, which would be most unlikely, the change had been made without Shandruk being made aware of it. In any event, divisional order No. 71 was issued on 27 April 1945 to correct the title¹⁰⁰.

Himmler agreed to hand the Division over to Shandruk as the "1st Division of the Ukrainian National Army" and between 25 and 30 April 1945, the men took a new oath of allegiance to the Ukrainian nation. On 25 April, they were already wearing newly manufactured Ukrainian insignia in place of the old Galician ones¹⁰¹. Two days later, on 27 April, divisional commander Fritz Freitag officially handed over his formation to the Ukrainians and Shandruk took it over as the 1st Division of his U.N.A.

In its new capacity, the Division saw only limited action in Austria before the war ended. Managing to avoid contact with Yugoslav troops but engaging the Russians briefly, it withdrew through Tamsweg and Judenburg towards Radstadt, and was in the line in the Feldback area near Graz¹⁰². It finally surrendered to the British¹⁰³ near Radstadt on 8 May 1945, and when Shandruk successfully convinced his captors that he

⁹⁹1. ukrainische Division der ukrainischen National-Armee in German or Persha Ukrains'ka Dyviziiia Ukrains'koi Natsional'noi Armii transliterated from Ukrainian.

¹⁰⁰P.C.T. Verheye, letter dated 5 March 1974.

¹⁰¹Heike (op.cit., Ukrainian edition, p. 252) says that from the time the Division swore loyalty to the Ukrainian nation, its men wore the Ukrainian national emblem... the trident, on their headgear. When the Division was taken over by the U.N.A. the insignia of rank of that organization were also adopted.

¹⁰²Shandruk makes no mention of the "unexpectedly tough resistance at Graz in Austria at the end of the war" (Reitlinger, The SS - Alibi of a Nation, p. 203, fn. 3), yet Heike (op.cit., Ukrainian edition, p. 251) says the Division distinguished itself while holding a sector of the front along the Austro-Hungarian border until the capitulation.

¹⁰³The majority of the Division surrendered to the British, but a few to the Americans.

and his men were Poles rather than Russians, they were spared the unenviable fate that would surely have followed compulsory repatriation to the Soviet Union. So after struggling to be recognized as Ukrainians rather than Galicians by the Germans, the men of the former 14th SS Division saved their lives by claiming to be Galicians after all. Rather than being returned to Russia for extermination like the Cossacks, they negotiated with the British Army and retreated from the front across the mountains to a region agreed upon by the British. At this stage, the German personnel left the formation and Fritz Freitag chose suicide to surrender. The Ukrainians were interned in the pleasant surroundings of Rimini, an Italian seaside resort on the Adriatic once much favoured by Mussolini. They survived the war and many, like Shandruk himself, emigrated to the United States, while others went to live in England, South America and elsewhere. It is interesting to note in conclusion that a decoration commemorating the Division's participation in the Brody battle instituted in 1949 was manufactured in England in 1952, and that the Statutes of the "Commemorative Badge of the 1st Ukrainian Division of the U.N.A.¹⁰⁴ and the Battle of Brody" were published in Ukrainian at Croydon, Surrey in 1951.



COMMEMORATIVE BADGE FOR
THE BATTLE OF BRODY.

¹⁰⁴Of course at the time of the Brody battle, the formation was known as the "14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (galizische Nr. 1)" and not "1. ukrainische Division der U.N.A." as claimed by the veterans - doubtless they would prefer to forget that they were ever members of the Waffen-SS.

Order-of-Battle¹⁰⁵

(COMPOSITE)

* = unconfirmed

Stab der Division

SS-Kradmeldestaffel*

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)/SS-Kartenstelle 14

SS-Musikzug

SS-Div.-Begleit-Kompanie 14*

Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 29 (ukrainisches Nr. 1) (formed at Heidelberg in September 1943 as SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 1 (Gal.) and then became SS-Freiwilligen-Grenadier-Regiment 1. Renumbered on 22.10.1943 from SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 1 (Galizische Division) to SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 29, and nationality added on 22.1.1944 making title: SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 29 (galizisches Nr.1). Renamed on 27.6.1944 as Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 29 (galizisches Nr. 1) and final Waffen-SS title adopted on 12.11.1944. Its IIIrd Battalion, which may in fact never have been completed, was detached in January 1944 and while a new one was ordered on 1.6.1944, it was used to reform SS-Füsilier-Bataillon 14(106). Regiment was completely rebuilt in August/September 1944 after the Brody battle. A IIIrd battalion is shown in an official German chart dated 1.3.1945).

Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 30 (ukrainisches Nr. 2) (formed at Heidelberg in September 1943 as SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 2 (Gal.) and then became SS-Freiwilligen-Grenadier-Regiment 2. Renumbered on 22.10.1943 from SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 2 (Galizische Division) to SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 30, and nationality added on 22.1.1944, making title: SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 30 (galizisches Nr.2). Renamed on 27.6.1944 as Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 30 (galizisches Nr. 2) and final Waffen-SS title adopted on 12.11.1944. Its IIIrd Battalion was detached in January 1944, and while a new one was ordered on 1.6.1944, this was not formed before the Regiment was destroyed at Brody. Regiment was completely rebuilt in August/September 1944. No IIIrd battalion is shown in an official German chart dated 1.3.1945).

Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 31 (ukrainisches Nr. 3) (although not listed in SS-FHA document of 22.10.1943, this Regiment is also said to have been formed at Heidelberg in September 1943 as SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 3 (Gal.) and then became SS-Freiwilligen-Grenadier-Regiment 3. Renumbered on 12.11.1943 from SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 3 (Galizische Division) to SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 31 and nationality added on 22.1.1944, making title: SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 31 (galizisches Nr. 3). Renamed on 27.6.1944 as Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 31 (galizisches Nr. 3) and final Waffen-SS title adopted on 12.11.1944. Its IIIrd Battalion was detached in January 1944 and while a new one was

¹⁰⁵Only the German titles of the elements of this Division are given and no attempt has been made to give the corresponding Ukrainian terminology or the structure of the Division once it left the Waffen-SS and became the 1st Division of the U.N.A.

¹⁰⁶The Field Post Number of the IIIrd Battalion of the 1st Regiment (III./1.) was reallocated to SS-Füsilier-Bataillon 14 and this change appeared in the lists dated March 1944.

ordered on 1.6.1944, this was not formed before the Regiment was destroyed at Brody. Regiment was completely rebuilt in August/September 1944. No IIIrd battalion is shown in an official German chart dated 1.3.1945).

SS-Waffen-Füsilier-Bataillon 14 (formed in Poland in January 1944 from the III Battalion of SS-Freiw.-Rgt. 1 (Gal.). It escaped from Brody and was reformed in September 1944 as Füsilier-Bataillon/14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (galizisches Nr. 1).

SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung (Gal.)/SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 14/SS-Panzerjäger-Kompanie 14/SS-Waffen-Panzerjäger-Kompanie 14 (formed in Poland in August 1943. Gained a Fla-Kompanie of 2cm guns when the Division lost its Flak-Abteilung(107).

SS-Freiwilligen-Panzerjäger-Kompanie 14 (destroyed at Brody).

Waffen-Artillerie-Regiment der SS 14 (formed in Poland in August 1943, as SS-Artillerie-Regiment (Gal.). Numbered on 22.10.1943 as SS-Art.-Rgt. 14 and reformed in September 1944 after having escaped from the Brody battle. It received its final designation on 27.6.1944).

SS-Flak-Abteilung (Gal.)/SS-Flak-Abteilung 14/SS-Freiwilligen-Flak-Abteilung 14 (formed in Poland in August 1943 and was numbered on 22.10.1943. Destroyed at Brody and not reformed(107).

Waffen-Nachrichten-Abteilung der SS 14 (formed in Poland in August 1943 as SS-Nachrichten-Abteilung (Gal.) and was numbered on 22.10.1943 as SS-Nachrichten-Abteilung 14. Later renamed as SS-Freiw.-Nachr.-Abt. 14 and received its final title on 27.6.1944. Destroyed at Brody).

SS-Radfahr-Bataillon (Gal.)/SS-Radfahr-Bataillon 14 (formed in Poland in August 1943 and disbanded in June 1944).

Waffen-Pionier-Bataillon der SS 14 (formed in Poland in August 1943 as SS-Pionier-Bataillon (Gal.) and was numbered on 22.10.1943 as SS-Pionier-Bataillon 14. Later renamed as SS-Freiw.-Pi.-Btl. 14 and received its final title on 27.6.1944. Destroyed at Brody).

SS-Versorgungs-Kompanie 14/Versorgungs-Rgt. Stab 14*

SS-Div.-Nachschubtruppen/SS-Nachschubtruppen (14. Div.)

Kdr. SS-Div.-Nachschubtruppen 14 (established in August 1943 /Dinafü (Versorgungs-Rgt. Stab 14 was redesignated to SS-Divisions-Nachschubführer 14 in September 1944).

1. - 2. SS-Fahrschwadron (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Werkstatt-Kompanie (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Nachschub-Kompanie (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 14/SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abteilung 14 (formed in August 1943 and redesignated on 15.8.1944).

SS-Bäckerei-Kompanie 14 (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Schlächtere-Kompanie 14 (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Verpflegungs-Amt 14 (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Sanitäts-Abteilung 14 (formed in Poland in August 1943).

1. SS-(Waffen-) Sanitäts-Kompanie 14 (destroyed at Brody).

2. SS-(Waffen-) Sanitäts-Kompanie 14 (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Feldlazarett.

SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Kompanie 14 (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Zug 1

SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Zug 2

SS-Truppen-Entgiftungs-Zug

SS-Veterinär-Kompanie 14 (possibly there were two - one was destroyed at Brody).

SS-Feldpostamt 14 (destroyed at Brody).

SS-Kriegsberichter-Zug/Trupp (mot.?) 14.

SS-Feldgendarmarie-Trupp 14 (possibly reached company strength. Destroyed at Brody).

SS-(Div.-)Feldersatz-Bataillon 14 (formed in 1943 from personnel of the III battalions of the Division's infantry regiments. First appeared in the Field Post Number lists of January 1944. It consisted of 5 companies).

NOTES:

a. SS-Ausbildungs-Bataillon z.b.V. (SS-Freiw.-Div. "Galizien"), SS-Tr.-Üb.-Pl. Heidelager was the nucleus of the Division and was reported in a document dated 30.7.1943.

b. While not constituent elements of the Division the following were either absorbed by it or provided personnel:

galizisches SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 4 (Polizei) (formed by the Orpo in July 1943 and disbanded on 9.6.1944 when its men went to the Division).

galizisches SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 5 (Polizei) (formed by the Orpo in the General Government in July 1943 and absorbed I.Btl. of Polizeischützenregiment 32. Saw action against partisans in Poland before being disbanded on 9.6.1944 when its men went to the Division).

galizisches SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 6 (Polizei) (formed by the Orpo on 6.8.1943 with its cadre coming from Polizeischützenregiment 32. Disbanded in southern France on 31.1.1944 when 1,200 of its men went to the Division at Heidelager).

¹⁰⁷ As a result of an order dated 28 June 1944, whereby all Waffen-Grenadier-Divisionen lost their Flak-Abteilungen.

galizisches SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 7 (Polizei) (formed on 12.8.1943 (108) from the HQ and 2 companies of the I. Btl. of Polizei-Regiment 8 and disbanded on 31.1.1944 when 745 of its men went to the Division at Heide-lager).

galizisches SS-Freiwilligen-Regiment 8 (Polizei) (it is not known whether this Regiment was ever formed. It was to have been formed in November 1943 by the demobilization office (Abwicklungsstelle) of Police School (Polizei-Waffenschule) IV, Maastricht).

Polizei-Regiment "Galizien" / Polizei-Schützen-Regiment "Galizien" (believed to have been the unofficial title for either the Division itself, one of its three infantry regiments, or one of the 5 independent regiments listed above. It was reported on 20.3.1943 and is said to have been 3,500 strong). An unsupported report states that the Regiment was formed at Rowne and led by General Anatol Stupnytskyi.

DIVISIONAL STRENGTHS*

| Date | Officers: | NCOs | Men | Total |
|----------|-----------|-------|--------|--------|
| 31.12.43 | 256 | 449 | 11,929 | 12,634 |
| 30. 6.44 | 346 | 1,131 | 13,822 | 15,299 |
| 20. 9.44 | 261 | 673 | 11,967 | 12,901 |
| 1. 3.45 | | | | 14,000 |

*Actual strengths (including men in hospitals, on detachment or on leave)/Iststärke.

¹⁰⁸Tessin, op.cit., vol. 3, p. 84, states that this Regiment was formed on 29 September 1944 by the C-in-C of the Orpo in Paris.

¹⁰⁹If this date is correct, it is not known who commanded the Division from its creation on 28 April 1943 until July of that year - possibly no one. Kletmann, op.cit., p. 197, shows the date of Schimana's appoint-

Divisional Commanders

July 1943¹⁰⁹ - 19 November 1943 _____ SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS
Walter Schimana (110)

20 November 1943 - 27 April 1945 _____ SS-Oberführer (promoted to SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS und Polizei on 20 April 1944)
Fritz Freitag (111)

.....

27 April 1945 - 8 May 1945 _____ General-Khorunzhyi M. Krat
Pidpolkovnyk (equivalent to Lt. Col.) Porfirii Silenko (112)



SS-BRIGADEFÜHRER UND
GENERALMAJOR DER WAF-
FEN-SS UND POLIZEI FRITZ
FREITAG

ment as 15 July 1943. He was shown as being responsible for the forming of the Division in the SS-FHA order of 30 July 1943 (SS-FHA, Kommando Amt der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb.Nr. 982/43 g.Kdos., v. 30.7.1943, Aufstellung der SS-Freiw. Division "Galizien").

¹¹⁰Schimana may have been replaced as he was more an administrator than a military commander. It is unlikely that he was dismissed as a result of German/Ukrainian friction within the Division as Landwehr suggests, for his subsequent posting to Greece as Higher SS and Police Leader was certainly not a sign of disapproval.

¹¹¹Committed suicide (Heike, op.cit., Ukrainian edition, p. 252) at the beginning of May 1945 (Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 361).

¹¹²Silenko may never have actually commanded the Division but may have been the senior officer in the prisoner-of-war camp.

NOTES:

1. Pavlo Shandruk was the overall Ukrainian leader but never commanded this Division.
2. Reports of other commanders of this Division appear to be unfounded (113).

CHIEFS OF STAFF:

SS-Sturmbannführer Behrendt
Major Wolf-Dietrich Heike¹¹⁴

Divisional and Unit Insignia

It has been difficult to find hard and fast rules for the insignia worn by this Division since (a) men joining it from other organizations are known to have retained their old insignia for some time, and (b) various changes took place. The insignia situation will consequently be examined at the various stages of the Division's history.

- a. 30 July 1943¹¹⁵ - ?
Those under the rank of SS- (or Waffen-) Standartenführer of all elements wore a plain black right-hand collar patch (116).
- b. ? - November 1944¹¹⁷
Those under the rank of SS- (or Waffen-) Standartenführer of all elements wore the rampant lion of Galicia on the right-hand collar patch (118). The insignia of Galicia, a golden lion rampant and 3 ducal crowns

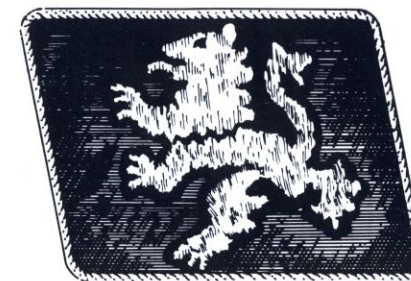
¹¹³Examples are Karl von Treuenfeld (Duprat, op. cit., p. 400) and Rudolf Pannier (Feldgrau of 1 April 1965). SS-Standartenführer Pannier did command Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 31 in late 1944 and early 1945.

¹¹⁴Listed as SS-Sturmbannführer Wolf-Dieter Heike in Stellenbesetzungsliste der Waffen-SS, v. 1.3.1945. While the abbreviation "Dieter" for "Dietrich" is understandable, it is interesting to note the SS rank... throughout his history of the Division, Heike contends he never held SS rank and in fact his photograph shows him in the uniform of an Army Major (see photo of Wächter and him, however, on page 25).

¹¹⁵This is the date from which the Division can be taken as having been formed. As insignia had not been manufactured in advance, no badges were worn until some time after this date.

¹¹⁶This had been ordered on 28 April 1943 and was confirmed in SS-FHA, Kommando Amt der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb. Nr. 982/43 g. Kdos., v. 30.7.1943, Aufstellung der SS-Freiw. Division "Galizien".

¹¹⁷12 November is sometimes taken as this was when the Division's title was ordered to be changed from "Galician Nr. 1" to "Ukrainian No. 1". This change had been eagerly awaited by the Ukrainians and doubtless some saw fit to manufacture their own Ukrainian insignia beforehand - it



STITCHED-ON OFFICER'S COLLAR PATCH



MACHINE-WOVEN EM PATTERN

A WAFEN-STURMMANN FROM THE DIVISION.

appears that the Ukrainians were, however, not made aware of the change until April 1945. Those who joined the Division from the Ukrainian Liberation Army (Ukrains'ke Vyzvol'ne Viis'ko - U.V.V. - "YBB" in Cyrillic characters), possibly retained the special insignia of that organization and the same is certainly true of many former members of the Ukrainian Schuma battalions. Apart from these unofficial instances, the actual change from Galician to Ukrainian insignia may not have come until later, when the Division was handed over by the Germans to Shandruk as the 1st Division of the U.N.A. and thus adopted the Ukrainian trident cap badge. In any event, special Ukrainian insignia were ordered from Prague and were being worn by 25 April 1945.

¹¹⁸Such a "non-Germanic" division as this should never have been permitted the "honour" of wearing the SS runes on the collar patch and in fact the plain black right-hand collar patch was ordered on 28 April 1943, for wear prior to the introduction and issue of the lion pattern. Possibly reports of members of the Division wearing the SS runes on the collar are instances of German cadre personnel, but where these were members of the SS, the runes should more correctly have been worn on the left breast. Officially, the runes should not have been worn on the collar and anyone who did so was breaking regulations. At first, cloth lions were merely stitched onto the already issued plain black collar patches (top illustration), whereas later collar patches were issued with the lion device machine woven. According to one unconfirmed source, Himmler ordered the discontinuance of the aluminum thread version for officers as this reflected too much light and was an unwise decoration in combat.

on a sky-blue field (119), were worn by all ranks on a shield on the upper right arm (120).

c. November 1944¹¹⁷ - April 1945¹²¹

Those under the rank of SS- (or Waffen-) Standartenführer of all elements may have adopted the "Trident of Volodymyr the Great" (122) on the right-hand collar patch, but all ranks are thought to have retained the Galician arm shield as described above (123).

d. April 1945¹²¹ - 8 May 1945

Once the formation became the 1st Division of the U.N.A., a metal cockade with the trident which had been instituted by Shandruk in April 1945 and ordered from Prague was worn on all caps. This was being worn by members of the Division on 25 April 1945.



THE GALICIAN SLEEVE SHIELD



SLEEVE SHIELD OF THE UKRAINIAN LIBERATION ARMY (U.V.V.)

¹¹⁹The golden crowned lion on a blue field was taken from the last royal coat of arms of mediaeval Ukraine as it was introduced by King Lev Danylovych (1264 - 1301). Note that Lev = Leo = lion.

¹²⁰Photographs show this shield being worn on either the upper left or upper right sleeve. Shields known to have been worn were larger than the standard Waffen-SS pattern and were not bordered in black cloth as was customary. It is of interest to note that the final pattern Waffen-SS sleeve shield for Galicia illustrated on "Tafel 5" (see vol. 3, p. 156, fn. 75) was the only one not to have had the black border. Possible explanations are that it was the result of local manufacture or that at the design stage, these badges had been intended for wear by police units.



FREITAG AND HIMMLER REVIEW A SIGNALS UNIT IN MAY 1943 (NOTE SLEEVE SHIELD).



¹²¹See footnote 9 on page 10.

¹²²"Tryzub Volodymyra Velykoho". This was the oldest Ukrainian emblem of national significance, Volodymyr the Great having lived between 979 and 1015. The trident appeared on the sleeve shield of the U. V. V. (see illustration) and on a circular yellow and blue cockade worn by Ukrainian (i.e. Galician) Schuma raised in the General Government. It was also embossed on a metal cap badge and is known to have been worn by at least some members of the Division (see note 4 on page 54).

¹²³See note 117 above. A degree of confusion was caused by the non-standardization of insignia once the Division became Ukrainian. As

NOTES:

1. No cuffband was worn by this Division¹²⁴.
2. SS members wore the SS runes on the left breast of the tunic (125).
3. The Dean of the Division is said to have worn "a lion on his sleeve and crosses on his collar" (126).
4. In at least one recorded example, a metal cap badge bearing an embossed trident was worn in conjunction with the lion collar patch (127) (see photo). This would not appear to be the trident badge introduced when the Division became the "1st Division of the U.N.A." and being worn by 25 April 1945 (as illustrated by Heike, op.cit., Ukrainian edition, opp. p. 137, and by Tys-Krokhmaluk, op.cit., opp. p. 145). What appears in the photograph could be a circular badge, possibly a case of a member of the Galician Schuma continuing to wear his (black?) cap and yellow and blue circular trident cap badge with his newly-issued field-grey Waffen-SS uniform. This was certainly unofficial for the Germans would have insisted on this Ukrainian (rather than Galician) badge being removed, and the correct Waffen-SS headgear (with Totenkopf and Hoheitsabzeichen) worn in its place. Possibly such insignia was put on again when the Division was detached from the Waffen-SS and joined the U.N.A.



THE UKRAINIAN TRIDENT CAP BADGE

far as officialdom was concerned, the formation was Ukrainian from 12 November 1944 but remained within the Waffen-SS until it was handed over to Shandruk in April 1945. Many Ukrainians, however, including Shandruk himself, do not seem to have been made aware of this change. During this period, the Galician lion collar patch is thought to have been replaced by the Ukrainian trident but the sleeve shield was left unaltered (this combination is illustrated in the "1.2.1945 map"). It would seem natural for the Galician sleeve shield to have been replaced by something more associated with the Ukraine as a whole, the trident for example, but this does not appear to have been the case. When Shandruk reached his men in the Feldbach area near Graz in the last days of the war, they were apparently wearing a lion on the sleeve. If any Ukrainian sleeve shields were being worn then, they could either have been hand-made or left-overs from the U.V.V., Schuma or other Ukrainian organizations. Once the Division became the 1st Division of the U.N.A. it is said to have been ordered to replace its "German eagles and other badges of the W-SS" with the trident cockade illustrated which, according to Heike (op.cit., Ukrainian edition, caption to photograph facing p. 137) was "the trident insignia to be worn on the cap of the soldiers of the Division" which had been instituted by General P. Shandruk in April 1945. These badges must have been the special Ukrainian insignia ordered from Prague and being worn by the men of the Division on 25 April 1945.

¹²⁴See *Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS*, 5. Jahrgang, 15.2.1944, Nr. 4, Z. 64 and SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/9542/43 geh., v. 12.11.1943 *Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS*. The manufacture of fake cuffbands was inspired by the illustration of such spurious patterns as "Galizien" and "1-Galizien-1" in books published in the late 1960s.

¹²⁵For illustration see vol. 2, p. 126.

¹²⁶Shandruk's autobiography, pp. 261-262.

¹²⁷This mixing of the Galician lion with the Ukrainian trident may appear inconsistent but is supported, nonetheless, by the "1.2.1945 map" (vol. 3, p. 91, fn. 42), where the trident collar patch (of the simple 3-pronged type admittedly) is shown together with the Galician lion and crowns sleeve shield.



(ABOVE) NOTE SLEEVE SHIELD IS WORN ON THE RIGHT SLEEVE. (RIGHT) IT APPEARS THAT THE RAMPANT LION IS THE CUT-OUT VERSION AND IS ATTACHED DIRECTLY TO THE COLLAR.



The photo at left shows Ukrainian volunteers taking the oath of allegiance to Hitler on the crossed Reich War Flag and the Ukrainian National Flag (the trident on a field of gold and light blue).

DIVISIONAL VEHICLE SYMBOL

1. The rampant lion and three ducal crowns of Galicia in yellow on a light blue background (128).



2. No confirmation has been found for the introduction and use of a trident, either from 12 November 1944 when the Waffen-SS recognized the formation to be Ukrainian, or from 25 April 1945 when the formation became the 1st Division of the U.N.A.

¹²⁸ An Allied Intelligence Report of January 1944 described it as being on a square background (German Divisional Emblems, Military Research Section, London, MIRS(D) - EMB-1/45, January 1945).

W

JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES



15. Waffen-Grenadier-Division
der 4 (lettische Nr. 1)

EVOLUTION AND TITLES OF 15. WAFEN-GRENADIER-DIVISION DER SS
(lettische Nr. 1)

25 February 1943¹ - 22 October 1943 — (15.)² Lettische SS-Freiwilligen-Division (3)
22 October 1943⁴ - (15) June 1944 — 15. Lettische SS-Freiwilligen-Division (5)
(15) June 1944⁶ - May 1945⁷ — 15. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (lettische Nr. 1)(8)

NOTE:

At no time was this Division officially named either "Latvija" or "Lettland".

¹Sources (e.g. Manpower Study and Finke) that state that the Division was formed ten days earlier confuse the dates of the entry of the OKW War Diary (KTB/OKW 14.2.43) and the SS-FHA order (Kdo. Amt. der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb. Nr. II/1144/43 geh., v. 15.2.1943) with the date this order was to take effect (25 February 1943). See Klietmann, op.cit., p. 199. Tessin (op.cit., vol. 4, p. 20) states that formation began with an order of 10 February 1943, and here he refers to the relevant Führerbefehl. In fact the Division, which was supposed to be ready in June 1943, took from March to November of that year to raise.

²Unofficially so numbered from its creation since it was the 15th division of the Waffen-SS to be raised. According to Klietmann, op.cit., p. 199, the number appeared in the SS-FHA order of the 15 February 1943 (see above under first note) and so would appear to have been official since then. On the other hand, the number was not always given in official documents (e.g. Gesamtstärke der Waffen-SS am 31. Dezember 1943, given by Klietmann, p. 507).

³Also called simply "Lettische Division". Manpower Study gave the incorrect forms "Lettische SS-Freiwilligen-Infanterie-Division" and "Lettische SS-Freiwilligen-Grenadier-Division" as being in use in October 1943. These titles may have been used unofficially, however. The form "1. Division der lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion" was used by Hansen in orders of 19 March 1943.

⁴SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Amt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g. Kdos., v. 22.10.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

⁵Forms existed where the adjective "Latvian" appeared in brackets and with a small letter, e.g. "15. (lett.) SS-Freiwilligen-Division" (Silgailis, p. 347). In Latvian, the title was : 15. (latv.) SS-brīvprātīgo divīzija (ibid).

⁶Reports vary as to the date the final form was adopted and include April 1944 (Manpower Study) and August 1944. It was in use as early as 30 June 1944 (Gesamtstärke der Waffen-SS am 30. Juni 1944, see Klietmann, op.cit., p. 508) and as Tessin and Finke agree on June 1944, this has been taken for want of more definite evidence. In fact, Finke gives 15 June 1944, and this may have some foundation, in spite of the fact that he erroneously gives this as the date the title "Lettisch SS-Vol.-Div."

History



The tide of war had turned against the Germans in the winter of 1942 and the SS planners were obliged to turn to such unlikely stock as Yugoslav Moslems and Ukrainians for their new divisions. Then it was the turn of the Baltic States and before the war was over no less than five divisions had been planned, three of which were to be realized. Two of them were raised in Latvia and what follows is the story of the first Latvian SS Division. Before attempting to cover its history in detail, it would be well to continue the practice set in earlier chapters and provide a brief background sketch to Latvia itself. Particular emphasis will be given to the historical facts that led the men of the Third Reich to look so favourably upon Latvia, and the Latvians themselves to come forward in such numbers to enroll in the ranks of what was not only the army of their invader, but also their nation's traditional enemy.

Latvia was one of the three Baltic States, bound on the north by the Gulf of Riga and Estonia, on the east by Russia, on the south by Byelorussia and Lithuania, and on the west by the Baltic. The country had not enjoyed a particularly happy history and its people, mainly Lutherans except for the Roman Catholic Latgalians in the east, have always been dominated by one foreign power or another. They have endured Swedish and Polish domination, but by far the strongest influences stem from the very two countries that were to prompt the raising of the Latvian SS, Germany and Russia.

The Teutonic knights colonized Latvia and so it is not surprising that German influence was very strong by 1795 when the country was finally and completely annexed to Russia⁹. The German minority continued to wield

was adopted. It is possible that the nationality was added some time after the "Waffen-" form was introduced.

⁷Some were taken prisoner by the Americans on 27 April 1945, while others fell to the Red Army in early May.

⁸The formation's final title in Latvian is 15. ieroču SS grenadieru divīzija (latv. Nr. 1) (Silgailis, op.cit., p. 347).

⁹Courland (Kurland in German) was the last part of Latvia to fall under Russian control in 1795 - northern Latvia had fallen in 1721 and Latgale in 1772.

enormous political and economic power as well as cultural influence and it was to take a century before the virtual running of the country was taken from them. Between 1795 and 1882, no less than 24 out of 27 Governors were Germans.

Latvian nationalism finally flared up in the 19th century and this was mainly directed against the rich German landowners. Attempts to undermine the influence of the German upper class began in the 1880's and took the form of Russification which was taken up by the Czarist government in 1908.

The Germans were already unpopular when, upon the outbreak of the First World War, it was declared that Latvians would fight Germany in the ranks of the Russian Army. In 1915, German troops occupied Courland and the Russians evacuated some 355,000 Latvians to relative safety.

It was during the First World War that the Latvian leaders at last made a bid for independence and at a conference held in Riga in July 1917, appealed to their Russian masters for political autonomy. Events overtook the attempt, for Riga fell to the Germans on 3 September of that year and in November the communists overthrew Kerensky and seized power in Russia. So rather than being granted political freedom by the Russians,



the latter were obliged to cede Latvia with the other Baltic countries to Germany by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (3 March 1918) and in the following month a German-controlled administration (Landesrat) was set up in Riga to bring the country back under Prussian control. Of course, such plans were in turn scotched when the war ended with Germany's defeat and the Latvian National Council proclaimed independence for its people on 18 November 1918. Yet the precious freedom from foreign domination that had eluded the Latvians for so long was not to be theirs before more fighting and more Russian and German occupation. First the Russians invaded and took Riga on 3 January 1919, only to be ousted by the Germans on 22 May. The following month the Estonian Army defeated the Germans, but it took another defeat in November before the latter were finally forced to withdraw to East Prussia. With the Germans gone, it only needed driving the Russians out of Latgale in January 1920 to allow Latvia to savour freedom a little more.

The newly independent Latvia signed a peace treaty with Russia in Riga on 11 August 1920, and on 15 February 1922, a constitution was adopted which made Latvia a republic. These first years of independence were fraught with political instability and crisis, the premiership changing hands no less than 18 times between 1918 and 1934.

In 1935, the German minority numbered 62,000, or 3.2 percent of the population¹⁰, and pro-Nazi tendencies were looked upon with dismay and suspicion by the struggling Latvian leaders. Attempts were made to curb the extreme politics of this minority group and included the suppression of the Latvian branch of the Baltic Brotherhood (Baltische Bruderschaft) whose declared aim was the incorporation of the Baltic countries into the Third Reich. Even so, the situation deteriorated further and faced with a possible take-over by a Latvian fascist organization called the Thundercross (Perkonkrusts), a state of siege was declared in May 1934. All political parties were dissolved and under a corporative form of government the

¹⁰ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1960 ed., p. 763.

situation began to improve. But fate continued to look unkindly upon Latvia and she was soon to be swept into the chaos of war. The Second World War was about to break over Europe and as a result of the German-Soviet non-aggression treaty of 23 August 1939, Latvia was signed over to Russia. In October 1939, a month after Germany had precipitated the war by invading Poland, Latvia was forced to sign a treaty of mutual assistance with Russia, whereby she had to grant military bases to the Red Army. Russia completed the take-over by invading Latvia and the other Baltic States on 16 June 1940, occupying, annexing and transforming them into constituent republics of the Soviet Union. Latvia was back under total Russian oppression and subjected to the reign of terror and deportations that this entailed.

As a result of Russian excesses, a large number of Latvians began to look on any alternative to Russian occupation as an improvement. Therefore, many were able to overcome their traditional dislike of the Germans and greet them as liberators when the Wehrmacht, having turned on their former allies at dawn on 22 June 1941, drove them northwards and eastwards and so from Latvian soil. Riga fell to the Germans at the beginning of July and not long thereafter the Baltic States were back at the mercy of their other oppressor. Except for the Jews and others they considered "undesirables", the Germans did in fact prove to be an improvement upon their predecessors. Fear of the Russians ever returning made some Latvians amenable to the idea of joining the Germans in their "crusade against Bolshevism", and it is estimated that during the Second World War about 165,000 Latvians assisted in the German war effort in one capacity or another. A large proportion were members of the Latvian SS.

Plans had been laid, even before Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941, as to how Germany would administer the occupied eastern territories. The Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories¹¹ had been set up under Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg¹² while Russia and Germany were

¹¹Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete (R.M.f.d.b.O.) or Ostministerium.

¹²Reitlinger (*Alibi of a Nation*, p. 475) states that Rosenberg was appointed Minister of the R.M.f.d.b.O. in April 1941. His appointment, however, was not declared until 17 July of that year and then Hitler held



REICHSLEITER ALFRED ROSENBERG

still allies and a Reich Commissariat¹³ was formed to control the Baltic States and Byelorussia. These four countries were to be considered and governed as a unit which the Germans chose to call the "Ostland" (literally "East Land"). The Gauleiter of Schleswig-Holstein, Hinrich Lohse, was appointed Reichskommissar of the Ostland (R.K.O.).

The SS lost no time in establishing themselves in the newly formed Ostland and an SS Main District (SS-Oberabschnitt) of that name was formed under SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei Friedrich Jeckeln¹⁴ at Jacobstrasse 11, Riga. Jeckeln was also the Higher SS and Police leader (HSSPF) for the Ostland and under him came SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Polizei, Dr. Walther Schröder as SS and Police Leader for Latvia (SSPF Lettland, also based in Riga).

back the announcement since he wished it to coincide with that of the fall of Moscow or Leningrad (see Cecil, p. 196). It was finally announced on 18 November 1941.

¹³Reichskommissariat für das Ostland. Divided into Generalkommissariate with subordinate Gebiets- (district) and Stadt- (city) kommissariate.

¹⁴By 9 November 1944, his rank had been raised to SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS und Polizei (Dienstaltersliste der SS der NSDAP, Stand vom 9.11.1944).

Schröder arrived in the Latvian capital in August 1941 and took over, amongst other things, urban and country Latvian police elements that SS-Brigadeführer Walter Stahlecker¹⁵ had formed during the previous month in collaboration with the commander of the "North" Rear Area¹⁶. Schröder needed trustworthy Latvian police units to relieve the Germans of the need to keep order in general and to combat the partisans in particular, and started to raise security battalions. These were the Schuma battalions¹⁷ which, as has already been seen in the previous chapter, were raised in the Ostland, central Russia, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, the Crimea and the General Government. The original intention was to use them for police duties and as such they came under the control of the Higher SS and Police leaders in these areas, or Jeckeln/Schröder in the case of Latvia. Himmler wanted to take the Latvian Schuma battalions into the SS but the heavy losses sustained by the Germans in the Russian winter counteroffensive of 1941/42, forced the Army to fall upon them as reserves and to fill gaps in the front lines. The first Latvian Schuma battalion to be sent to the eastern front was the 16th¹⁸ and it left home on 22 October 1941. It and the many others that were to follow were inadequately and unsuitably trained, equipped and armed for such fully-fledged warfare and in spite of reported bravery, heavy losses were unavoidably sustained. Raised as police and used as cannon-fodder, the Schuma were to fall into Himmler's clutches and were to form the basis of the Latvian SS.

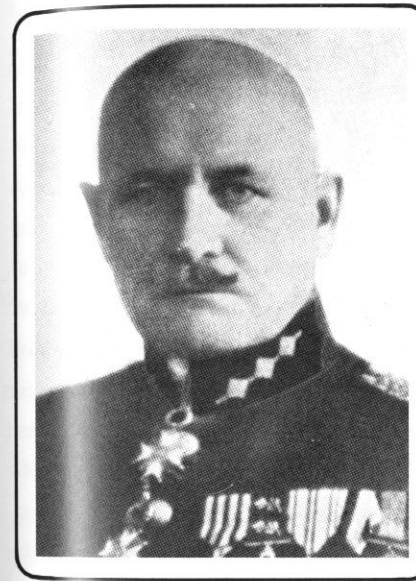
¹⁵Stahlecker took command of the infamous Einsatzgruppe "A" in 1941 which followed Army Group "North" during the attack on Russia through the Baltic States towards Leningrad, liquidating large numbers of Jews, partisans and others considered by the Nazis to be "undesirable". His Einsatzgruppe was the first to see action in the partisan war when Russian partisans were discovered around Leningrad in late September 1941. Stahlecker was killed during these operations in early March 1942. (See Höhne, op.cit., pp. 358 and 369).

¹⁶Kommandeur für das rückwärtige Gebiet Nord.

¹⁷Schutzmannschafts-Bataillone. The Germans began forming these auxiliary security police units (at first under another name) as soon as they arrived in Latvia. Himmler ordered on 15 January 1942, that the "Eastern" Schuma should come under the jurisdiction of the SS and Police (SS- und Polizeigerichtsbarkeit - Look, see bibliography, p. 202f). Himmler renamed the Latvian Schuma battalions as "Latvian Police Battalions" (Lettische Polizeibataillone) with effect from 24 May 1943 (HSSPF "Ostland" to Bangerskis J./Gy., Riga, den 22. Juni 1943).

¹⁸16. lett. Pol.-Btl. - see note 17 above.

As can be expected in any occupied country, a group of collaborators under puppet leaders emerged in Latvia after the German invasion of July 1941. One of the most noted of these was Rudolf Bangerskis who, born on 21 July 1878, had not only been a former Latvian general but also Minister of War. Bangerskis and his followers were nationalists with a burning hatred for the Russians, but while they wished to fight on the eastern front their ideas on just how this should be done were not in complete agreement with what the Germans had in mind for them. Rather than see Latvians lose their national identity by being taken into German elements, they looked to the raising of closed Latvian elements. When permission was given to Estonia on 1 October 1942, to raise an SS-Legion, they petitioned Hinrich Lohse for the reestablishment of a 100,000 strong Latvian army. The prospect of Latvians lending a hand on the Russian front was attractive to the Germans and to the SS in particular, but they were wary of this proposal. Gottlob Berger mounted an investigation and later reported to Himmler that the Latvians were merely trying to gain political advantage. He counselled his master that if the Latvians were really so keen to fight the Bolsheviks, then they should demonstrate the fact by making themselves available to the Reichsführer-SS as volunteers. Provided they were found to be racially acceptable, they could be used for police battalions for fighting the partisans, or even as a Latvian legion¹⁹.



RUDOLF BANGERSKIS,
LATVIAN MINISTER OF WAR.

From a racial point of view, Himmler looked favourably upon the Latvians as a suitable source of fresh (and by then, much needed) manpower for the Waffen-SS. Ignoring the fact that they were racially far removed from his Aryan ideal, he was perhaps impressed by the many blond, blue-eyed

¹⁹C.d. SS-HA, V.S. Tgb.Nr. 5081/42, v. 11.12.1942, Unternehmen Lettland (NO 3300).

specimens that resulted from past admixtures of Scandinavian and German blood during the country's many occupations²⁰. He thus favoured Berger's suggestion which also came at a time when the German situation in the east was fast becoming critical at Stalingrad. Seeing the adverse trend the war was taking, and wishing to add Latvians to the already considerably mixed bag of foreigners in the Waffen-SS, Himmler agreed and presented the proposal to Hitler in a report of 23 January 1943. The idea also appealed to Hitler and he approved and ordered the raising of a "Latvian SS Volunteer Legion"²¹. The plan could thus go ahead and as a basis for the Legion, Himmler chose four Schuma battalions²² that were serving under the 2nd (motorized) SS Infantry Brigade²³ on the Leningrad front²⁴. On 24 January, the day after he had obtained Hitler's approval to create the Legion, Himmler sent a radio message²⁵ to the commander²⁶ of the SS Brigade advising that the four Latvian police (ex-Schuma) battalions under his command had been upgraded to the status of a Latvian SS Legion. On 30 January, Himmler recorded in a memorandum that "the Führer has agreed to and ordered the formation of a Latvian SS Volunteer Legion on the basis of my report of 23 January 1943". Hitler signed a brief order authorizing the raising of the Legion at his HQ on 10 February 1943²⁷. In this, he stated that the Legion's size and nature would depend upon the number of Latvians available for it.

Setting out to woo volunteers, the Reichsführer-SS and his henchmen took up the cause of independence and autonomy for the Baltic States. Since

²⁰Reitlinger, *Alibi of a Nation*, p. 205.

²¹Lettische SS-Freiwilligen-Legion.

²²Lett. Pol.-Btle. 16, 19, 21 and 24.

²³2. SS-Infanterie-Brigade (mot.).

²⁴It is possible that Himmler's intention was to designate all the then extant Latvian Schuma battalions as forming part of the Legion - this certainly became the position later as will be seen below.

²⁵Funkspruch RFSS-Kdr. 2. SS-Inf.-Brig. (mot.), v. 24.1.1943.

²⁶The day the message was sent, SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Gottfried Klingemann was commanding the Brigade. Two days later, Klingemann took over command of SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz and his place was taken by SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Fritz von Scholz, who led the Brigade until 1 May 1943.

²⁷Führerbefehl, F.H.Q., den. 10.2.1943.

general mobilization was incompatible with the status of an occupied country under the Hague Convention, they set out to provide the Ostland with sovereignty under the protection of the Reich. In February 1943, Rosenberg's Eastern Ministry drew up a statute of autonomy for the three Baltic States, but, in spite of Himmler's endorsement, Hitler would have none of it and turned the proposal down on 8 February 1943.

The men of the SS-FHA were suitably optimistic over the willingness of the Latvians to join the Waffen-SS that they abandoned the original concept of a Legion for expansion on a grander scale. Rather than look to the type of Legion raised in Scandinavia and the Low Countries in 1941 (all of battalion strength, except for the three-battalion strong Dutch Legion) and in Estonia in 1943 (originally equivalent to a regiment), the decision was taken to use the term "Legion" generically in the case of Latvia. All Latvians serving in the Waffen-SS and Police were to be considered as being members of the Latvian Legion, which was consequently far larger than any legion previously raised.

Even at this early stage, the decision had been taken to raise a Latvian division of the Waffen-SS within the Latvian Legion. On 15 February 1943, the SS-FHA ordered that a "Latvian SS Volunteer Division"²⁸ should be raised with effect from the 25th of that month in the Reichskommissariat Ostland in collaboration with the local Higher SS and Police Leader²⁹. More details of the new formation were forthcoming from Berlin in a further SS-FHA order of 26 February³⁰. This opened by confirming that the "15th Latvian SS Volunteer Division"³¹ had been duly established on the previous day in the Ostland in collaboration with the HSSPF. The raising and training of the new division were to be controlled by a formation staff³² under the command of SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS

²⁸Lettische SS-Freiwilligen-Division.

²⁹SS-FHA, Kdo. Amt der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb. Nr. II/1144/43 geh. v. 15.2.1943.

³⁰SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb. Nr. II/1501/43 geh., v. 26.2.1943, *Aufstellung der 15. Lett. SS-Freiw.-Div.*

³¹15. Lettische SS-Freiwilligen-Division.

³²Aufstellungsstab.

Peter Hansen³³, who was to have the same authority as a divisional commander, and the HSSPF was to recruit the necessary officers, NCOs and men. The language of command was to be Lettish and the same special version of the SS oath, as had been authorized for the Ukrainians of the 14th SS Division, was adopted:

"Ich schwöre bei Gott diesen heiligen Eid, dass ich im Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus dem Obersten Befehlshaber der deutschen Wehrmacht, Adolf Hitler, unbedingten Gehorsam leisten und als tapferer Soldat bereit sein will, jederzeit für diesen Eid mein Leben einzusetzen."

"I swear by God this holy oath, that in the struggle against Bolshevism I will give the C-in-C of the German Armed Forces, Adolf Hitler, absolute obedience and as a fearless soldier if it be his will I will always be prepared to lay down my life for this oath."

Weapons, equipment, vehicles and horses were to be supplied within the bounds of possibility by Section Ib of Office VI and Office X of the SS-FHA and in fact the reservation was not unfounded as it later proved necessary to postpone the delivery of weapons and equipment which had been due for delivery in March to mid-April. As far as uniforms were concerned, normal SS rank insignia were to be worn on the left collar patch but as no national patch had by that date been devised, the men of the Division were to wear a plain black, right-hand collar patch. Overall control of the new Division during its planning and forming stages was to be exercised by the SS-FHA itself.

The success of the operation depended upon letting the Latvians feel they were running it themselves and Himmler chose Latvians for key positions in the Latvian SS Legion and its constituent division. With effect from 1 March 1943, Rudolf Bangerskis was promoted to Legions-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion and entrusted with the command of the Division, which was referred to as the "1st Division of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion"³⁴. From the same date, fifty-one year

³³ Hansen commanded the Division until early May 1943. On 15.5.1943, he was attached to the SS-FHA before being sent to Italy where, under the orders of the Highest SS and Police Leader, he helped establish and then led the Italian SS Legion. In early 1945, Hansen became Chief of Staff of the XVIIIth SS Army Corps.

³⁴ 1. Division der Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion.

old Arturs Silgailis was appointed Legions-Standartenführer and Chief of Staff of the Division³⁵.

Bangerskis set about recruiting his men and in March a recruiting office³⁶ was opened. He was in this period promoted to the rank of SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS and Inspector General of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion³⁷.

The preparatory work done, it was now up to Bangerskis, his aides, their recruiting office and the will of the Latvian people to supply the men that Hansen would need to build up his new division and have it ready for the June 1943 deadline. The first difficulty arose when it was found impossible to recall the Schuma/Police battalions, that had been named "Latvian SS Volunteer Legion", from Volkhov on the Leningrad front. Had they been available as originally intended, Hansen's task would have been simplified, for at least he could have used the four battalions as a framework upon which to build the Division. But nothing could be done to get the Latvian SS men home and so Hansen was obliged to build up his formation in Latvia from scratch. This was not to prove simple on account of the reluctance of the Latvians to step forward and aggravated further by the inefficiency of the recruiting office to process those Latvians who actually had volunteered. As has been seen above, the ultimate responsibility for the Division's recruiting program fell upon the shoulders of the HSSPF and Jeckeln was obliged to look to conscription as early as February 1943. He wrote to Himmler on the 19th of that month advising that those born between 1919 and 1925 were to be called up³⁸. The Germans had consequently made a lie of the word "Freiwilligen" (volunteer) in the Division's title before it had even been formed, and this designation was to remain until June of the following year.

The introduction of conscription did not solve the manpower shortage for the Latvian puppet regime continued to be slow and inefficient in calling

³⁵ Legions-Standartenführer und Ia der I. (sic) Division der Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion. Both the orders for Bangerskis and Silgailis were headed "Der Befehlshaber-SS der Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion, Riga, den 19. März 1943 Vorläufige Verfügung" and signed by Hansen.

³⁶ Heimatwerbestelle.

³⁷ Generalinspekteur der lettischen SS-Freiwilligen-Legion.

³⁸ HSSPF Riga, Nr. 607, v. 19.2.1943 (NO 3302).

up the men. Berger drew Himmler's attention to the problem in a letter of 15 April 1943, in which he stated that by that date, only 2,478 of the 15,025 men who had been registered had in fact been called up³⁹. To aggravate matters even further, Hansen had to cope with a shortage of barracks and instructors for those men he was able to lay hands on⁴⁰. Also, the Division was not to have the benefit of any of the Latvian SS men made available when the four Schuma battalions were eventually dissolved and their men repatriated. These battalions were to be used instead, along with the 18th and 26th Schuma battalions, for the raising of a second Latvian formation within the Latvian Legion, an SS Brigade which was later up-graded to become the 19th SS Division⁴¹. It is believed, however, that other Schuma battalions dissolved in this period did provide men for the 15th SS Division⁴².

Himmler had to clarify the status of the "Legion" in an order of 24 March 1943⁴³. Here he explained how the term "Latvian Legion" (Lettische Legion) was a collective designation for all those in the Latvian elements of the Waffen-SS and Police, to be more precise in the Latvian SS Brigade, the Latvian SS Volunteer Division and the Latvian Police Battalions⁴⁴. In spite of this clarification, doubt and confusion must have persisted in certain quarters for Himmler was obliged to clarify the situation to the

³⁹ RFSS, C.d. SSHA Be/Rü Az. 2. (NO 3379).

⁴⁰ Letter from Berger to Himmler: RFSS, C.d. SSHA, Be/Rü, V. S. Tgb.Nr. 3564/43 geh., v. 4.5.1943 (NO 3303).

⁴¹ The 16th, 19th and 21st Schuma battalions formed the Brigade's first infantry regiment (later Lett. Gren.-Rgt. 39) and the 18th, 24th and 26th its second (later Lett. Gren.-Rgt. 40). The Latvian SS Volunteer Brigade was formed by adding these and other Latvians to the predominantly native and racial German survivors of the 2. SS-Inf.-Brig. (mot.), to which the original four Schuma battalions making up the Latvian Legion had been attached on the Leningrad front. This Brigade was up-graded to become a sister division to the 15th in January 1944 and its detailed history will be found under the 19th SS Division in Vol. 5.

⁴² Since the field post numbers of Lett. Pol.-Btle. 17, 27, 28 and 269 were cancelled in this period, it is possible that men from these battalions joined the 15th SS Division.

⁴³ See Jeckeln to Bangerskis, J./Gy., Riga, den 22.6.1943, which mentions RF-SS "Erlauss von 24.3.1943".

⁴⁴ The name Himmler gave to the Schuma battalions on 24 May 1943.

HSSPF "Ostland" and heads of the Order Police, Security Police and SS-FHA in a memorandum of 26 May 1943⁴⁵. Here the meaning of the term "Legion" was given and the fact that it came under the RFSS underlined. Its representative during its formation and stay in the area of SS Main District "Ostland" was given as the HSSPF "Ostland" and Himmler listed the constituent elements that had been raised to date. The same explanation was relayed by Jeckeln to Bangerskis in a letter dated 22 June 1943⁴⁶.

The original plan was to have the Division ready by June 1943, but the various difficulties already described prolonged the exercise. No exact date can be given for the forming of the Division, although such are to be found in various post-war sources⁴⁷. Its original components were formed between March and November 1943 as follows:

23. 3.1943 - Divisional staff at Riga
- 4.1943 - Artillery regiment at Jelgavā (Mitau in German)
3. 5.1943 - Infantry Regiment 32 at Paplaka near Liepāja (Libau)
6. 6.1943 - Anti-tank unit at Grobina near Liepāja (Libau)
26. 6.1943 - Staff of Infantry Regiment 33 at Vainoņe near Priekule
12. 7.1943 - Infantry Regiment 34 at Cēsis (Wenden)
- 7.1943 - Anti-aircraft unit in Lilaste (48)
1. 8.1943 - Signals battalion at Tukumā (Tuccum)
- 8.1943 - Engineer battalion at Ventspils (Windau) (49)

⁴⁵ Der RFSS, Feld-Kommandostelle, den 26. Mai 1943, Niederschrift für den HSSPF "Ostland", Chef der Orpo, Chef der Sipo, Chef des SS-FHA.

⁴⁶ Jeckeln to Bangerskis, J./Gy., Riga, den 22.6.1943.

⁴⁷ a. Divisional elements raised in Latvia during April 1943 (Daugavas Vanagi). See note below.

b. Formed in August 1943 from Latvian Schuma-Btle. (Polizei-truppe) (Keilig).

c. Formed in September 1943 from the Latvian Legion (Tessin-Verbände und Truppen..., vol. 4, p. 21).

⁴⁸ Formed at Grobina according to Daugavas Vanagi.

⁴⁹ Formed at Jelgava according to Daugavas Vanagi.

NOTE:

Originally the title of the Latvian soldiers' newspaper published during the war, the name "Daugavas Vanagi" was given to an organization formed on 28 December 1945 in a British POW camp in Belgium. Today this Latvian émigré organization publishes historical material on the Latvian forces in W.W.II. Its name can be translated as "Falcons of the Daugava", the Daugava (or Zapadnaya Dvina) being the river which runs through Latvia and flows into the Gulf of Riga, at Riga.

12.11.1943 - Infantry reconnaissance (Füsilier-)battalion at Ventspils
 17.11.1943 - IInd Bn., Infantry Regiment 33 at Vainoðe
 19.11.1943 - Ist Bn., Infantry Regiment 33 at Vainoðe
 11.1943 - Field replacement battalion at Paplaka

N.B. Fuller details of the dates and locations of the raising of the Division's original and subsequent elements can be found under the composite order-of-battle given later in this chapter.

During the months it took to raise the Division, plans were made and changed a number of times as to its composition. The most significant change was the reduction from three battalions to two of the Division's three infantry regiments⁵⁰.

Work on raising the 15th SS Division and the Latvian SS Brigade continued simultaneously and on 18 May 1943, the SS-FHA ordered that those members of the Legion not in the Division should be used for the Brigade⁵¹. The Legion was soon to be dissolved, however, and with effect from 1 December 1943, it ceased to exist and its men were absorbed by the 15th Latvian SS Division and the Latvian SS Brigade. In building up the Brigade, the 15th Division was weakened when it had to provide artillery, anti-aircraft and veterinary sub-units.

The Latvian recruiting office continued to be rather inefficient and so Himmler welcomed the suggestion that Bangerskis should take it over himself, assisted by a staff of four Latvian officers. He telegraphed his agreement to the heads of the SS-FHA and SS-HA as well as to Hansen in Riga on 24 May 1943⁵², confirming that Bangerskis and his staff should receive equivalent rank and pay in the W-SS to those they had had in the Latvian Army⁵³. To help with the Legion's (and consequently the Division's) manpower needs, he agreed that the minimum height requirement should be

⁵⁰In the chart OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Org. Abt. I/3290/43 geh. Kdos. v. 15.7.1943, OKH/Chef. H. Rüst. u. B. d. E./AHA. Iu. IV Nr., 3519/43 geh. Kdos., v. 13.7.1943, the Regiments were shown with three battalions each, while the number was reduced to only two in SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb. Nr. 1299/43 g. Kdos., v. 22.9.1943 (T-175, Roll 108, Frame 2632405), and OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Org. Abt. II Nr. 12808, v. 28.9.1943 (T-175, Roll 174, Frame 2709416).

⁵¹SS-FHA, Kdo. Amt der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb. Nr. 660/43 geh. Kdos., v. 18.5.1943.

⁵²RFSS, Bra/V., Fernschreiben an 1. Chef des SS-FHA, 2. Chef des SS-HA, 3. SS-Brif. Hansen, den 24. Mai 1943.

lowered to 1,64 meters, but that it should be 1,68 meters for the Brigade. Here is a pointer to the later emergence of the Brigade as the senior of the two formations. In his telegraph message, Himmler went on to welcome the founding of the Association of Friends of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion⁵⁴ under the patronage of the Generalkommissar of the Ostland, and he went so far as to make a donation of 20,000 Reich Marks. Finally, Himmler stated that SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Carl Graf von Pückler-Burghaus⁵⁵ was to take over the forming, training and leadership of the Division⁵⁶.



JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES

PÜCKLER-BURGH AUS (CENTER) AND HIS STAFF.

Even with Bangerskis directly in charge, the recruiting office failed to produce the results the Germans needed and one good reason was the very real requirements of Latvia's own war industry. It was decided that mobilization of the Latvians (along with the Estonians) should be entrusted to Himmler, and Hitler's decision to do so appeared in the OKW diary under

⁵³It is strange that this needed mentioning in the case of Bangerskis, for he had been appointed a Legions-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor on 1 March 1943, and was promoted soon after to SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS.

⁵⁴Gemeinschaft der Freunde der lettischen SS-Freiwilligen-Legion.

⁵⁵This German-Balt's surname was given simply as "Pückler" in the Dienstaltersliste der SS der NSDAP, and in correspondence.

⁵⁶In fact, Himmler referred again to the "lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion".

the date 2 December 1943⁵⁷. The SS consequently took over the 50 recruiting offices that the German Army had opened in Latvia during 1943, and an SS recruiting office⁵⁸ equivalent to a German military district HQ⁵⁹ was opened in Riga and began to help with the selection process. This move by the SS to look after mobilization themselves, rather than leave it to the Latvian collaborators, was obviously successful at least in part, since Berger was able to note an improvement in the situation in February 1944⁶⁰.

The need for a higher formation to provide the necessary strategic command for the two Latvian SS formations had been realized for some time and Berger mentioned the possibility of forming a Latvian army corps as early as 17 April 1943⁶¹. The SS-FHA established the headquarters of the VI. SS-Freiw.-Korps on 8 October 1943⁶², and it was formed at Grafenwöhr. Corps troops were raised which at first were numbered 106, but were later renumbered by the addition of a base of 400 to become 506⁶³. At the beginning of July 1944, in common with other non-German formations, both the constituent 15th and 19th SS Divisions lost their anti-aircraft units⁶⁴, which were merged to form SS A.A. Unit 106/506⁶⁵ for the defense of the VIth SS Army Corps.

An SS-FHA order of 22 October 1943⁶⁶ implemented the decision to number all divisions of the Waffen-SS in the sequence in which they had been

⁵⁷KTB/OKW, 2.12.1943, III/2, 1328f.

⁵⁸SS-Ergänzungskommando, Riga. This was later renamed SS-Ersatzkommando Ostland, was located at Hamburgerstrasse 27/29 in Riga, and had a branch office (Nebenstelle) in Reval. In June 1944, it was upgraded to Ersatzinspektion Ostland and was moved to Jakobstrasse 11, Riga (Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin, 15.6.1944, Nr. 12, Z. 306).

⁵⁹Wehrbezirkskommando.

⁶⁰C.d. SSHA/Be/We, Adjtr. Tgb. Nr. 340/44 geh., v. 10.2.1944 (NO 3308).

⁶¹RFSS, C.d. SSHA, Be/Rü Az 2, v. 17.4.1943 (NO 3379).

⁶²SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1471/43 g.Kdos., v. 8.10.1943, Aufstellung des Gen.-Kdo. VI. SS-Freiw.-Korps. (T-175, Roll 111, Frame 2635214f).

⁶³See vol. 2, p. 40 in this series.

⁶⁴SS-Flak-Abteilungen.

⁶⁵SS-Flak-Abteilung 106/506.

formed and so the "15." in the Division's title became official at last, even though it had been used since the very beginning. The same order renumbered all divisional infantry regiments in a single sequence and so those of the Latvian Division were redesignated thus:

| From: | To: |
|---|-----------------------|
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 1 (Lettische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 31 |
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 2 (Lettische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 32 |

Shortly thereafter, on 12 November 1943, the SS-FHA published another order⁶⁷ which showed the formation as having three infantry regiments rather than two. As a result of a similar expansion within the 14th SS Division, the renumbering within the 15th had to be modified as follows:

| From: | To: |
|---|-----------------------|
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 1 (Lettische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 32 |
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 2 (Lettische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 33 |
| SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 3 (Lettische Division) | SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 34 |

The nomenclature of the divisional infantry regiments, and also that of its artillery regiment, was altered yet again by an SS-FHA order dated 22 January 1944⁶⁸. This implemented the decision that all non-German SS volunteer regiments should have their nationality... and a progressive numeration within that nationality... added parenthetically at the end of their titles. Consequently the 15th SS Division's regiments took on the following titles:

- SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 32 (lettisches Nr. 1)
- SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 33 (lettisches Nr. 2)
- SS-Freiw.Gren.Rgt. 34 (lettisches Nr. 3)
- SS-Freiw.Art.Rgt. 15 (lettisches Art.Rgt. Nr. 1)

The Division, which should have been ready for battle in June 1943, was still forming and training under the C-in-C Replacement Army in November of that year⁶⁹. Such preparation had to be interrupted that month

⁶⁶SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.10.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

⁶⁷SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/9542/43 geh., v. 12.11.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

⁶⁸SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 166/44 g.Kdos., v. 22.1.1944, Bezeichnung der SS-Freiw.Rgter.

when the formation was ordered to the northern sector of the eastern front to try and contain the Russian advance in the Nevel area. The divisional HQ was set up a kilometer to the north of the Widumka railway station, but its elements were initially not to serve together as a formation but were rather attached to the German divisions in the area of the 16th Army, Army Group "North"⁷⁰. The Russian offensive began on 18



SHAPE PICTORIAL SECTION

RUDOLF BANGERSKIS, AS GENERAL INSPECTOR OF THE SS LATVIAN VOLUNTEER LEGION.

⁶⁹Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen...*, vol. 4, p. 22, and *Manpower Study*.

⁷⁰16. Armee, Heeresgruppe "Nord".

November 1943, and the Latvians were engaged in the Pustoshka/Majevo/Novosokolniki area. It was at Novosokolniki, later in the year, that the divisional elements were united and the 15th SS Division, then under the XXXXIIIrd Army Corps, 16th Army, fought as a formation for the first time⁷¹.

The defensive battle near Nevel ended on 5 January 1944, only to reopen north of the town on the 14th...this lasting until the middle of February. During January 1944, the Division was under the XXXXIIIrd Army Corps, VIth SS Volunteer Corps, 16th Army, Army Group "North" and in the Pskov (Pleskau) area.

To make up for losses sustained once the two Latvian formations were at the front, more men were required for the Waffen-SS and so the calling up of other year groups was made necessary. On 26 January 1944, Bangerskis, in his capacity of General Inspector of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, ordered the enlistment of men born in 1917 and men born in 1910. All available Latvians were being drafted and Latvian factories and firms were only permitted those workers born between 1906 and 1924, who were unfit for military service.

At the beginning of February 1944, the Division left its 34th and part of its 33rd infantry regiments behind at Novosokolniki under the VIth SS Corps, 16th Army, and moved towards the northeast and the town of Bebelka, about 30 kilometers south of Staraya-Russa. There it established a front along the western bank of the Radja River under the Xth Army Corps, 16th Army⁷².

The Russians continued their attack on Nevel and the Division was engaged in defensive fighting until 15 February 1944. Two days later, SS-Oberführer Nikolaus Heilmann, formerly Chief of Staff of the VIth SS Corps, took command of the Division and on 18 February⁷³, seeing little option

⁷¹Some reports say the divisional elements were attached to German divisions at the end of December 1943, and even as late as February 1944, but the Division's first action was at Novosokolniki at the end of 1943, under the 16th Army, when it fought as a whole.

⁷²Some reports suggest that the two regiments left behind had in fact been attached to German divisions since the Latvians' arrival on the eastern front...see note 71 above. *Manpower Study* gives the Xth Corps under Gruppe "Friessner" in February 1944.

but to withdraw, ordered his men to give up their positions on the Radja. The Division fought rearguard actions during the following ten days, during which time the Latvians were forced back past the Polist' River, Chikhachevo and Novorzhev. The 15th SS Division sustained heavy losses in the process and it was only scattered remnants that eventually gathered at the so-called "Panther Position"⁷⁴ on the Velikaya River, about 40 kilometers south of Ostrov on 28 February. At the "Panther Position", the 15th SS Division not only linked up with its 34th and that part of its 33rd infantry regiments that it had left behind at Novosokolniki, but also with its sister division and fellow component of the VIth SS Corps, the 19th SS. This was the first time since the establishment of the Latvian higher formation that its two constituent divisions were to be together.

The 15th SS Division took up its positions at once and on the day after its arrival at the "Panther Position" was holding a 30 kilometer front along the Velikaya in the area of Novi-Putj-Puschkinskije Gori.

The Russian advance was gaining momentum and it was by now only a matter of time before the Germans and their allies were to be driven westwards out of Russia. To the Germans, that was another serious setback in the war, but to the Latvians of the VIth SS Corps it was the nightmare of renewed Russian occupation and domination come true, for they had no illusions as to their fate should they be unfortunate enough to ever fall into the hands of the Red Army alive. So the men of the 15th SS Division fought desperately to stem the Russian advance, but the situation was quite hopeless and their losses merely postponed the inevitable by a matter of days.

In March, both Latvian SS divisions made up the VIth SS Corps, which came under the 18th Army, Army Group "North" and between the 4th and 12th of March, held out in positions along the Velikaya River north of Ostrov and Pskov. The Russians held back for two weeks only to resume their attacks on 26 March, north of OPOCHKA. The 15th SS Division was transferred to the area and fighting continued into April, first southeast of OPOCHKA lasting until the 11th, then with the formation marching on the 16th in the direction of Kudevera/Bardovo, some 50 kilometers to the

⁷³According to Duprat, op.cit., p. 358, von Pückler-Burghaus "fell heroically at the head of his division".

⁷⁴"Pantherstellung".

southeast of OPOCHKA. Static fighting began on 24 April and carried through May to end on 21 June 1944⁷⁵. In April, the VIth SS Corps and its constituent 15th SS Division came back under the orders of the 16th Army, having been under the 18th only during March.

The Russians dealt the final blow by opening their offensive on 10 July 1944. The whole German Army Group "North" was pushed westwards towards the Latvian border and those who survived the destruction of the 15th SS Division at Ostrov, were forced out of Russia on the 16th and over the frontier into Latvia three days later.

While the 15th SS Division was fighting in Russia, a number of changes in its designation...and in that of its principal elements...were made in Berlin. In May, the 19th SS Division was made the senior of the two Latvian formations making up the VIth SS Corps, and when the two infantry regiments of the 19th SS were parenthetically numbered "Latvian No. 1 and 2", those of the junior 15th SS became "Latvian No. 3, 4 and 5". Similarly, the 19th's artillery regiment became the "1st Latvian Artillery Regiment" and consequently the 15th's became the "2nd Latvian Artillery Regiment"⁷⁶. In June, the 15th was renamed as part of a program to identify the nature of Waffen-SS divisions at a glance from their titles. The word "Freiwilligen-" (volunteer), which had long ceased to have been an accurate adjective in any event, was replaced by "Waffen-", denoting in the confused politico-military jargon of the Third Reich that it was a non-Germanic formation. With its nationality and number within that nationality appearing in brackets, the 15th SS Division took on its final title: "15. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (lettische Nr. 1)". Simultaneously, its infantry regiments took on their final form: Waffen-Gren.-Rgter. 32 (lettische Nr. 3), 33 (Nr. 4) and 34 (Nr. 5).

On 13 June 1944, Berger ordered that potential Waffen-SS officers from Latvia were to be sent to SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz to guarantee replacements for the two Latvian SS divisions⁷⁷. The situation was still unsatisfactory and the lack of barracks and supplies prompted desertions...

⁷⁵The Division's actions up to this time were shown in *Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS*, 6. Jahrgang, Berlin, 1.4.1945, Nr. 7, Z. 193.

⁷⁶V.O. SS 1446 geh., v. 16.5.1944.

⁷⁷C.d. SSHA/Be/We, V.S. Tgb.Nr. 475/44 geh.Kdos., Adj.Tgb. Nr. 408/44 geh.Kdos., v. 13.6.1944.

doubtless the imminent defeat of the Germans in Russia and the almost certain fall of Latvia to the Red Army also played their psychological rôles. At the beginning of July, the Division's anti-aircraft protection was weakened when its A.A. unit was detached to become a corps troop of the VIth SS Corps and the Division was left with only a 2,00 cm A. A. company⁷⁸.

The Russian offensive of July 1944 had thus forced the German Army Group "North", with its Latvian SS Corps of two divisions, off Russian soil and over the border into Latvia. When Hinrich Lohse heard the news that the Russians had broken through to the Baltic, he collapsed and in September Hitler sent him on indefinite leave. What few useful tasks there remained left to do in the Ostland were passed to Erich Koch, Gau-leiter of East Prussia and Reichskommissar for the Ukraine. The front was stabilized, command of the 15th SS Division passed on 21 July to SS-Oberführer Herbert von Obwurzer⁷⁹, and the Germans took stock of the situation.

More men were needed for all the depleted Baltic SS formations and in spite of the situation, sufficient men were still not forthcoming and on 23 July 1944, Jeckeln had to order the conscription of 18 and 19 year olds⁸⁰. Men born in 1919 and after were no longer to be deferred and both active and reserve officers born between 1906 and 1918 were ordered on 22 August 1944, to report to the SS Military Sub-Area Commander at Liepāja⁸¹. Faced with imminent invasion, the Ostland had to build defenses as well as fight, and so Lohse had extended Jeckeln's powers on 20 July 1944, to include the use of the people of the Ostland for this purpose⁸².

When the Germans came to look at what was left of the 15th SS Division, they found that in spite of severe losses, the cadres to some extent remained intact. The decision was taken to remove these cadres from Lat-

⁷⁸V.O.SS 492 geh.Kdos., v. 2.7.1944.

⁷⁹For von Obwurzer's involvement in the raising of the 13th SS "Handschar" Division, see vol. 3, p. 137 et seq.

⁸⁰HSSPF Riga, Nr. 605, v. 23.7.1944 (NO 3044).

⁸¹SS-Militärbezirkskommandeur Liepaja.

⁸²R.K.O., Chf. 236/44 geh. Rs. v. 20.7.1944.

via and use them as the basis for reforming the Division. The other survivors fit enough to soldier on, were to be taken into the 19th SS Division, which was then a component of the Lth Corps, 18th Army of Army Group "North". An exception was made in the case of the 15th SS Division's artillery regiment, for this had survived sufficiently well to be allowed to continue to fight in the east under the VIth SS Corps, 18th Army, Army Group "North"⁸³.

If the 15th SS Division was to be reformed, then this had to be done in a safer and more secure setting than Latvia on the brink of Russian invasion in the summer of 1944. The men were undoubtedly unhappy at the prospect of leaving their homeland at such a critical time but possibly saw in the reforming of the Division the only effective means left for them to strike another blow against Russia... a blow that they hoped would delay if not prevent the impending overrunning of their country by the Red Army. In mid-August, the SS-FHA ordered⁸⁴ the surviving cadres to gather at the SS Military Training Area "West Prussia" in the Konitz district⁸⁵ and personnel from the training and replacement elements of the 15th and 19th Latvian, as well as the 20th Estonian, SS Divisions were ordered to the nearby SS-Sammellager (an assembly depôt located at the SS barracks at Konitz...not on the SS-Tr.Üb.Pl.)⁸⁶.

⁸³V.O.SS 669 geh.Kdos., v. 11.9.1944, confirmed that the artillery regiment was not being reformed at Konitz. It is interesting to note that in December 1944/January 1945, the IInd and IIrd units of SS-Art.-Rgt. 15 were among the elements serving with the 19th SS Division in Courland, and that in April 1945, remnants of the 15th SS Division (presumably of its artillery regiment) were still serving under Army Group "Courland" (Heeresgruppe "Kurland") (*Der Freiwillige*, January 1963).

⁸⁴SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 2580/44 g.Kdos., v. 16.8.1944, *Verlegung 15. Waffen-Gren.Div. der SS (lettische Nr. 1)* (T-175, Roll 141, Frame 2669207).

⁸⁵SS-Truppenübungsplatz (SS-Tr.Üb.Pl.) "Westpreussen", referred to unofficially as SS-Tr.Üb.Pl. "Konitz", was opened in the autumn of 1943 in the Konitz district (Kreis), with its HQ at Kelm-Gut near Bruss (Klietmann, op.cit., pp.200 & 453). Tessin (*Verbände und Truppen...*, vol. 4, p. 21) gives its location as Zempelberg (Tucheler Heide). The SS-Sammellager (assembly depôt) from Tr.Üb.Pl. Schieratz was transferred to Konitz in May 1944, but was based at the SS-Kaserne (barracks) in Konitz, not at SS-Tr.Üb.Pl. "Westpreussen" (*Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS*, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin, 15.5.1944, Nr. 10, Z. 256).

⁸⁶*Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS*, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin, 15.8.1944, Nr. 16, Z. 476.

The transfer of the Latvian SS officer corps and some 20,000⁸⁷ new recruits was undertaken during August and September, and on 8 September 1944, sufficient men had arrived at Konitz to allow the SS-FHA to order the immediate reforming of the Division at SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. "Westpreussen" under SS-Oberführer von Obwurzer⁸⁸. 600 engineers were to be supplied by the 1st SS Engineer Training and Replacement Battalion⁸⁹ at Dresden for the reforming of the divisional engineer battalion⁹⁰.

Sufficient Latvians were found available at Konitz for an additional five battalions of four companies each to be raised during August 1944, for the divisional recruiting depot⁹¹. Lack of equipment prevented these battalions from becoming combat elements, however, and they were reorganized in December 1944, into three divisional construction regiments⁹².



THE VIII SS CORPS STAFF
IN OCTOBER 1944 (SS-
OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER
KRÜGER, BANGERSKIS
AND SILGAILIS).

⁸⁷Daugavas Vanagi gives this figure, while only 13,000 were mentioned in the SS-FHA order of 16.8.1944 (see note 84 above).

⁸⁸SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 2939/44 g.Kdos., v. 8.9.1944, *Neuaufstellung der 15. Waffen-Gren.Div. der SS* (lett.Nr. 1).

⁸⁹SS-Pionier-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-Bataillon 1.

⁹⁰As note 88 above.

⁹¹Btle. XI (5.-8. Kp.), XII (9.-12. Kp.), XIII (1.-4. Kp.), XIV (5.-8. Kp.) and XV (9.-12. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Division. Presumably Btle. I to X were absorbed in the Division. Superfluous personnel formed construction battalions (Bau-Btle.) to work under the orders of the HQ Staff of the 3rd Armoured Army (Pz.AOK 3 - F/A Org. Abt. Tgb.Nr. 2253/45, v. 15.4.1945).

⁹²Lett. Bau-Rgtr. 1, 2 und 3 der 15. SS-Division. XII, XIII and XIV became the I., II. and III. of lett. Bau-Rgt. 1; XI became the Staff Company and XV the I. of lett. Bau-Rgt. 2; while the remaining two battalions of lett. Bau-Rgt. 2 and the three battalions of lett. Bau-Rgt. 3 were formed from other personnel.

The order-of-battle of the reformed 15th SS Division differed from that of its predecessor in a number of respects, but by far the most important change was a strengthening of the divisional infantry regiments from two battalions each to three battalions... this had been the original intention in 1943 but had been altered in September of that year.

While the Division was reforming at Konitz in West Prussia, during the closing months of 1944, the Russians proceeded to overrun Latvia. Riga fell in October but the Germans continued to hold out in Courland, where the 19th SS Division was engaged until the end of the war. In October and November, the reforming of the 15th was carried out under the C-in-C Replacement Army, but in December the SS-FHA took over.

The Division was still preparing for battle under the SS-FHA when the Russians launched their thrust of January 1945. The retreating German front fell back towards Konitz and the ill-prepared 15th SS Division was forced into action. Those fit to fight were sent on 20 January 1945 to try and hold the enemy in the Schlaufensee-Nakel-Immenheim-Vandsburg area of West Prussia under the 3rd Armoured Army, and it was at Nakel, on



MEN OF THE 15th SS DIVISION DURING THE MONTHS OF LATE 1944.

the 26th, that von Obwurzer was taken prisoner by the Russians. His place was taken by SS-Oberführer Adolf Ax. The sick, wounded, untrained and unequipped were sent back to Konitz. They were evacuated along with various Baltic Schuma elements to the ports of Danzig (Gdansk) and Pillau (Baltiysk) and the battleworthy fought on fanatically to try and keep the ports open to enable the refugees to be evacuated. Some did manage to escape, for example the Latvian replacement unit reached Denmark, but others were faced with no alternative but to surrender to the Russians without a fight. Those survivors able to fight on, pulled back in the last four days of January through the Wilkenswalde-Flatow area. The first two days of February 1945, saw the Division engaged in positional warfare near Jastrow. Between the 3rd and 5th of the month, it fought near Flederborn, and between the 10th and 13th, near Camin with SS-Oberführer Karl Burk assuming temporary command. From the 14th to the 24th of February, it withdrew fighting past Peterswalde, Domsloff, Hammerstein, Sparsee, Lüngust, Dobel and Wusterbarth. On the 24th, the Division retreated past Bad Polzin, Nemmin, Geiglitz, Zedlin and Dievenow and was then broken up to continue fighting in battle groups (SS-Kampfgruppen). During February 1945, the Division was a part of the XVIIIth Mountain Army Corps, 2nd Army, Army Group "Vistula".

Elements arrived at Swinemünde on 14 March 1945, and on the 25th, all survivors were ordered to proceed to Neubrandenburg in Mecklenburg⁹³ for a rest and refit and to assist in fortress construction work⁹⁴. During March, the Division is listed as having been under Corps "Tettau" of the 3rd Armoured Army, Army Group "Vistula"⁹⁵. The rest and refit in Pomerania should have brought the 15th SS Division back to combat readiness by 15 April, but eleven days short of that date the formation's remaining 250 officers and 8,000 other ranks were ordered to join their countrymen of the 19th SS Division in Courland⁹⁶. The worsening situa-

⁹³Daugavas Vanagi. See Klietmann, op.cit., p. 200.

⁹⁴Manpower Study and Daugavas Vanagi. The Division was not short of engineers and construction units as has already been seen.

⁹⁵Duprat says that at this time, the Division was part of Steiner's 11. SS-Panzer-Armee (sic).

⁹⁶OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Op.Abt. (Ia) Nr. 4192/45 geh.Kdo., v. 4.4. 1945.

tion, however, prevented the Latvians of the 15th SS Division from returning home to make a last desperate and futile stand against the Russian invader. For what little was left of the war in Europe, the survivors of the 15th SS Division were to fight for the doomed Third Reich. In this respect, the 15th SS Division can be considered as being the best of the three Baltic formations. While all fought desperately while there was still a chance to save their native lands, the 19th Latvian and 20th Estonian lost much of their ardour once the Ostland had fallen back under Russian control and all left to fight for was another country's lost cause.

The Division was at the disposal of the SS-FHA in April 1945, and on the 19th of that month, a battle group was raised for the Berlinfront⁹⁷. Under the command of Waffen-Standartenführer Vilis Janums, previously commander of the 33rd Infantry Regiment, this element was about 2 regiments in strength and set off from Fürstenberg, southwards towards the embattled German capital. Passing through Bernau to the north of Berlin, it began to skirt the city in a clockwise direction through the suburbs. On 20/21 April 1945, it engaged the enemy three times in the Erkner, Buchhorst and Neu-Zittau districts and passed through the southern suburbs to Gutergolz, where it veered southwest away from Berlin and continued in that direction until on 27 April 1945, it met up with and surrendered to the Americans at Güterglück, some six kilometers from the Elbe River⁹⁸. Those of the Division who had not gone to Berlin under Janums were less fortunate in their choice of captors and were taken prisoner by the Red Army at Neuruppin in early May.

⁹⁷SS-Kampfgruppe "Janums". Steiner gives it as "lettisches Füsilier-Bataillon 15" (*Die Freiwilligen*, p. 332).

⁹⁸The movements of SS-Kampfgruppe "Janums" are taken from Schema Nr. 30, of Silgailis' book.



MEN OF THE 15th SS DIVISION, AS PRISONERS OF THE U.S. NINTH ARMY, ON THEIR WAY TO A PRISONER OF WAR COMPOUND ON 27 APRIL 1945.

Order-of-Battle

(COMPOSITE)

* = unconfirmed

Stab der Division/Div.-Kommando (formed in Riga on 23.3.1943)

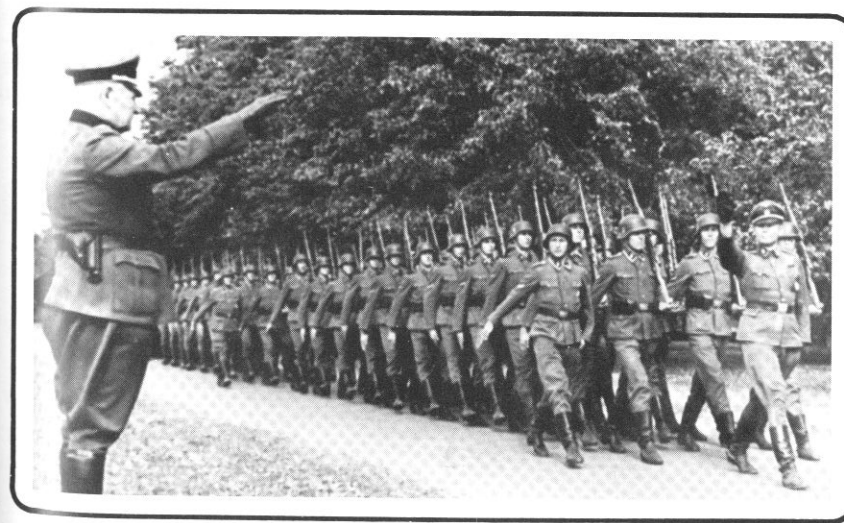
SS-Kradmeldestaffel*

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)/SS-Kartenstelle 15

SS-Musikzug

SS-Div.-Begleit-Kompanie 15*

Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 32 (lettisches Nr. 3) (formed 3.5.1943 at Paplaka near Liepāja, the III. Btl. in Liepāja itself, from SS-Freiw.-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-Regiment Paplaken (99) as: SS-Freiw.-Rgt. 1 (Lett. Legion). 3.7.1943 shown as: Lett. SS-Freiw.-Rgt. Nr. 1. Reduced from 3 to 2 Btle. by order of 22.9.1943(100). 22.10.1943(101) renumbered from SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 1 (Lett.Div.) to SS-Freiw. Gren.Rgt. 31. 12.11.1943 renumbered to SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 32(102) but also appeared as: Lett.Gren.-Rgt. 32. 22.1.1944(103) became SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 32 (lettisches Nr. 1). 16.5.1944(104) renumbered "(lett. Nr. 3)" as the 19th SS Division took seniority and its 42. Rgt. became "(lett. Nr. 1)". In June 1944 took on title: Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 32 (lett. Nr. 1)(105). Destroyed at Ostrov in July 1944 and remnants absorbed by the 19th SS Division. Reformed at SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. "Westpreussen" following order of 8.9.1944(106) under final title. May have been named "Karlis Aperāts"... see under "cuff-bands" on page 102).



BANGERSKIS REVIEWING THE WAFEN-GRENADIER-REGIMENT DER SS 32.

⁹⁹ Silgallis, op.cit., p. 352, gives it as an "SS-Freiwilligen- und Ausbildungs-Regiment" which is undoubtedly incomplete. While this suggests omission of the word "Ersatz-" it should be noted that the German Army used the form "Ersatz- und Ausbildungs-" while the Waffen-SS used "Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-".

Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 33 (lettisches Nr. 4) (formed at Vainoņe near Priekule - staff with 400 men on 26.6.1943, I. Btl. on 10.11.1943 and II. Btl. on 17.11.1943. At first: Freiw.-Rgt. 2 (Lett. Legion). Reduced from 3 to 2 Btle. by order of 22.9.1943(100). 22.10.1943(101) renumbered from SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 2 (Lett. Div.) to SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 32. 12.11.1943(102) renumbered to SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 33 but also appeared as: Lett. Gren.-Rgt. 33. 22.1.1944(103) became SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 33 (lettisches Nr. 2). 16.5.1944(104) renumbered "(lett. Nr. 4)" as the 19th SS Division took seniority and its 43. Rgt. became "(lett. Nr. 2)". In June 1944, took on title: Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 33 (lett. Nr. 2)(105). Suffered severe losses at Ostrov in July 1944 and its survivors were absorbed by the 19th SS Division. Reformed at SS-Tr.Üb.Pl. "Westpreussen" following order of 8.9.1944(106) under final title).

Waffen-Grenadier-Regiment der SS 34 (lettisches Nr. 5) (formed 12.7.1943 at Cēsis but later moved to Ventspils. At first: SS-Freiw.-Rgt. 3 (Lett. Legion). Reduced from 3 to 2 Btle. by order of 22.9.1943(100). 12.11.1943(102) renumbered from SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 3 (Lett. Div.) to SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 34. 22.1.1944(103) became SS-Freiw.-Gren.-Rgt. 34 (lett. Nr. 3), but also appeared as: Lett. Gren.-Rgt. 34. 16.5.1944(104) renumbered "(lett. Nr. 5)" as the 19th SS Division had seniority. In June 1944, took on title: Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 34 (lett. Nr. 3)(105). Destroyed in July 1944 and its survivors were absorbed by the 19th SS Division. Reformed at SS-Tr.Üb.Pl. "Westpreussen" following order of 8.9.1944(106) under final title).

Lett. SS-Füsilier-Bataillon 15/SS-Füsilier-Bataillon 15/SS-Waffen-Füsilier-Bataillon 15 (formed September 1943 following decision to convert SS-Radfahr-Abt. 15 into a Füsilier-Btl. Only the 1st company had cycles and so battalion reformed at Ventspils on 12.11.1943 with personnel received from SS-Kavallerie- und Aufklärungsschule Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) in West Prussia).

SS-Waffen-Panzerjäger-Abteilung/Kompanie 15 (formed 6.6.1943 at Liepāja(107) as Pz.-Jg.-Abt. (Lett. Legion) - in chart of 13.7.1943(108) shown as: Pz.-Jg.-Abt. (mot.) - also appeared as: Lett. Pz.-Jg.-Abt. 15).

¹⁰⁰SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1299/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.9.1943 (T-175, Roll 108, Frame 2631405).

¹⁰¹SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.10.1943 Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

¹⁰²SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/9542/43 geh. v. 12.11.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

¹⁰³SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 166/44 g.Kdos., v. 22.1.1944, Bezeichnung der SS-Freiw.-Rgt.

¹⁰⁴V.O.SS 1446 geh., v. 16.5.1944.

¹⁰⁵In this particular case, the renumbering from 1, 2 and 3 to 3, 4 and 5, had obviously not been taken into account.

¹⁰⁶SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 2939/44 g.Kdos., v. 8.9.1944, Neuaufstellung der 15. Waffen-Gren.-Div. der SS (lett. Nr. 1).

SS-Sturmgeschütz-Kompanie 15 (began forming at Tr.Üb.Pl. Mielau in the summer of 1944(109) - it was probably a Jagdpz.Kp. within the Pz.-Jg.-Abt.).

Waffen-Artillerie-Regiment der SS 15 (lettisches Artillerie-Regiment Nr. 2) (formed April 1943 at Jelgavā as: SS-Art.-Rgt. (Lett. Legion). In summer 1943 shown as: Lett. Art.-Rgt. 15. 22.1.1944(103) became: SS-Freiw.-Art.-Rgt. 15 (lett. Art.-Rgt. Nr. 1). 16.5.1944(104) renumbered "(lett. Art.-Rgt. Nr. 2)" as the 19th SS Division took seniority and its artillery regiment became "(lett. Art.-Rgt. Nr. 1)". Final title adopted 11.10.1944(110). Remained behind in Latvia when survivors of the Division were sent to SS-Tr.Üb.Pl. "Westpreussen" for reforming in September 1944(111) and its II. and III. Abteilung served with the 19th SS Division in Courland in December 1944 and January 1945(112)).

Waffen-Artillerie-Regiment der SS 15 (lettisches Artillerie-Regiment Nr. 2) (a new artillery regiment was formed for the Division in the winter of 1944/45 and took on new field post numbers in February 1945).

SS-Flak-Abteilung 15 (formed in July 1943 at Lilaste (113). In common with those of other non-Germanic divisions, it was detached in July 1944 and added to that of the 19th SS Division to form SS-Flak-Abt. 506 for the Vith SS Army Corps. An SS-Fla.-Kp. was left for the Division's A.A. protection as part of the Pz.-Jg.-Abt. (114).

SS-Fla-Kompanie 15 (ex 2cm Fla-Bttr...it remained for the Division's A.A. protection as part of the Pz.-Jg.-Abt. when the Flak-Abt. was detached in July 1944).

SS-Waffen-Nachrichten-Abteilung 15 (formed 1.8.1943 with its staff and Nachr.Kol. at Tukumā, Funk.Kp. at Tilās and its Fernsprech.Kp. at Jaunmokās. At first: SS-Nachr.-Abt. (Lett. Legion), then: Lett. Nachr.-Abt. 15. Hundestaffel added in winter 1943/44, at least by 25.2.1944).

SS-Radfahr-Bataillon 15 (formed in summer of 1943 in Latvia as: Radfahr-Bataillon (Lett. Legion). Shown as Radfahrabteilung in chart of 13.7.1943(108). In September 1943 converted to SS-Füsilier-Btl. 15).

¹⁰⁷Grobina near Liepāja according to Daugavas Vanagi.

¹⁰⁸OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Org.Abt. I/3290/43 geh.Kdos., v. 15.7.1943 OKH/Chef H. Rüst u. B.d.E./A.H.A. I u. IV Nr. 3519/43 geh. Kdos., v. 13.7.1943.

¹⁰⁹OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Org.Abt. I/5225 geh., v. 24.5.1944.

¹¹⁰Tessin, op.cit., vol. 4, p. 23. In fact he gives the form "Waffen-Art. Rgt. SS 15 (lett.Art.Rgt. Nr. 1)".

¹¹¹V.O.SS 669 geh.Kdos., v. 11.9.1944.

¹¹²Der Freiwillige, 9. Jahrgang, Januar 1963, pp. 16-23.

¹¹³Grobina near Liepāja according to Daugavas Vanagi.

¹¹⁴V.O.SS 492 geh.Kdos., v. 2.7.1944.

SS-Waffen-Pionier-Bataillon 15 (formed August 1943 at Ventspils (115) as: SS-Pi.-Btl. (Lett. Legion) - later Lett. Pi.-Btl. 15. Reformed at SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. "Westpreussen" following order of 8.9.1944 (106) on basis of 600 men supplied by SS-Pionier-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-Regiment 1 in Dresden).

SS-Versorgungs-Regiment 15 (formed in 1945 at Neu-Strelitz, Fürstenberg, by reorganizing elements controlled by KODINA).

SS-Nachschubtruppen (Lett. Legion).

SS-Lett. Nachschub-Regiment 15 (in summer of 1943 it was intended to contain: 1.-3. Kw. Kol., 4. Betr. St. Kol., Fahr-Kp., Nachschub-Kp. and Waffen- u. Werkstatt-Kp.).

SS-Dinafū (formed in 1943 as Div. Nachschubführer (Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion). Renamed KODINA in summer of 1943).

SS-KODINA 15 (Kommandeur der Divisions-Nachschubtruppen 15) (created in the summer of 1943 by renaming the SS-Dinafū. In 1945 at Neu-Strelitz, Fürstenberg, the elements controlled were up-graded to become SS-Versorgungs-Regiment 15).

SS-Instandsetzungs-Kompanie 15

Lettisches Wirtschafts-Bataillon 15/SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 15 (formed in 1944 and on 15.8.1944 became SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abteilung 15).

Divisions-Verpflegungsamt (mot.)/SS-Verpflegungsamt 15
SS-Bäckerei-Kompanie (mot.) 15
SS-Schlächtereier-Kompanie (mot.) 15
SS-Verwaltungszug 15

SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abteilung 15/ (formed 15.8.1944 by renaming SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 15).

Lettische Sanitäts-Abteilung 15/SS-Sanitäts-Abteilung 15 (formed 1944)

1. SS-Sanitäts-Kompanie 15 (formed in the summer of 1943)

2. SS-Sanitäts-Kompanie 15 (formed in the summer of 1943)

SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Kompanie (formed in 1943)

1.-2. SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Zug (formed in 1943)

SS-Entgiftungs-Zug 15 (formed in 1943)

Lett. Veterinär-Kompanie 15/SS-Veterinär-Kompanie 15

SS-Feldpostamt (mot.) 15

SS-Kriegsberichter-Trupp/Kompanie 15 (shown both as a Kompanie and a Trupp in charts of summer 1943 - possibly also existed as a Zug. Not listed in September 1943 but re-appeared in February 1944).

SS-Feldgendarmarie-Trupp (mot.) 15/SS-Waffen-Feldgendarmarie-Trupp 15

Lett. Feldersatz-Bataillon 15/SS-Feldersatz-Bataillon 15 (formed in November 1943 at Paplaka as: Lett. F.E.B. 15. A Versorgungs-Kompanie was added in September 1944).

Rekrutendepot der 15. SS-Division:

I. Btl. (1.-4. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

II. Btl. (5.-8. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

III. Btl. (9.-12. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

IV. Btl. (1.-4. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

V. Btl. (5.-8. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

VI. Btl. (9.-12. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

VII. Btl. (1.-4. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

VIII. Btl. (5.-8. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

IX. Btl. (9.-12. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

X. Btl. (1.-4. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (believed to have been absorbed in the Division)

XI. Btl. (5.-8. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (formed at SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. "Westpreussen" in August 1944 and in December 1944 became Stab and Stabs-Kp. of Bau-Rgt. 2 der 15. SS-Div.)

XII. Btl. (9.-12. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (formed as XI. Btl. and in December 1944 became I./Lett. Bau-Rgt. 1)

XIII. Btl. (1.-4. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (formed as XI. Btl. and in December 1944 became II./Lett. Bau-Rgt. 1)

XIV. Btl. (5.-8. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (formed as XI. Btl. and in December 1944 became III./Lett. Bau-Rgt. 1)

XV. Btl. (9.-12. Kp.) des Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. (formed as XI. Btl. and in December 1944 became I./Lett. Bau-Rgt. 2)

SS-Bau-Regiment 1 der 15. SS-Division (Lett. Bau-Rgt. 1 formed in December 1944 from XII., XIII. and XIV. Btle. of Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. Finally in Stettin and Swinemünde with part in Ventspils)

SS-Bau-Regiment 2 der 15. SS-Division (Lett. Bau-Rgt. 2 formed in December 1944 from XI. and XV. Btle. of Rekrutendepots der 15. SS-Div. and other personnel. Finally at Thorn)

SS-Bau-Regiment 3 der 15. SS-Division (Lett. Bau-Rgt. 3 formed in December 1944 at SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. "Westpreussen". Finally at Danzig in 1945)

NOTE:

In a letter Himmler sent to Jüttner (Chief of SS-FHA) in late 1944, he said that he had ordered five Latvian "Construction and Police Regiments" (Bau- und Polizeiregimenter) to be detached from the Division and placed under the General Inspector of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion (i.e. Bangerskis) (116).

¹¹⁵ Jelgāva according to Daugavas Vanagi.

¹¹⁶ See Silgailis, op. cit., p. 377, where the text is given but without a date - headed "Geheim RF-SS - Chef des SS-FHA, SSOgruf. Jüttner, Fuchsbau". It was probably written in December 1944 or January 1945.

DIVISIONAL STRENGTHS*

| Date | Officers | NCOs | Men | Total |
|-------------------------|----------|-------|--------|--------|
| 31.12.43 ¹¹⁷ | 471 | 1,330 | 13,391 | 15,192 |
| 30. 6.44 | 541 | 2,322 | 15,550 | 18,413 |
| 1. 7.44 | 387 | 1,475 | 9,675 | 11,537 |
| 20. 9.44 ¹¹⁸ | 292 | 1,522 | 15,056 | 16,870 |
| 4. 4.45 | 250 | 8,000 | | 8,250 |

*Actual strengths (including men in hospitals, on detachment or on leave)/Iststärke.

Divisional Commanders

- 25 February 1943 - early May 1943 _____ SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Peter Hansen (119)
- early May 1943¹²⁰ - 16 February 1944 _____ SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Carl Graf von Pückler-Burghaus (121)
- 17 February 1944 - mid-July 1944 _____ SS-Oberführer Nikolaus Heilmann (122)
- 21 July 1944 - 26 January 1945 _____ SS-Oberführer Herbert von Obwurzer (123)
- 26 January 1945 - 15 February 1945 _____ SS-Oberführer Adolf Ax
- 15 February 1945¹²⁴ - May 1945 _____ SS-Oberführer Karl Burk

NOTE:

On 19 March 1943, Hansen signed an order in Riga (125) confirming that Himmler had appointed Rudolf Bangerskis, with effect from 1 March 1943, "Legions-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion mit der Führung der 1. Division der Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion" (underlining not in original). The fact that Bangerskis never actually commanded the Division is confirmed by various sources and Silgailis himself does not include Bangerskis in his list of divisional commanders (126). Bangerskis was the General Inspector of the Latvian SS and the senior Latvian officer.



KARL GRAF VON PÜCKLER-BURGH AUS IN PRAGUE



NIKOLAUS HEILMANN (HERE AN SS-STANDARTENFÜHRER)

¹¹⁷ SS-Lett. SS-Frw.-Div. m. Flak-Abt. Felders.-Btl. (given as such in Gesamtstärke der Waffen-SS am 31. Dezember 1943, see Klietmann, op.cit., p. 507).

¹¹⁸ SS-Art.Rgt. 15 was listed separately as having on this date 91 officers, 379 NCOs and 1,908 other ranks for a total of 2,378. (Starkmeldung der Waffen-SS mit dem Stand vom 20. September 1944 - see Klietmann, op.cit., p. 512).

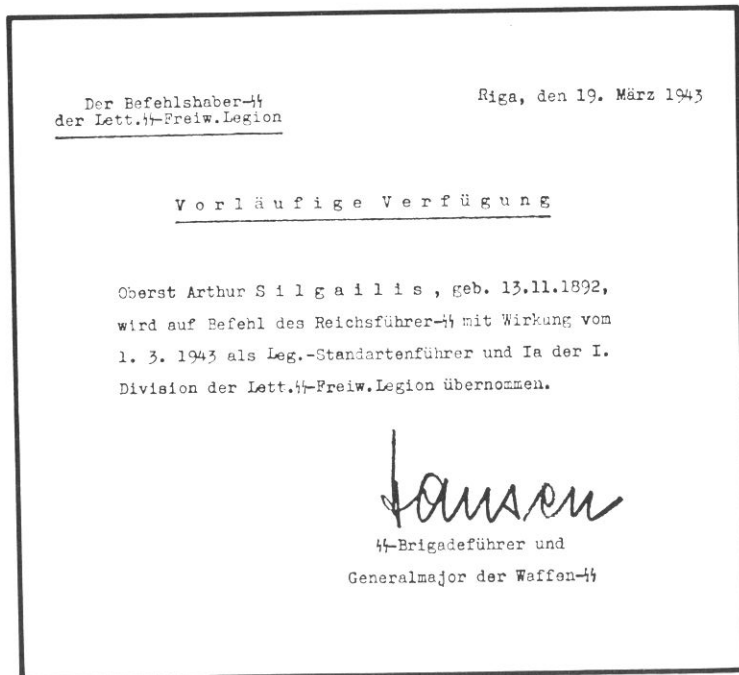
¹¹⁹ Appointed "Kdr. des Aufst.Stabes" by SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/1501/43 geh., v. 26.2.1943, Aufstellung der 15. Lett. SS-Freiw.-Div. Shown as seconded to SS-FHA on 15 May 1943 (Dienstaltersliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP (SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer - SS-Standartenführer), Stand vom 15. Mai 1943).

¹²⁰ According to Klietmann, op.cit., p. 201, von Pückler-Burghaus took over command at the beginning of May 1943 and he was certainly in command on the 15th of that month (Dienstaltersliste as note 119). In a telegram from Himmler (RFSS, Bra/V, v. 24.5.1943) to the Chiefs of the SS-FHA and SS-HA and to SS-Brif. Hansen in Riga, it was stated that Hansen should see to the recruiting of a further 2,500 Latvians for the Legion, while SS-Brif. von Pückler was to see to the formation, training and leadership of the Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion. It is assumed that Himmler meant that von Pückler was to command the Division, not the Legion. He was named as commander of the Division in a letter from Himmler dated 26 May 1943 (Der RFSS, Feld-Kommandostelle, den 26. Mai 1943, Niederschrift für den HSSPF "Ostland", Chef der Orpo, Chef der Sipo, Chef des SS-FHA).

¹²¹ Known simply as "von Pückler" in the Dienstaltersliste der SS der NSDAP, and correspondence.

CHIEFS OF STAFF:

Legions-Standartenführer Arturs Silgailis (from 1.3.1943)
SS-Sturmbannführer Knebel
SS-Hauptsturmführer Hahn
SS-Sturmbannführer Horst Wulff
SS-Sturmbannführer Kopp (in 1945)



A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL ORDER LISTING ARTHUR SILGAILIS AS THE DIVISIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF, SIGNED BY DIVISIONAL COMMANDER PETER HANSEN.

¹²²Heilmann was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on either the 27th or 28th of August 1944 (Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 316 gives the 27th, von Seemen, op.cit., p. 120 the 28th). He was killed in action on the eastern front in the winter of 1944/45 (v. Seemen, op.cit., p. 120).

¹²³Taken prisoner by the Russians at Nakel in West Prussia on 26 January 1945.

¹²⁴Burk was given as being in temporary command from 12 February 1945 in Feldgrau, 1 April 1965.

¹²⁵Headed "Der Befehlshaber-SS der Lett. SS-Freiw.-Legion, Riga, den 19 März 1943 Verläufige Verfügung".

¹²⁶Silgailis, op.cit., p. 347.

Divisional and Unit Insignia

COLLAR PATCHES

The SS-FHA ordered on 26.2.1943¹²⁷ that the SS runes were not to be worn on the right hand collar patch by members of this Division. Officially, a plain black right hand collar patch was therefore worn at first, but in practice the rule was often broken and the forbidden SS runes worn. At a date as yet unidentified, a collar patch was introduced depicting the three 5-pointed stars within a rising sun that was considered the first national coat of arms and had been the cap badge of the former Latvian Army¹²⁸.

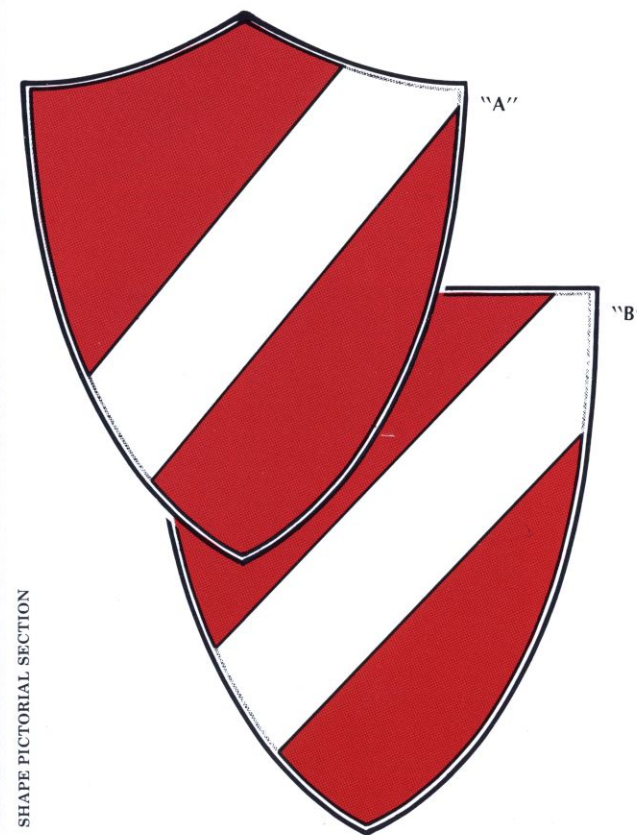


¹²⁷SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/1501/43 geh., v. 26.2.1943, Aufstellung der 15. Lett. SS-Freiw.Div.

¹²⁸Numerous sources have attributed this collar patch to the 19th SS Division and the swastika collar patch of that Division to the 15th. This

SLEEVE SHIELDS

A number of patterns were worn, all being variations on the old Latvian flag, having a diagonal central white bar on a crimson field¹²⁹. The first types were plain with differently shaped shields ("A" and "B") and the most common of these ("A") had been authorized for Latvians serving in the Wehrmacht¹³⁰. A more elaborate pattern ("C") could also have been worn by this Division. In early September 1943, Himmler ordered that members of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion (and consequently the con-



SHAPE PICTORIAL SECTION

is unfounded, contradicted by all photographic evidence and in any event confirmed as incorrect by Silgailis, *op.cit.*, p. 315. The stars and sun device was designed by the sculptor Prof. B. Dzenis and the cockade upon which it was based had been worn during the liberation wars of 1918-1920. The stars symbolized the three ancient regions of Latvia: Courland, Livland and Lettgallia (P.H.B., & Trembicky in The Flag Bulletin, vol. VIII, no. 3, p. 106).

¹²⁹A Latvian military unit from Cēsis carried such a flag in 1279. On the Latvian flag, the white bar runs along the center, parallel to the

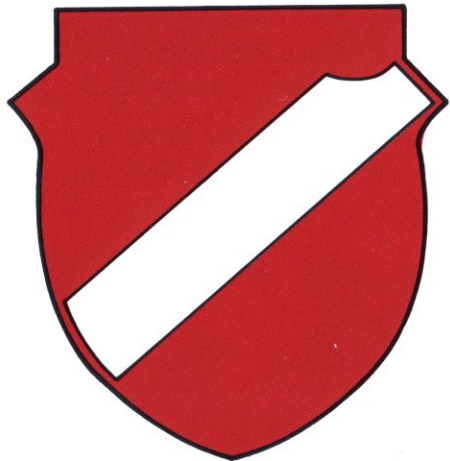
stituent 15th SS Division) were only to wear armshields with the inscription "LATVIJA"¹³¹. Thus a pattern intended for Latvian police ("D") was worn (and possibly another manufactured in Riga ("E")¹³²) until the eventual introduction of a Waffen-SS pattern on a black field ("F"). This order also provided that the shields were to be worn on the upper right sleeve before then they had been worn in virtually any position on either sleeve and in some cases not at all.

sides, and is 1/5th of the total width (Trembicky, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-105).

¹³⁰H.V.Bl., 26. Jahrgang, Ausgabe Teil B, Blatt 15, Z. 289, v. 17.7.1944. Army orders prescribed this shield shape for the Balts.

¹³¹Der HSSPF für das Ostland, H./Gy., Riga, den 13. Sept. 1943, Lettsche SS-Freiwilligen-Legion.

¹³²P.H.B. Manufactured by the firm Lenta of Riga, it is known to have been worn in a number of Latvian Schuma battalions.



"C"



"E"



"D"





LATVIAN SS PRISONERS (NOTE "F" STYLE SLEEVE SHIELD).



"F"

CUFFBANDS

A cuffband "LATTVIJA" (sic - it should have been "LATVIJA") was listed in the SS-FHA order of 22.10.1943¹³³ for the Division and its two infantry regiments. This cuffband was cancelled in the subsequent SS-FHA order of 12.11.1943¹³⁴. It is most unlikely that any were manufactured or worn. An unconfirmed report suggests that the honour name "Aperāts" or "Karlis Aperāts" was given to the 32nd Infantry Regiment after the death on 16 July 1944 of its commander, Karlis Aperāts. This seems unlikely as Aperāts had only taken this command over from Waffen-Standartenführer (pulkvedis) Krīpens on 28 June 1944. It is also more than unlikely that such a cuffband would even have been considered for this Regiment when the Division itself did not have one.

¹³³SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.10.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

¹³⁴SS-FHA, Amt II Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/9542/43 geh., v. 12.11.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

UNIFORM NOTES

1. In the early and late stages of this Division's history, an assortment of uniforms and insignia was worn and so it is virtually impossible to lay down hard and fast rules. The use of former Schuma personnel undoubtedly resulted in some Schuma uniforms and insignia being worn by divisional personnel.
2. Members of the Division wore colored, 1cm wide bands at the base of their shoulder straps which indicated their regiment. The coding was as follows (135):
 - White - Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 32 & I./Waffen-Art. Rgt. der SS 15
 - Red - Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 33 & II./Waffen-Art. Rgt. der SS 15
 - Yellow - Waffen-Gren.-Rgt. der SS 34 & III./Waffen-Art. Rgt. der SS 15

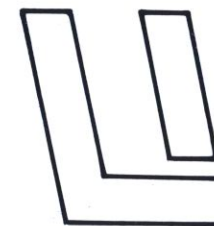
REGIMENTAL COLOURS

1. The colour of the 32nd Infantry Regiment was a plain Latvian flag with the sun and stars device as a pole top.
2. If the Division's senior infantry regiment had a colour then it is possible that the 33rd and 34th Infantry Regiments also had colours.



DIVISIONAL VEHICLE SYMBOL

1. A capital letter "L" with a Roman "I"¹³⁶.



¹³⁵Divisionsbefehl Nr. 10 (Anzugordnung), dated 9.9.1944, and signed by the divisional commander, SS-Oberführer von Obwurzer.

¹³⁶Der Freiwillige, 15. Jahrgang, Heft 7, Juli 1969, p. 20. The letter "L" for "Latvijs" had also been used by Prof. Dzenis in his design for a cap cockade for Latvian soldiers during 1918-1920 (see note 128). No vehicle symbol had been identified for this Division by Allied Intelligence as late as 1 March 1945 (German Divisional Emblems, Military Research Section, London, MIRS(D) - EMB, January 1945 and 2nd supplement, MIRS (D-1) - EMB/3/45, 1 March 1945).



MAX SIMON WITH A STAFF OFFICER IN ITALY, 1944.

16. *SS*-Panzer-Grenadier-Division
"Reichsführer-*SS*"

EVOLUTION AND TITLES OF 16. SS-PANZER-GRENADIER-DIVISION
"REICHSFÜHRER-SS"

| | |
|---|---|
| 15 May 1941 - 14 February 1943 | Begleit-Bataillon Reichsführer-SS (1) |
| 14 February 1943 - 3 October 1943 | Sturmbrigade "Reichsführer-SS" |
| 3 October 1943 - 22 October 1943 | (16.) SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Reichsführer-SS" |
| 22 October 1943 ² - 14 February 1945 | 16. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Reichsführer-SS" |
| 14 February 1945 ³ - May 1945 | "Auffrischungsgruppe 13. SS-Division" - "Ergänzungsstaffel 13. SS-Pz. Gren. Div." (4) |

History

NOTE:

The histories of the Division's predecessor units (Begleit-Btl. "RFSS" and Sturmbrigade "RFSS") are not dealt with in detail here and will be covered in future volumes of this series.



Hitler signed a number of orders at his HQ on Sunday, 3 October 1943, that concerned the Waffen-SS. Most important were two by which he raised two new SS - Panzer - Grenadier - Divisionen, one to be named "Reichsführer-SS" after Heinrich Himmler's rank⁵ and the other "Götz von Berlichingen"⁶. These were soon numbered the 16th and 17th divisions of the Waffen-SS and their stories are dealt with in this and the following chapter of this book. Another order signed that day set out five armoured corps of the Waffen-SS and the new "RFSS" Division was listed with the (9.) SS-Panzer-Division "Hohenstaufen" as making up the IVth SS Armoured Corps⁷.

¹This was the original escort battalion. Another was later formed and attached to the 16. SS Division.

²The Division was officially numbered by SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.10.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.

³P. H. B.

⁴Disguised titles adopted to confuse the enemy when transferring the Division to Hungary.

1943 had been a year of expansion for the Waffen-SS but not since the 12. SS-Panzer-Division "Hitlerjugend" had been raised in June, had German formations been added to its order-of-battle. Yugoslav Moslems, Ukrainians and Latvians had formed the basis for the 13th, 14th and 15th Divisions and the raising of the German 16th and 17th Divisions was the most important development for many months. While the "foreign" formations were to serve their German masters with varying degrees of success, these formidable mechanized divisions of the Waffen-SS were of considerable military worth.

The origins of the "RFSS" Division can be traced back to the escort battalion of that name (Begleit-Bataillon Reichsführer-SS) which had been formed within Himmler's Headquarters Staff (Kommandostab RFSS) on 15 May 1941⁸. In February 1943, Hitler had ordered that this escort battalion, having proved itself in battle, be upgraded to the status of an assault brigade and thus, Sturmbrigade "Reichsführer-SS" was formed⁹.

⁵Although only Himmler was intended in the naming of this Division, it would be strictly accurate to say that a total of four men held the rank of "Reichsführer-SS". Joseph Berchtold was the first, named as such on 1 November 1926. His deputy, Erhard Heiden, became the second in March 1927 when Berchtold resigned. Heinrich Himmler, Heiden's deputy in 1927, was appointed on 6 January 1929, and held the position until late April 1945, when he fell from Hitler's favour and was replaced by the demented Führer in his last will and testament by Karl Hanke (Hitler, Mein politisches Testament, Gegeben zu Berlin, den 29. April 1945, 4.00 Uhr, p. 8). Hanke was Gauleiter of Niederschlesien, held the rank of an SS-Obergruppenführer since 30 January 1944, and had been on Himmler's staff. But the war was almost over and Hanke never held office. Instead of joining Dönitz in Flensburg, he fled and hid at Schörner's HQ at Kroneberg (Reitlinger, The SS - Alibi of a Nation, p. 436).

⁶Führer-Hauptquartier, den 3. X. 1943 - initialled by Himmler and signed by Hitler.

⁷Although a different document, this was not referenced differently to that in the previous footnote (T-175, Roll 111, Frame 2635150).

⁸SS-FHA, I Org., Tgb.Nr. 1447/41, v. 25.4.1941 (T-175, Roll 109, Frames 2633296-7). It was formed at the SS Barracks (SS-Kaserne) at Oranienburg.

⁹SS-FHA, Abt. Ia, Tgb.Nr. Ia 380/43, v. 14.2.1941 (Roll 108, Frames 2631355-6). SS-FHA, Kdo. Amt der Waffen-SS, Org. Tgb.Nr. 260/43 g.Kdos., v. 23.2.1943, Umgliederung des Begleit-Btls. RF-SS zur Sturm-Brigade RF-SS (T-175, Roll 108, Frames 2631347-9).

This assault brigade was stationed on the island of Corsica in the summer of 1943, and was to be used as the basis for the new division of the same name¹⁰.

SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Max Simon, who had won the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 20 October 1941 when commanding SS-Totenkopf-Infanterieregiment 1 of the SS "Totenkopf" Division, was given command of the new Division on 16 October 1943. Three days later, the SS-FHA issued an order confirming and expanding upon Hitler's Führerbefehl of 3 October¹¹.

The SS-FHA order of 22 October 1943¹² officially labelled "RFSS" as the 16th division of the Waffen-SS, and its two infantry regiments were numbered the 33rd and 34th. The raising of new regiments lower in the series altered these numbers soon after and in a subsequent SS-FHA document of 12 November, these were renumbered to the 35th and 36th¹³.

Formation began in October 1943 at Ljubjana (Laibach) in Slovenia and at Baden, some 15 miles south of Vienna, but the real work of reorganizing began on 15 November 1943¹⁴. During November, the divisional elements were raised by taking the assault brigade recalled from Corsica as a nucleus¹⁵ and adding an SS training battalion for special employment (SS-

¹⁰Reitlinger, *The SS - Alibi of a Nation*, p. 245, mentions an SS-Brigade "Guernica" as being stationed on Corsica and being "the nucleus of a raw SS Division, Reichsführer-SS". While confusion did exist even among the members of this Brigade as to its exact title, Reitlinger must have confused "Korsika" for "Guernica". (For confirmation of the contemporary confusion see Allied Forces HQ, "Intelligence Notes", No. 29, 17.10.1943... "B. Assault Brigade SS "Reichsführer").

¹¹SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1565.43 g.Kdos., v. 19.10.1943, *Aufstellung der 16. SS-Pz.Gren.Div. "RFSS"* (T-175, Roll 108, Frame 2631314).

¹²See note 2 above.

¹³SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/9542/43 geh., v. 12.11.1943, *Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS*.

¹⁴SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1565/43, v. 19.10.1943 (T-175, Roll 108, Frame 2631314), Para. V.

¹⁵In fact the Sturmbrigade's 2. Pz. Jg. Kp. (sf.) was not used (P.H.B.).

¹⁶Keilig (op. cit.) is wrong in stating that the Division was formed in October 1943 from SS-Sturmbrigade "RFSS", from Corsica, and SS-Pz.

Ausb. Btl. z. b. V.) of 8 companies, motor-cycle companies (Kradschützen-Kompanien) of SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 19 and 20 of the 9th SS Armoured Division "Hohenstaufen" and hundreds of men from several replacement units of the Waffen-SS¹⁶.

In December 1943, the Division was listed as forming under command of the I List Army Corps of the 14th Army, Army Group "C". According to one source¹⁷ Sturmbrigade "RFSS" was officially expanded into the 16th SS-Division on 1 January 1944.



ASSAULT GUNS OF THE "RFSS" DIVISION, IN TUSCANY (WEST CENTRAL ITALY) ON 22 JANUARY 1944, AS A MOBILE FORCE AGAINST ANTICIPATED ALLIED LANDINGS.

Gren.-Lehr-Rgt. The latter regiment...later a brigade...did not join "RFSS" until later.

¹⁷Finke...unconfirmed.

Formation continued into the new year and for the first months of 1944, the "RFSS" Division was listed under the C-in-C of the Replacement Army¹⁸. Before formation could be completed, elements were required to face the allied landings in the Nettuno/Anzio area south of Rome¹⁹. A battle group (SS-Kampfgruppe) of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35 was sent from northern Italy along with another reinforced battalion from the Division to join the 14th Army, to take on the Anglo-American invaders. Some confusion surrounds the divisional elements that actually went to Nettuno²⁰. A list dated 1 April 1944²¹ gave the 5th, 7th and 8th Companies of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35 and the IInd Battalion of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 36, plus telephone and wireless sub-sections²² as being there on 3 March 1944. It also reported the presence of part of the so-called SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 16 (in fact, SS-Pz.Jg.Abt. 16 - see under order-of-battle) and the 2nd Company of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35. The 14th Army's stand at Anzio lasted until 4 March 1944, and the elements of the "RFSS" Division were ordered north to rejoin their formation five days later.

The possibility of Hungary changing sides, deserting the Axis and signing a separate peace with the Russians and/or the western Allies, had concerned the Germans for some time and as early as September 1943 a plan for the occupation of the country had been conceived and baptised Oper-

¹⁸ Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres, or Bde. This is according to Tessin (*Verbände und Truppen...*, vol. 4, p. 48). *Manpower Study* gives the Division forming under L1st Army Corps, 14th Army, Army Group "C" in January 1944; in February still forming but under A. Abt. v. Zangen, Army Group "C"...not shown in March 1944.

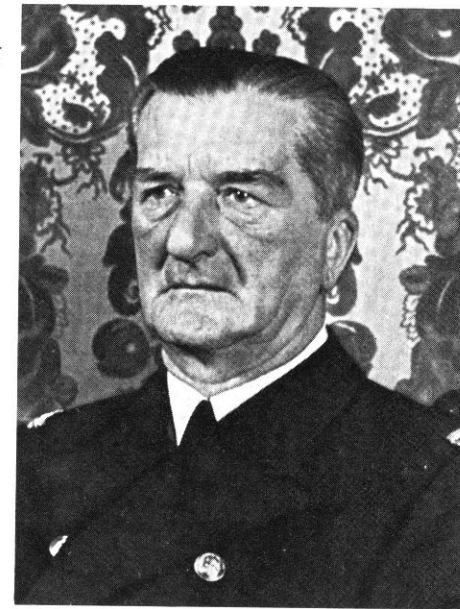
¹⁹ In Operation "Shingle", British and American forces landed north-east of Anzio and southeast of Nettuno respectively on 22 January 1944.

²⁰ For example, Klietmann, relying on German Red Cross information (op.cit., p. 203) says that it was part of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 36 and SS-Flak-Abt. 16 that were sent to the Nettuno beachhead in January 1944. While the IInd Battalion of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 36 was shown there on 3 March 1944, the Flak-Abt. is not believed to have gone to Anzio/Nettuno at all, being shown on 3 March 1944, split between the collection area (Versammlungsraum) Baden near Vienna, around Raab an der Donau in Hungary and in the billeting area (Unterkunftsraum) southwest of Decreben in Hungary.

²¹ This list, showing the locations of the scattered elements of the "RFSS" Division on 3 March 1944, formed part of a return the Division sent to the Generalinspekteur der Panzertruppen on 1 April 1944 (P.H.B.)

²² Fernsprechrupp und Funktrupp.

NICOLAUS HORTHY, REGENT OF HUNGARY.



ation "Margarethe" (Unternehmen Margarethe). In early 1944, the Russians were dangerously close to Hungary and the threat of Rear-Admiral²³ Miklos (Nikolaus) Horthy de Nagybanya, Regent of Hungary, abandoning the Germans was considered so real that Hitler decided to put "Operation Margarethe" into effect.

"RFSS" was to be one of the three Waffen-SS divisions to take part in the operation, but with elements detached and fighting at Anzio/Nettuno, it was so incomplete as only to be able to make three of its battalions mobile²⁴. To bring the formation up to strength, the SS-Pz.Gren.-Lehr-Regiment²⁵ was brought from the SS-Pz.Gren.Schule at Prosetschnitz and together with the Begleit-Btl. "RFSS"²⁶ was added to the Division. This took place

²³ Horthy is often erroneously referred to as an "Admiral".

²⁴ P.H.B.

²⁵ The SS-Pz.Gren.Lehr-Regiment was already shown as attached to "RFSS" on 3 March 1944 (see note 21). Tessin, op.cit., vol. 4, p. 48, is therefore wrong in saying that it was not formed until April 1944. It was still referred to as a Regiment in KTB/OKW as late as 26 May 1944, but by 3 June 1944, had become an SS-Pz.Gren.Lehr-Brigade in common with other independent regiments.

²⁶ This was a new Begleit-Btl. "RFSS" that had been formed in the summer of 1943 after the original had been upgraded in February 1943 to the assault brigade that later became the 16th SS Division.

in early March and the disposition of the "RFSS" Division as on the 3rd of that month is recorded in a contemporary list²⁷. In addition to the divisional elements detached and fighting south of Rome, there were others stationed in Italy. The 6th and 14th Companies of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35 were based at Mussolini's HQ of the R.S.I.²⁸ on Lake Garda and the 1st Battalion of the newly arrived SS-Pz.Gren.-Lehr-Regiment, along with divisional supply elements, the medical battalion and military police company, were in the Carpathian Mountains. It was therefore a strengthened but nonetheless incomplete 16th SS Division that set off in March 1944 via Baden in Austria for Hungary, there to join the 8th ("Florian Geyer") and 18th ("Horst Wessel") SS Divisions. It took up positions as occupation troops around Debrecen under the orders of the German C-in-C East Hungarian Operation Zone²⁹, Army Group "Southwest". At this time, "RFSS" gave up personnel and vehicles³⁰ to the 3rd SS Armoured Division "Totenkopf"... the weakening in manpower being made up by racial Germans from Hungary. In April, the detached elements returned from Italy and the Division was complete for the first time.

The Hungarian problem was not resolved by any means³¹ but the Allies' northward advance in Italy was cause for grave concern and it was decided to transfer the "RFSS" Division to Italy to try and hold the British 8th Army. The formation was transported southwards from Parma to Grosseto, on the west coast facing the island of Elba. In May, it was given as being in reserve under the OKW, Army Group "F" and in June and July, was part of the LXXVth Army Corps, A. Abt. v. Zangen, Army Group "C" in Liguria.

²⁷ See note 21.

²⁸ Repubblica Sociale Italiana, or Italian Social Republic. Mussolini's so-called Republic of Salo' (named after its seat on Lake Garda) which was set up after the Duce's liberation from the Gran Sasso, in spite of Badoglio's surrender to the Allies of 8 September 1943. The R.S.I. had its own armed forces, including an SS Legion which was upgraded to become the 29th Division of the Waffen-SS before the war ended.

²⁹ Deutsche Befehlshaber Operationsgebiet Ostungarn.

³⁰ OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Org.Abt. III Nr. 73576, v. 24.4.1944.

³¹ Horthy did in fact later negotiate with the Russians for a separate peace for his country and this he announced by radio on 15 October 1944. The following day, SS-Sturmbannführer Otto Skorzeny seized the Citadel

In June 1944, the Division officially absorbed the two elements that had been used to bolster it for Operation "Margarethe". On 3 June, it absorbed the SS-Pz.Gren.Lehr-Brigade (previously SS-Pz.Gren.Lehr.Regiment) and shortly thereafter the IInd Battalion of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35 was exchanged for the new Begleit-Btl. "RFSS".



MAX SIMON AND THE DIVISIONAL STAFF IN ITALY, EARLY AUTUMN 1944.

"RFSS" fought the British 8th Army in an attempt to stem its advance but was pushed back northwards past Siena, Leghorn and Pisa. By August, it had been driven back as far north as Carrara, where it was part of the XIVth Armoured Corps of the 14th Army, Army Group "C".

The Division fought defensively for the remainder of 1944, first around Carrara in August, and then retiring in a northeasterly direction towards Bologna across the Appennino Tosco-Emiliano Mountains. It was in this area of the Appenines, south of Bologna, that the Division's record was blotted by what has come to be regarded as a war crime ranking with those of Oradour-sur-Glane, Lidice and Melmédý... along with the Ardeatine

Caves reprisal³², certainly one of the most infamous of the war in Italy. Yet after years of heated controversy, the exact circumstances surrounding the alleged "Marzabotto Massacre" remain unclear.

Partisans were very active in this area and the men of the partisan brigades were in their element in the mountains and able to harass effectively the German troops and those of the R.S.I. (by this time, the wartime Official Loss Reports in Berlin listed several hundred Germans killed by Italian partisan groups, those being members of the Waffen-SS, as well as the Army and Air Force). Elements of the "RFSS" Division were thus ob-

liged to ward off numerous attacks and were consequently engaged in fighting the partisans, SS-Sturm-bannführer Walter Reder's armoured reconnaissance unit taking a leading role³³. On 12 August 1944, Reder's unit moved on the village of Sant'Anna di Stazzema in Versilia where it was known that a "Garibaldi" Brigade had set up its base. The SS troops reportedly set fire to the neighboring village of Farnocchia, before proceeding to burn Sant'Anna to the ground and kill a number of people. The same unit is said to have killed a further 120 civilians in a later operation in Padule di Fucecchio³⁴. Yet, Reder was acquitted by a military court in Bologna for the alleged massacres of Sant'Anna di Stazzema and other places³⁵.



SS-HAUPTSTURMFÜHRER
WALTER REDER

of Budapest in "Operation Panzerfaust" with (according to Skorzeny, *Skorzeny's Special Missions*, p. 130) a battalion of cadets from the Wiener-Neustadt War Academy (known as Schule II für Führerjunker der Infanterie), SS-Jagdverband "Mitte", SS-Fallschirmjäger-Btl. 600 and a battalion of Luftwaffe paratroopers in reserve. The operation was successful and Hungary was obliged to continue on Germany's side. Horthy died in Portugal in February 1957.

The men of SS-Pz. Aufkl. Abt. 16 joined those of other elements in an attack on the mountainous positions of the "Lunnense" Brigade on 24 August 1944, but by far the most notorious crime is alleged to have taken place at Marzabotto a month later. Exactly what took place in this vexed and controversial incident is not clear even today and various highly conflicting accounts can be found listed in the bibliography of this book. That Walter Reder and men of the 16th SS-Division descended on the Marzabotto area in the last days of September 1944 and killed a large number of partisans is certain, but whether civilians were deliberately killed or just "got in the way" is the question. Reder's responsibility for the death of 270 or 1,830 or any number of innocent civilians is a difficult question that lies beyond the scope and purpose of this series. He was, however, convicted and is presently serving a life sentence at the Gaeta military prison³⁶ south of Rome, accompanied with Herbert Kappler, a fellow prisoner for life (see note 32 below).

Between August and November 1944, the Division had remained under the 14th Army of Army Group "C", . . . in August and September as part of the XIVth Armoured Corps and in October of the Ist Parachute Corps. In November, this Parachute Corps and its constituent "RFSS" Division came under the 10th Army of the same Army Group in the Appenines and the Division's higher formation remained unaltered until the end of the year. In January and February 1945, "RFSS" was part of the LXXVth Armoured Corps, 14th Army, Army Group "C". In addition to these changes in

³²As a reprisal for killing 32 members of 11. Kp./III. Btl./Pol.-Rgt. "Bozen" by a bomb in Via Rasella on 23 March 1944, SS-Obersturmbannführer Herbert Kappler of the SD had 335 hostages shot in the Ardeatine Caves outside Rome.

³³SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 16. Reder had lost his left arm at the recapture of Kharkow in March 1943 and on the 28th of that month received the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross as an SS-Hauptsturmführer and commander of the Ist (armoured) Battalion of the SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. "Totenkopf", of the 3rd SS Armoured Division "Totenkopf".

³⁴Both the Sant'Anna and Padule incidents are reported in *Storia Illustrata della Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, vol. 8: "L'Invasione", Hans-Adolf Jacobsen e Hans Dollinger, Edizione italiana a cura de Riccardo Posani, Sansoni Editore, Firenze, 1969, p. 142.

³⁵*Der Freiwillige*, Heft 9, September 1967, p. 15.

³⁶Reclusorio Militare, Gaeta/Latina.



GENERAL DER PANZERTRUPPEN JOACHIM LEMELSEN, COMMANDER OF THE 14th ARMY, BIDDING FAREWELL TO SS-GRUPPENFÜHRER SIMON DURING AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE "RFSS" HQ IN AUGUST 1944.

higher command, Max Simon left the Division on 24 October to assume command of the XIIIth SS Army Corps on 1 November and SS-Oberführer Otto Baum assumed command as second and last divisional commander. As January 1945 gave way to February, the "RFSS" Division came down from its rocky positions in the Appenines and continued northeastwards, crossing the Via Emilia, southeast of Bologna. It then took up positions again, this time southwest of the Valli di Comacchio Lake, in a triangular area having its corners marked by the townships of Lavezzola, Fusignano and Alfonsine.

The Division's time in Italy was at an end for it had been decided to add its weight to that of the 6th SS Armoured Army in Hitler's desperate offensive in Hungary along the shores of Lake Balaton (Plattensee). In January 1945, "RFSS" moved northwards to Ferrara and there entrained and passing through Padua was transported to Hungary where on arrival, it assembled in the Nagykanisza area. One element that did not make the journey was the divisional anti-tank gun unit (SS-Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung 16) for this was detached in February 1945 and sent to SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. "Kurmärk" for the 32nd SS-Division. . . . in April, it was renamed SS-Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung 32.

In an attempt to confuse the enemy, the "RFSS" Division was pulled out of Italy in disguise. With effect from 14 February 1945, it was referred to as both "Auffrischungsgruppe 13. SS-Division" and "Ergänzungsstaffel 13. SS-Pz. Gren. Div." as it would have done the Germans no good to let the Allies know that the Italian front had been so effectively weakened³⁷.

The offensive was launched on 6 March 1945, along both sides of Lake Balaton, with "RFSS" advancing east of Zalaegerszeg in the area south of the Lake. It was doomed to failure, however, and had petered out by the middle of March.

The Division, forming part of the XXIIth Mountain Army Corps, 2nd Armoured Army, Army Group "South"³⁸, was under constant enemy pressure during March and April and was forced to withdraw westwards towards Untersteiermark in southern Austria. At this time, the Division was divided and some of its infantry and artillery was forced to surrender south of the River Drau. Elements able to fight on, assisted with the withdrawal of German troops from Yugoslavia. Most of the survivors of "RFSS" then withdrew past Marburg an der Drau, south of Graz, through Eibiswald and Köflach to the Klagenfurt area. In these last two months of the war, the Division became a component of the Ist Cavalry Corps of the 2nd Armoured Army, Army Group "South". On 3 April 1945, four complete Luftwaffe draft conducting battalions (Marschbataillone der Luftwaffe) were ordered to join the formation³⁹. In May, parts of the Division surrendered to the British in the Untersteiermark area west of Graz, while others fell into American captivity further northwest, around Radstadt.

³⁷The first can be translated roughly as "13th SS Division Refitting Group" and the second "13th SS Mechanized Infantry Division Supplementary Echelon".

The statement in Volume 3, p. 151, that "RFSS" was disguised as the 13th SS-Division "Handschar" has been found to be not strictly correct. For while it is true that "RFSS" was given the camouflage number "13", it was not actually called "Handschar" nor disguised as a mountain division.

³⁸XXII. Gebirgs-Armee Korps, 2. Panzer-Armee, Heeresgruppe "Süd".

³⁹OKW/W. F. St./Op (H.)/Süd w. Nr. 001203/45, v. 3.4.1945.

Order-of-Battle

(COMPOSITE)

Stab der Division/SS-Divisions-Kommando

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)

SS-Musikzug

SS-Div.-Begleit-Kompanie (mot.)

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 35 (ordered 3.10.43; on 22.10.43 numbered SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 33; on 12.11.43 renumbered to final title, June 1944; II. Btl. exchanged with Begleit-Btl. "RFSS").

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 36 (ordered 3.10.43; on 22.10.43 numbered SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 34; on 12.11.43 renumbered to final title.

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Lehr-Regiment (16)/SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Lehr-Brigade (16) (formed in early 1944(40) at SS-Pz. Gren. Schule at Prosetschnitz and added to "RFSS" Division in early March to strengthen the latter for Operation "Margarethe". 3.6.1944; absorbed by the Division. In common with other independent regiments it was renamed a Brigade).

SS-Begleit-Bataillon "Reichsführer-SS" (formed when the original Begleit-Btl. was upgraded to Sturmbrigade "RFSS" in early 1943; added to "RFSS" Division in early March to strengthen the latter for Operation "Margarethe". In June 1944, it was exchanged for the IInd Battalion of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35).

SS-Panzer-Abteilung 16 (formed November 1943 and equipped with assault guns (Sturmgeschütz)).

SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 16 (formed November 1943. As two of its three companies were equipped with assault guns it was unofficially referred to as "SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 16". Charts of 31.12.1944 and 28.2.1945 show the Pz. Jg. Abt. being under conversion from Stu. Gesch. to Pz. Jg. at a Tr. Üb. Pl. In February 1945, it was sent to SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. "Kurmark" for the 32. SS-Division and in April 1945 became SS-Pz. Jg. Abt. 32).

SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 16 (thought to be the unofficial name for SS-Pz. Jg. Abt. 16 resulting from the latter's large self-propelled element(41).

SS-Artillerie-Regiment 16 (formed November 1943. A IV. Abt. (7.-9. Kp.) existed in June 1944 (42).

⁴⁰ Tessin, Verbände und Truppen..., vol. 4, p. 48, only shows it as a Regiment, stating that it was formed in April 1944, saw action with the 16. SS-Pz.Gren.Div. in Italy and was back in Prague in 1945. In the first place, it could hardly have been formed in April 1944 if it had been added to "RFSS" in early March 1944 in time for Operation "Margarethe". It certainly saw action with "RFSS" in Italy for it was absorbed by that Division on 3 June 1944. As it could not have been in Prague in 1945, it is believed that this report refers to a successor unit.

⁴¹ At no time in official contemporary documents did the Division have a Pz. Jg. Abt. and a Stu. Gesch. Abt.

SS-Flak-Abteilung 16 (formed November 1943)

SS-Nachrichten-Abteilung (mot.) 16/SS-Nachrichten-Abteilung 16 (formed November 1943).

SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 16 (formed 12.11.1943 on basis of 15. Kradschützen-Komp. des SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 2 (20), 9. SS-Pz.Div. "Hohenstaufen" (43).

SS-Pionier-Bataillon 16 (16. SS-Pz. Gren. Div. "RFSS")/SS-Pionier-Bataillon (mot.) 16/SS-Pionier-Bataillon 16 (formed 15.1.1944 (44).

SS-Divisions-Nachschubführer 16/Kommandeur der Divisions-Nachschubtruppen 16 (created November 1943)

SS-Divisions-Nachschubtruppen 16

SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 16/SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abteilung 16 (formed November 1943 and renamed 15.8.1944)

SS-Feldpostamt 16

SS-Panzer-Instandsetzungs-Abteilung 16

SS-Sanitäts-Abteilung 16 (formed November 1943)

SS-Feldgendarmarie-Trupp 16

SS-Feldersatz-Bataillon 16 (formed November 1943)
SS-Ersatz-Staffel 16

⁴² This contradicts Klietmann, op. cit., p. 206 and Tessin, Verbände und Truppen..., vol. 4, p. 49, who both say that in December 1944 a new III. Abt. was formed and the existing III. Abt. became the IV.

⁴³ Klietmann, op. cit., p. 168.

⁴⁴ SS-FHA, Stabsbefehl 27/43, v. 31.12.1943 (T-175, Roll 107, Frame 2630978).

DIVISIONAL STRENGTHS*

| Date | Officers | NCOs | Men | Total |
|----------|----------|-------|----------------------|--------|
| 31.12.43 | 203 | 1,191 | 11,326 | 12,720 |
| 30. 6.44 | 369 | 1,984 | 11,865 | 14,218 |
| 10. 9.44 | 368 | 2,089 | 12,226 | 14,683 |
| 31.12.44 | 395 | 2,262 | 11,566 ⁴⁵ | 14,223 |
| 31. 1.45 | 382 | 2,188 | 11,186 ⁴⁶ | 13,756 |
| 28. 2.45 | 381 | 2,270 | 10,989 ⁴⁷ | 13,640 |

*Actual strengths (including men in hospitals, on detachment or on leave)/Iststärke.

Divisional Commanders

16 October 1943 - 24 October 1944_ SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS (promoted on 20. 4.1944 to SS-Gruppenführer u. Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS) Max Simon

24 October 1944 - May 1945_____ SS-Oberführer Otto Baum



BEST WISHES TO MAX SIMON FROM SS-PZ.ABT. 16 UPON HIS PROMOTION TO SS-GRUPPENFÜHRER ON 20 APRIL 1944.



SS-GRUPPENFÜHRER
MAX SIMON

JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES



US ARMY PHOTOGRAPH

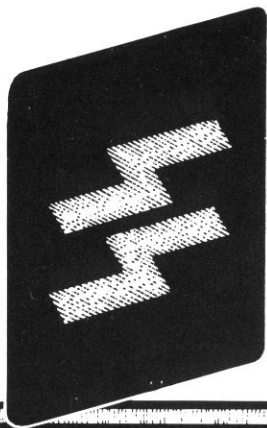
OTTO BAUM (HERE AN SS-OBERSTURMBANNFÜHRER)

⁴⁵+162 Hiwis + 1,359 in F.E.B. 16 & Ers.Staffel.

⁴⁶+160 Hiwis + 998 in F.E.B. 16 & Ers.Staffel.

⁴⁷+155 Hiwis + 1,038 in F.E.B. 16 & Ers.Staffel.

Divisional and Unit Insignia



- (1) All elements wore the "Reichsführer-SS" cuffband in Roman lettering and the SS runes on the collar throughout the Division's existence⁴⁸.

Reichsführer - 44

US ARMY PHOTOGRAPH



SS-GRUPPENFÜHRER SIMON, AS COMMANDER OF THE XIIIth SS ARMY CORPS, DISCUSSING SURRENDER TERMS WITH THE AMERICANS (NOTE "REICHSFÜHRER-SS" CUFFBAND)

DIVISIONAL VEHICLE SYMBOLS



(1)

A: CONFIRMED

- (1) Reproduction of the collar patch insignia denoting the rank of Reichsführer-SS in white (note insignia on right fender of vehicle below).



US ARMY PHOTOGRAPH

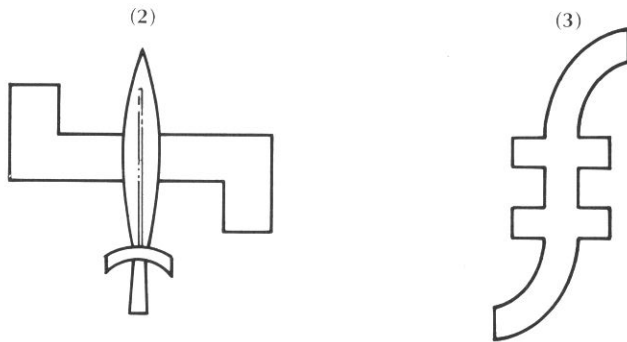
JAPANESE-AMERICANS OF THE 100th INFANTRY BATTALION, 34th DIVISION, EXAMINING A SMOULDERING VEHICLE IN LEGHORN, ITALY (19 JULY 1944).

B: UNCONFIRMED (and therefore possible variations)

(2) Upright sword superimposed over a Runic letter "S"⁴⁹.

(3) The symbol illustrated⁵⁰.

(4) Black SS runes⁵¹



⁴⁸The cuffband was listed in the SS-FHA document, dated 22 October 1943 (see note 2 above) and in *Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS*, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin 15.2.1944, Nr. 4, Z. 64.

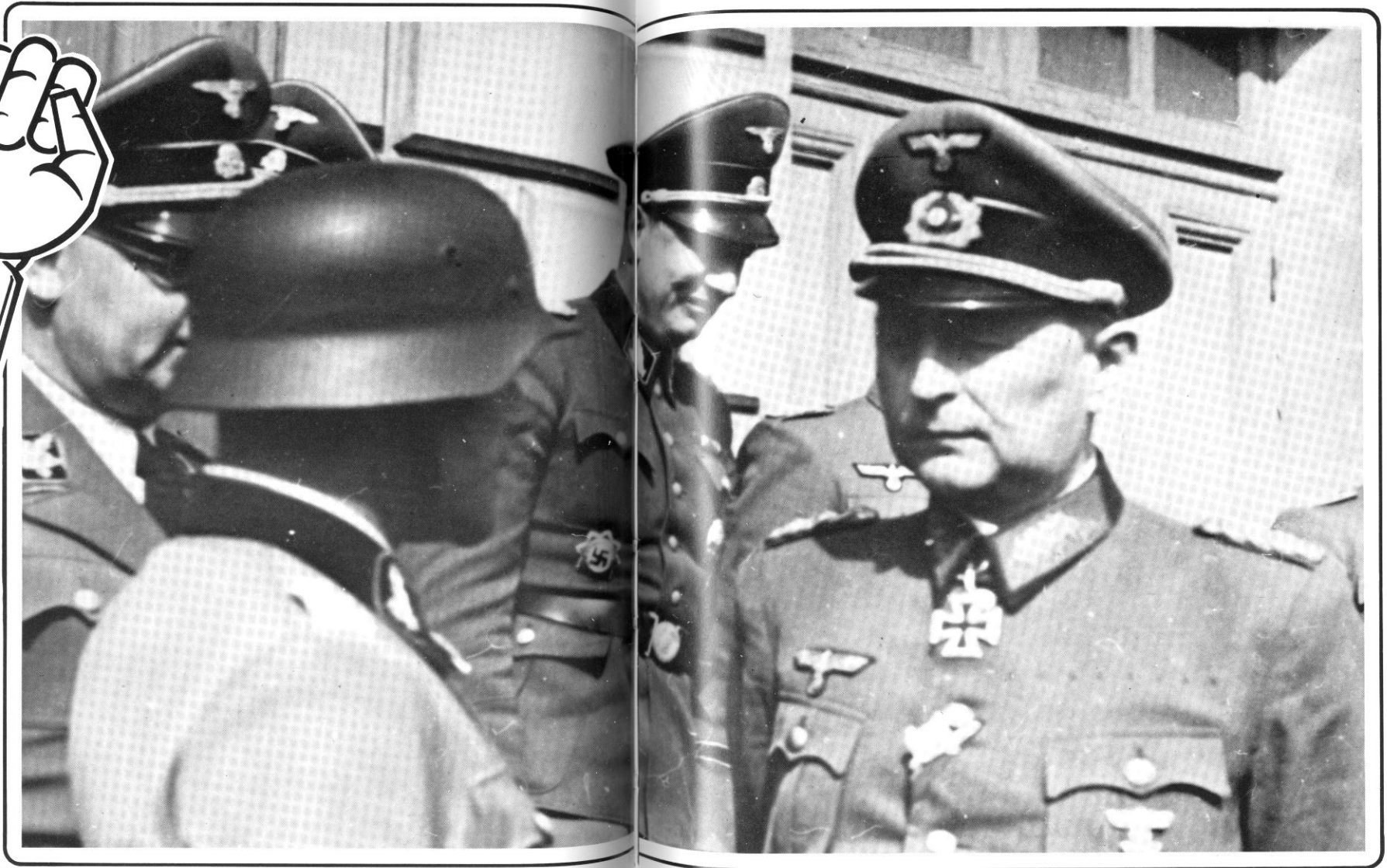
⁴⁹Reported but unconfirmed by Allied Intelligence in October 1944 (MIRS (D)-EMB-1/45, *German Divisional Emblems*, Military Intelligence Research Section, London, January 1945).

⁵⁰Reported in connection with the Division on 23 January 1944, during the fighting at the Anzio beachhead (AFH *Intelligence Notes*, Nr. 56, 23 April 1944) and in April 1944 (same source as cited in note 49)).

⁵¹Numerous photographs show Stu. G. III Ausf. F 75mm assault guns with the SS runes painted in black above the base of the barrel and on the right of the rear engine compartment plate. These photographs were taken in Italy and as one even attributes the vehicles to the "Himmler Division" (sic), there is a good possibility that the SS runes were used as an armoured vehicle symbol by the "RFSS" Division, and earlier by the Sturmbrigade "RFSS" (they are illustrated in photos dated September 1943 and January 1944).



JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES



SS-GRUPPENFÜHRER OBERG (HIGHER SS AND POLICE LEADER (HSSPF) IN FRANCE), SS-OBERFÜHRER OSTENDORFF., SS-OBERFÜHRER LAMMERDING, AND GENERAL DER PANZERTRUPPEN v. SCHWEPENBURG AT THOUARS, THE DIVISIONAL HQ ON 14 APRIL 1944.

17. *W*-Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Götz von Berlichingen"

EVOLUTION AND TITLES OF 17. SS-PANZER-GRENADIER-DIVISION "GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN"

3 October 1943¹ - 22 October 1943 — SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division
"Götz von Berlichingen"
22 October 1943² - 9 May 1945³ — 17. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division
"Götz von Berlichingen"

History



Thouars is a small country town in northwestern France, by road some 200 miles southwest of Paris and 75 miles inland from Nantes. In early 1944, it was chosen for the headquarters of the 17th division of the Waffen-SS.

On Monday, 10 April 1944, its town hall was packed with high-ranking German officers. While the new division's anti-aircraft unit kept a watchful eye on the skies for Allied air attacks, inside the building a ceremony was being held to name the formation officially and to bestow the first divisional cuffbands.

On a raised stage at one end of the hall, the Division's band was seated, backed by a huge eagle and swastika on a sun-burst patterned wall. Potted flowers and firs lent a festive spirit, while the dramatic black banner with its silver runes decking the podium reminded everyone present that this was an SS affair.

Most of the soldiers present wore the uniform of the Waffen-SS rather than that of the German Army. A notable exception was seated to the right of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, General der Panzertruppen Leo

¹The date of the Führerbefehl. In fact, forming did not begin until later. MID Manpower Study gives 15 October. The SS-FHA order giving details of the new division was not published until 30 October 1943. According to Tessin, the relative field post numbers were not published until 15 November. The HIAG-Kalender 1975 gives 1 December 1943 as the formation date.

²SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574 g.Kdos., v. 22.10.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS. Klietmann, op.cit., p. 209, gives December 1943.

³The Division laid down its arms and surrendered at midday on 9 May 1945. It was not disbanded, however, until 11 June 1945 when its men were sent to various POW camps.

Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg, commander-in-chief of all armoured troops in the west. To his right sat another general, the squat figure of SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer und Generaloberst der Waffen-SS Josef ("Sepp") Dietrich. Wearing a black tank uniform, Dietrich was at that time the general commanding the 1st SS Armoured Corps "LSSAH", under which the new division was to be placed two weeks later. Also present were two junior officers, one of the Waffen-SS and the other of the German Army, whose fates had been drawn together by the event. SS-Oberführer Werner Ostendorff was to be the Division's first and ill-fated commander... Oberstleutnant von Berlichingen was descended from the popular German hero,



WAFFEN-SS OFFICERS AT THE THOUARS CEREMONY IN APRIL 1944 — FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: DIETRICH, HERMANN BUCH (BEHIND HIM), KIERMAYER, OBERG (HSSPF IN FRANCE), HIMMLER, DR. STUMPFEGGER AND OSTENDORFF.

Götz von Berlichingen, whose name had been chosen for the Division⁴. Himmler took the stand and proceeded to name the Division, "Götz von Berlichingen", gave the town of Stuttgart as its sponsor, and handed out

⁴Götz (or Gottfried) von Berlichingen was a German knight who lived between 1480 and 1562. Born at the castle of Jagsthausen, he waged many wars and carried on numerous feuds - mainly for ransom and booty.

a number of the cuffbands to a selected number of divisional personnel. In the days to follow, all members of the Division were to receive these prized bands from their commanders⁵.

The Division's story began over six months before at Hitler's headquarters when, on 3 October 1943, he ordered the raising of two new SS-Panzer-Grenadier divisions, to be named "Reichsführer-SS" and "Götz von Berlichingen". The latter was to be joined by the (10.) SS-Panzer-Division "Frundsberg" to form the VIIth SS Armoured Corps, the HQ staff⁶ for which Hitler also ordered on 3 October. The Corps was later to be known as the "Mercenary Corps" of the Waffen-SS⁷.

While the "Reichsführer-SS" Division was to be based on an assault brigade of that name already in existence, "G.v.B." was to be an entirely new formation and recruiting difficulties were to delay its forming until December. Although existing only on paper in October 1943, the Division was included in the renumbering of all Waffen-SS divisions as of that month. On 22 October 1943, the SS-FHA numbered it the 17th Division of the Waf-

While assisting Albert IV, Duke of Bavaria, in the siege of Landshut in 1505, his right hand was shot away. The iron hand he then adopted allowed him to continue fighting, gave him the nickname of "Götz of the Iron Hand" and the SS division that was to bear his name almost four centuries after his death, a symbol. (No evidence has so far been found to support the colourful theory that the men of the 17th SS Division adopted the memorable words of Götz von Berlichingen in Goethe's play of that name; he told the Bishop of Bamberg "kiss my arse!"). It is interesting to note that while Georg von Frundsberg helped release Götz von Berlichingen from the citizens of Heilbronn in 1522, so the 10. SS-Panzer-Division "Frundsberg" helped provide the basis for the 17. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Götz von Berlichingen" in 1943.



GÖTZ VON BERLICHINGEN

⁵ According to one source, the cuffbands did not arrive until 11 April (the day after the ceremony) and were actually distributed (to the Flak-Abt. at least) on 12 April.

⁶ Korps-Kommando, VII. SS-Panzer-Korps.

⁷ Landsknecht-Korps. See Stöber, *Die Eiserne Faust - Bildband und Chronik der 17. SS-Panzergründervdivision "Götz von Berlichingen"*, Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, Neckargemünd, 1966, p. 13.

fen-SS and so it assumed its final title: 17. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Götz von Berlichingen"⁸. The same order gave its two infantry regiments as SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35 and 36, but on 12 November 1943, as a result of an alteration in the number of SS infantry regiments, these were renumbered to 37 and 38⁹. On 30 October 1943, the SS-FHA issued an order setting out details of the new formation¹⁰.

The divisional elements were to be built up in western France during November 1943, and a formation staff (Aufstellungsstab) was set up under SS-Obersturmbannführer Otto Binge, provisionally based at Poitiers, under the LXXXth Army Corps, 1st Army, Army Group "D". This was to remain the new Division's higher formation until late April 1944, when it came under the Ist SS Armoured Corps "LSSAH".

During November 1943, the various elements were raised with men coming from the "Frundsberg" Division^{11a}, Assault Brigade "Reichsführer-SS"^{11b}, training and replacement units^{11c} and a number of racial Germans from the Balkans^{11d}. Field post numbers for the divisional elements first appeared on 15 November 1943. On 24 November, one of the Division's most noteworthy units was raised. This was the armoured reconnaissance battalion (SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 17), which was based upon the 15th (motor-cycle) companies of the "Frundsberg" Division's two infantry regiments and formed at Thouars¹². Two days later,

⁸ See note 2 on page 128.

⁹ SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/9542/43 geh., v. 12. 11.1943, *Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS*.

¹⁰ SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1658/43 g.Kdos., v. 30 10.1943, *Aufstellung der 17. SS-Pz.Gren.Div. "Götz von Berlichingen"* (108/2631358-72).

^{11a} III./Art.Rgt. 10 of "Frundsberg" was the cadre for SS-Art.Rgt. 17 and SS-Pz.Aufkl.Abt. 17 was based on the 15. Kp. of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgter. 21 and 22.

^{11b} 2. Pz. Jg.Kp. (sf.) of Sturmbrigade "RFSS" provided the base for SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 17.

^{11c} These included 9. u. 10. Kp./Ausb.Btl. z.b.V., SS-Pz.Gren.-A.-u. E.-Btle. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 12, SS-IG-A.-u. E.-Btl. 2, SS-Pi.-A.-u. E.-Btl. 1, SS-Nachr.-A.-u. E.-Abt. 1 and 5.

^{11d} The Division also contained some Italians. The reference to "numerous Belgians and Rumanians" in MID, *Manpower Study*, is suspect. . .no Belgians are reported and the "Rumanians" were probably racial Germans.

on 26 November 1943, the 40 year-old Werner Ostendorff was chosen to command "G.v.B." A former Reichswehr officer, he had transferred to the infant Luftwaffe soon after Hitler's rise to power and had then joined the SS-Verfügungstruppe in 1935. Having been a lecturer in tactics at the SS Officer Cadet School (SS-Junkerschule) in Bad Tölz, he was well qualified and gained further experience on the staff of the mixed armoured division "Kempf" in the Polish campaign and then as Ia (erster Generalstabsoffizier) of the SS-Verfügungs-Division in the western and Jugoslav campaigns and of the "Das Reich" Division in the attack on Russia in 1941. In Russia, he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 13 September 1941, and in the 1941/42 winter fighting, commanded the battle group made up of the survivors of the "Das Reich" Division. Before being given command of "G.v.B.", he had been on the staff of the SS Armoured Corps (SS-Panzerkorps...later numbered the IInd SS Armoured Corps) and was its chief of staff at Kharkov and during the Kursk and Mius offensives. Ostendorff was appointed on 26 November 1943, but did not assume effective command of "G.v.B." until January 1944 as a result of delays in raising the Division.



JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES

SS-OBERFÜHRER OSTENDORFF, SS-OBERSTURMBANNFÜHRER FICK (CMDR. SS-PZ.GREN.RGT. 37), AND SS-OBERSTURMBANNFÜHRER BINGE (CMDR. SS-ART. RGT. 17 WITH BACK TO CAMERA), AT THOUARS IN APRIL 1944.

In December 1943, the SS-FHA ordered the concentration of the various elements to make up the new division in an area some 60 miles south of Le Mans. Here, east of Tours and between Angers to the north and Parthenay to the south, the new division was assembled with its HQ at Thouars. Its original order-of-battle, with the locations of the elements, was as follows:

| <u>GERMAN</u> ¹³ | <u>ENGLISH</u> | <u>LOCATION</u> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| SS-Divisionsstab | (divisional staff) | Thouars |
| SS-FG-Komp. | (military police coy) | |
| SS-Div.-Sich.-Komp.(*) 17 | (divisional security coy) | |
| SS-Aufkl.-Abt. 17 | (reconnaissance unit) | Montreuil |
| SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 37 | (37th motorized infantry regiment) | Parthenay/ Fontevrault |
| SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 38 | (38th -"-) | Saumur |
| SS-Art.Rgt. 17 | (artillery regiment) | St. Varent |
| SS-Pi.Btl. 17 | (engineer battalion) | Saumur |
| SS-Flak-Abt. 17 | (A.A. unit) | Noirterre, etc. |
| SS-Pz.Jg.Abt. 17 | (anti-tank battalion) | Parthenay - Airvault - St.Loup/Thouet - Gourgé |
| SS-Nachr.Abt. 17 | (signals battalion) | ? |
| SS-Wirtsch.Btl. 17 | (logistic battalion) | ? |
| SS-Div.Nachsch.Trp. Abt. 17 | (supply battalion) | Châtellerault |
| SS-Inst.Abt. 17 | (repair unit) | ? } possibly formed |
| SS-San.Abt. 17 | (medical battalion) | ? } in Germany by |
| SS-F.P.A. 17 | (field post office) | ? } A.-u. E. units |
| SS-F.E.B. 17 | (field replacement bn.) | Loudon (later moved to Châtellerault |

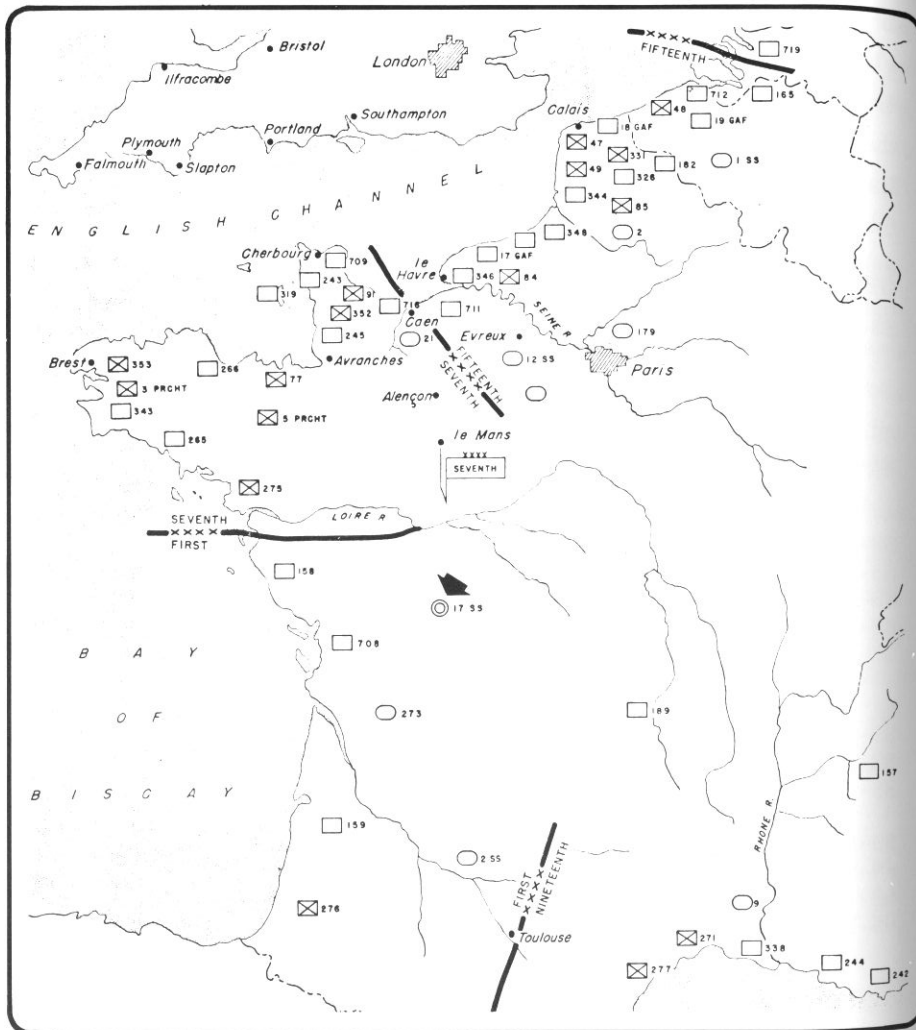
(*)Although the original document gives "Sicherungs-", it should in fact have been "Begleit-" (protection) (P.H.B.).

An armoured battalion (SS-Panzer-Abteilung 17) was mentioned on 30 October 1943, and raised at Mirebeau.

Such was the Division's theoretical composition and location at the end of 1943, but in practice continual difficulties in acquiring the necessary manpower and equipment slowed progress down. It was not until April 1944, that the first divisional element, the anti-aircraft unit, was ready for action, and even then this had to depend on oxen to tow its 3rd battery! In May, the reconnaissance unit was ready.

¹²Helmut Günther, SS-Panzeraufklärungsabteilung 17 "Götz von Berlichingen" von der Normandie bis nach Österreich, privately printed, 195?.

¹³For full German designations see pp. 50/51 of Vol. 2 of this series.



DISPOSITION OF GERMAN FORCES IN THE WEST - 6 JUNE 1944.

SS-Oberführer Werner Ostendorff arrived at Thouars in January 1944, and took over effective command. Although he was to remain in command for only a short period of actual combat, it was Ostendorff who was responsible for the smooth and highly efficient training of "G.v.B."

The Germans were well aware that an Allied invasion of Europe was inevitable and saw the need to have a number of divisions in France, ready to repel the invaders wherever they landed. On 9 February 1944, an order was entered in the Wehrmacht War Diary¹⁴ whereby the Wehrmacht

Operational Staff¹⁵ provided that "G.v.B." should supply a battle group to the 1st Army, should the Allies land on the west or south coasts of France.

Training continued into March and certain elements were engaged in security operations. Supply for the divisional elements was slow and with only three quarters of the required motor transport at hand, the Division began a collection of French vehicles on the orders of the LXXXth Army Corps. In this way, "G.v.B." was at least partially motorized by March 1944...just three months from D-Day.

After its official baptism at Thouars on 10 April 1944, "G.v.B." came under Sepp Dietrich's 1st SS Armoured Corps "LSSAH" as OKW Reserve on 26 April¹⁶. Available for further employment by the OKW, the Division's reconnaissance unit became combat ready and was soon after followed by the entire formation¹⁷. The anti-aircraft unit was sent to Saumur and placed under the 13th Anti-Aircraft Regiment (Flak-Rgt. 13) of the Luftwaffe at Remes.

June 1944...the month of the Allied invasion in Normandy and the fateful extension of Hitler's war to three fronts, opened with a small victory for "G.v.B.": the first battery of its anti-aircraft unit shot down a Halifax on the 2nd. Two days later, the commanders of the future Jagd-Panzer companies of the anti-tank battalion were assigned to the Panzer-Lehr-Division in an area southwest of Paris for instruction and training. On the eve of D-Day, "G.v.B." was one of the four armoured Waffen-SS divisions in France and Belgium...the others were the 1st "Adolf Hitler", the 2nd "Das Reich" and the 12th "Hitlerjugend".

The long-awaited landings came on 6 June 1944, and the secret of its target...so closely and well-guarded from the Germans...was known. "G.v.B." was to be rushed to face the invaders in Normandy and during D-Day, the necessary preparations for its departure were hurriedly made. On 7 June, parts of the Division moved towards Normandy and on the 10th,

¹⁵Wehrmachtführungsstab (W.F.St.).

¹⁶The other divisions in this Corps were the 1st SS "Adolf Hitler" and the 12th SS "Hitlerjugend".

¹⁷Tessin, op.cit., Vol. 4, p. 77.

its reconnaissance unit was the first element to make contact with the enemy. On that day, the Division was placed under the LXXXIVth Army Corps¹⁸.

Only two-thirds of the Division were serviceable by 12 June and ammunition for the heavy weapons was in short supply. Thus, it was only a relatively weak 17th SS Division that joined the 6th Parachute Regiment (Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 6) in taking on a vastly superior enemy on 14 June 1944, at Carentan¹⁹. The fighting was fierce and "G.v.B." suffered heavy casualties. During June 1944, 4 officers were killed, 17 wounded and 3 unaccounted for. Among the wounded was divisional commander Werner Ostendorff (an SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS since 20 April 1944) who, wounded on the 15th, was at once replaced by SS-Standartenführer Otto Binge. Binge's appointment was only temporary, however, and three days later he was replaced by SS-Standartenführer Otto Baum²⁰. 229 NCOs and other ranks died in June, 760 lay wounded and 82 were missing. More men were urgently required in Normandy if the Allies were to be contained and on 17 June, the first mention appeared in the OKW War Diary of the 49th and 51st SS Armoured Brigades. These were to be thrown into the fighting in August and their survivors were later absorbed by "G.v.B.", as will be seen later.

July 1944 opened with "G.v.B." fighting south of Carentan under the LXXXIVth Army Corps and it is believed to have been reinforced during this period by eastern volunteers²¹. On 5 July, the Allies attacked in the left sector which was held by SS-Pz.Gren. Rgt. 37 and Fallschirmjäger-

¹⁸LXXXIV. Armeekorps. Formed in France on 15 May 1942, it was to remain based at St. Lô in Normandy until its destruction in August 1944 and subsequent disbandment on 2 November of that year. From June 1942 until August 1944, it was under the 7th Army of Army Group "D". General der Artillerie Erich Marcks was its commanding general, until his death on 12 June 1944 in an air raid. He was succeeded by General Wilhelm Fahrmbacher.

¹⁹101st and part of the 82nd Airborne Divisions and the 2nd U.S. Armoured Division.

²⁰Baum only remained in command until the end of July 1944, when he assumed temporary command of the "Das Reich" Division. Binge then resumed command for the month of August.

²¹Ost-Truppen. Ost-Bataillone 439 and 635 are reported but not confirmed.

Regiment 6 after a softening-up by heavy artillery fire. In this period, "G.v.B." 's senior infantry regiment lost 30 dead (2 of whom were company(?) commanders) and 200 wounded²². Further heavy losses followed on 10 July when, for example, the IIIrd Battalion of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 37 was reduced from 945 men to 345. Up to that date, 32 officers (of whom 9 were company (?) commanders) had been killed.

The time had come for the Americans to launch a major offensive to break out of the Normandy bridgehead. Heavy bombing north of Marigny and east of St. Lô on 25 July was followed by a breakthrough in that area by the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 30th U.S. Infantry Divisions of General Bradley's 1st Army. The German front was held by the 91st and 243rd Infantry, Panzer-Lehr and 2nd and 17th SS Divisions. These fought well, especially "G.v.B." which was praised by the OKW in a bulletin of 29 July²³, but could not hold the advance and were forced back.

The American attack of 25 July was the beginning of the Division's withdrawal from Normandy... and from France itself. In the last days of July, it pulled back fighting past Savigny, Cerisy la Salle and Roncey, and then staged a break-out in the Percy-Souvdeval area as part of an armoured battle group with the "Das Reich" Division²⁴.

All of August 1944 was taken up by the Division's withdrawal from France. On the first of that month, all battle-worthy elements were brought together to form a battle group. At first, this was called simply "Kampfgruppe "17. SS-Pz.Gren.Div." ", but then took on the name of its commander, SS-Obersturmbannführer Jakob Fick, as SS-Kampfgruppe "Fick". This battle group was to be used in an attack on Avranches which Hitler had ordered to try and cut the lines of supply to Patton's rapidly advanc-

²²The 6th Parachute Regiment lost even more...50 killed and 250 wounded.

²³Wehrmachtbericht v. 29.7.1944. This put on record how "G.v.B." had distinguished itself in fierce fighting in the St. Lô - Lessay area during the preceding weeks in defense and attack. Credit was also given to divisional commander Ostendorff who had been badly wounded and his successor, Otto Baum...no mention being made of Otto Binge's three-day tenure of command.

²⁴The "Panzer-Kampfgruppe der Waffen-SS" made up of the 2nd and 17th SS Divisions and in action north of Souvdeval was mentioned in the Wehrmacht bulletin of 31 July 1944.

ing armoured columns. This desperate assault, so vital to the Germans, was entrusted to SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer und Generaloberst der Waffen-SS Paul Hausser, who had taken over command of the 7th Army on 2 July, after the death of Generaloberst Friedrich Dollmann on 27 June. The attack was launched on 7 August by the 1st and 2nd SS Divisions and the 2nd and 116th Army Panzer Divisions. These were supported by infantry and in addition to SS-Kampfgruppe "Fick", other elements of the "G.v.B." Division fought alongside "Das Reich". But the Americans were prepared for the attack and robbed of the element of surprise and lacking the required strength, the attempt failed and what was to have been a decisive blow against the Allies ended in a further defeat for the Germans. A far more crushing blow was soon to come at the closing of the Falaise/Argentan pocket on 19/20 August, but "G.v.B." was to be spared this fate by being ordered to proceed to Paris for a rest and refit, prior to reforming in the Saar area of western Germany²⁵. As the survivors of the Division made good their escape from the fate that awaited 19 German divisions at Falaise, some took up defensive positions on the Eure and near Paris, while SS-Kampfgruppe "Fick" continued to fight on under the LXXXIst Army Corps. On 18 August, it was by the Seine at Chambray but was then disbanded on 24 August south of Louviers.

The battered Division reached Paris and then, fighting rearguard actions, it veered east past Châlons sur Marne²⁶ towards its appointed reforming area at Merzig, some 30 miles northeast of Metz in the Saarland. No sooner had the first elements arrived than two new battle groups were hurriedly assembled and sent off to nearby Metz and Diedenhofen.

²⁵A number of orders were issued in rapid succession to this effect and some were probably overtaken by events. As early as 6 August the C-in-C West had ordered remnants of "G.v.B." to be absorbed by the "Das Reich" Division (Ob. West I/8588, v. 6.8.44). On 15 August, a divisional order (Divisions-Befehl) stated that "G.v.B." was to transfer to the Dreux-Lieu la Forêt area just north of Paris. An order from a Corps of 19 August provided that the Division would reform in the Saar-gebiet. On 20 August, the Division was ordered to transfer to the Fontainebleau area for a refit under A.O.K. I.

²⁶One source says that the survivors of the Division traveling eastwards from Paris met up with new and reformed divisional elements at Châlons sur Marne.

It was now time to reinforce the Division with what remained of the 49th and 51st SS Armoured Brigades which, as has already been mentioned, were thrown into the Normandy fighting in August. They had been formed in March 1944 as SS Battle Groups (SS-Kampfgruppen) 1 and 3 respectively and had been designated as SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Brigaden on 18 June. Both had been recalled from coastal defense duties in Denmark in August to bolster the German front in France and SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Brigade 49 was transferred on 16/17 August to engage the Allies. It was trapped in the so-called "Provinspocket" near Châlons sur Marne between Paris and Metz where it, and the 51st which tried to free it, suffered severe losses. The SS-FHA ordered on 10 August that these brigades should be up-graded to become the 26th and 27th SS Armoured Divisions respectively. In fact, these names were officially adopted even though the brigades were not to receive the necessary additional elements to bring them up to divisional strength. On 23 August, the decision was taken to use the remains of the two brigades to reform the infantry regiments of "G.v.B."²⁷. Both brigades were disbanded on 8 September 1944 during the German withdrawal towards Paris and then Metz. They were used to rebuild the two new infantry regiments for the Division (retaining the old designation of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgter. 37 and 38) with the exception of the artillery unit of the 49th Brigade, which had survived more or less intact. Its instructors and essential equipment were sent back to SS Artillery School 2 at Benešov²⁸ in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia where it had been raised. Only the personnel who had completed their training joined "G.v.B.", going to I./SS-Art.Rgt. 17.

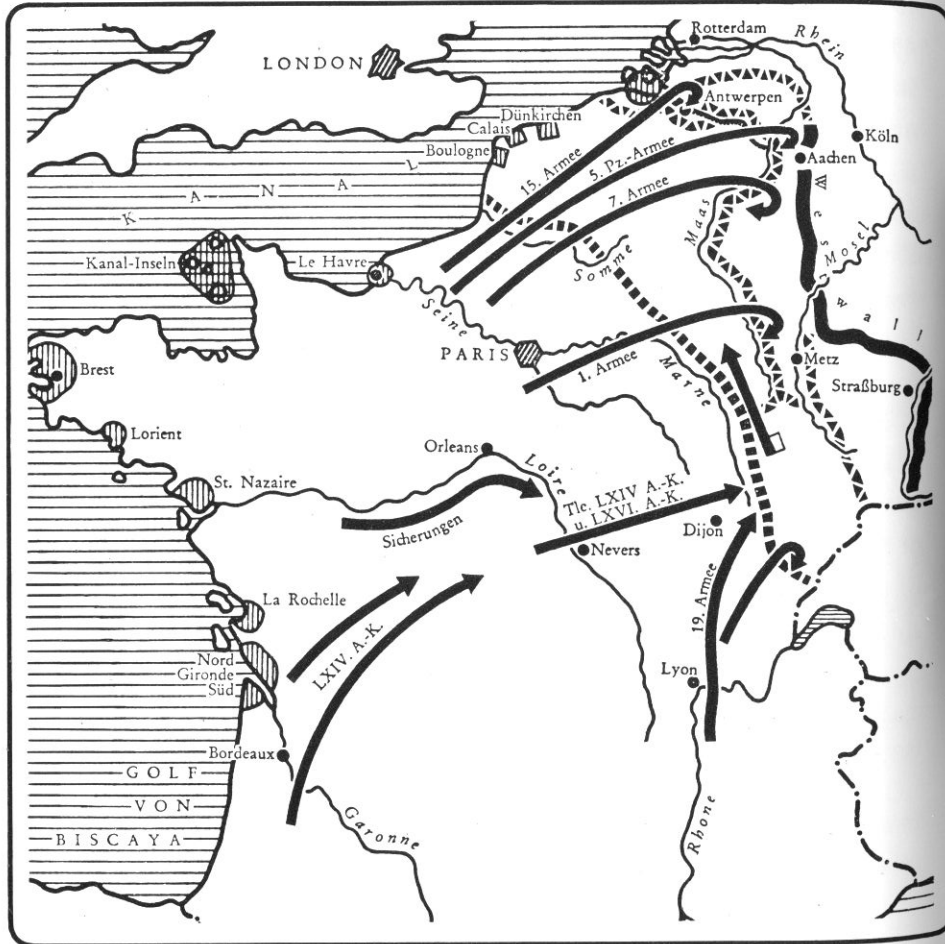
In addition to the Division's infantry, other elements were reformed or strengthened near Merzig at this time and on 4 September, "G.v.B." had its junior officer corps replenished by the arrival of 50 subalterns from the Metz Military Academy. In time, all elements were back in the line

²⁷AOK 1, Ia/d Nr. 5042/44 geh., v. 23.8.1944. According to Tessin, op.cit., vol. 4, p. 77, SS-Pz.Gren.Brigaden 49 and 51 were used to reform SS-Pz.Gren.Rgter. 27 and 38 respectively. In fact, the situation may not have been so clearly defined and according to Klietmann, op.cit., p. 321, SS-Pz.Gren.I ig. 51 was used to rebuild SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 37...not 38 as Tessin would have one believe.

²⁸SS-Artillerie-Schule II Beneschau, formed 1 August 1942.

for the coming bitter defense of Metz, which was to involve "G.v.B." for almost the remainder of the year. September was spent between the Meuse and Moselle Rivers around Pont-à-Mousson, on the Moselle about 20 miles south of Metz.

The American drive across France towards Germany was to be halted by the tough German resistance encountered at Metz. On 3 September, the



THE GERMAN WITHDRAWAL ACROSS FRANCE.

U.S. 3rd Army halted before the town, which had come under the control of the XXXXVIIth Armoured Corps (1st Army, Army Group "B") the previous day. The Americans launched their attack on 6 September. Two days later, "G.v.B." came under the XIIIth SS Army Corps (1st Army, Army Group "G")²⁹ and it was to remain under this higher SS formation for most of what remained of its short life.

From 13 to 25 September, the Division fought the XXth U.S. Corps south of Metz, except for its anti-aircraft unit which was transferred to Kaiserslautern, 75 miles to the northeast, on 14 September.

The taking of Metz was as vital to the Americans as its fall was to be disastrous to its German defenders. On 1 October, the Americans launched a general assault but this was met by stubborn resistance and "G.v.B." and the other defending forces held their ground. On 9 October, the 3rd company of the Reconnaissance unit was fighting defensively east of Nomeny near Chenicourt, and on 15 October, SS-Regiment "Matzdorff"³⁰ was sent to the area south of Sorbey and five days later was in the sector



MEN OF THE SS-PZ.AUFL.ABT. 17 DURING THE RETREAT TOWARDS THE WEST WALL.

of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 38 near Coin. The following day, 21 October 1944, the 45th Machinegun Battalion (MG-Batl. 45) under Major Dr. Weiss was attached to the Division and on 24 October, it managed to free the 1st Battalion of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 38 in the Selzeck - Sillingen - la Houtonnerie Ferme area.

²⁹Previously at Metz under LXXXIIInd Army Corps (Stöber, op. cit., p. 92).

³⁰SS-Regiment z.b.V. "Matzdorff" was an ad hoc infantry regiment commanded by SS-Sturmbannführer Werner Matzdorff.

October ended with "G.v.B." still holding fast to its positions, but it had suffered heavy losses and was short of supplies, weapons and ammunition. Ammunition for the heavy weapons was running out and the Division was so reduced in strength as to be no longer classified as an assault formation (Angriffsdivision) and was as weak as a People's Grenadier Division (Volks-Grenadier-Division).

In the first days of November 1944, the Division faced the 5th U.S. Infantry Division and was reinforced for the inevitable assault. It received four Mark IV tanks and six assault guns, its Artillery Regiment was reinforced and would receive support from the XIIIth SS Army Corps' artillery unit (SS-Korps-Art.-Abt. 513). At this time, part of SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 38 was being refitted in the area between Kurzel a. d. Strasse and Han a. d. Nied.

Hitler ordered on 3 November that Metz was to be held to the last man, but "G.v.B." was not to allow itself to be surrounded in the city. Four days later the OKW ordered "G.v.B." to be refitted but this had to be cancelled when the U.S. XIIIth Corps finally launched its major offensive on 8/9 November. This offensive turned the tide of the battle and most of the defenders were either killed or driven from their positions by 20 November. Pockets of resistance held out even longer and SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 38 was destroyed for the second time on 22 November. Other elements were to hold out even into December and the majority of these are said to have been Waffen-SS troops³¹. But "G.v.B." had left Metz by the end of November.

At the beginning of December 1944, "G.v.B." was the most southerly component of the XIIIth SS Army Corps³². On the first of the month it had been so weakened through combat as to have had barely 3,500 men, 1000 of whom were Panzergrenadiere. Its armour was down to 20 tanks and assault guns. Forced eastwards out of Metz, it was trying to hold the Americans in the St. Avold area. For the first three weeks of December it was forced back northeastwards towards Saarbrücken and the West Wall which marked the German frontier. Its HQ was some five miles

³¹Waffen-SS personnel held onto Fort Gambetta until 7 December, for example.

³²Under 1st Army, Army Group "G".

southeast of Saarbrücken at Ormesheim on 11 December. The following day, it was engaging the enemy at the West Wall itself. A stand was achieved around Reinheim and Habkirchen and on the Blies River. On Christmas Eve the Division was relieved and sent a short distance to the north to Neuenkirchen, St. Ingbert, Homburg and Spiesen for a much needed refit.

At this time what remained of SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 38 was used to strengthen the Division's senior infantry regiment³³ and a new SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 38 was formed from the SS-Pz. Gren.-Lehr-Regiment, which was rushed from SS-Pz. Gren. Schule at Prosetschnitz at SS-Tr. Üb. Pl. Böhmen (Benešov) to join the Division³⁴. This reorganization took from 24 to 27 December and on New Year's Eve 1945, "G.v.B." was alerted and sent the short distance south to the Zweibrücken area around Medelsheim, Altheim and Gailbach.

1945 dawned with "G.v.B." holding the line Achen, Bettweiler, Urbach, and Nussweiler, south of Zweibrücken.

The German offensive launched in the Ardennes in mid-December 1944 (the "Battle of the Bulge") had obliged the Americans to send men to face the attacking three armies. As a result, the American position on other fronts was weakened and one vulnerable area in southern Alsace was to be exploited on Hitler's orders in "Operation North Wind" (Unternehmen "Nordwind"). Eight divisions attacked and were led by the XIIIth SS Army Corps, made up of "G.v.B." and the 36th Volks-Grenadier-Division. But the offensive met with only limited success and failed to achieve the desired breakthrough.

Frauenburg fell on 3 January and on 6 January, "G.v.B." had to give up its positions and withdrew to the Lothringen area. On 9 January, SS-Standartenführer Hans Lingner, who had commanded the Division since December 1944, was taken prisoner and his place given to an Army officer from OKH Reserve, Oberst Lindner. Fighting in Lothringen continued

³³The IInd Battalion of SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 38 became the IIIrd of SS-Pz. Gren. Rgt. 37, for example.

³⁴This Regiment, known as "SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Ausbildungs-Regiment", was incorporated following an order of late December 1944 (P.H.B.). It consisted of 3 battalions, a heavy anti-tank gun company, an anti-aircraft company and an engineer company.



FRITZ KLINGENBERG, "JOPP",
FICK AND WILHELM KMENT.

JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES

and the tough combat around Rimlingen was referred to in an OKW report of 11 January. At this time, "G.v.B." was still under the XIIIth SS Army Corps³⁵ which on 13 January was also made up of the 19th and 559th Volks-Grenadier-Divisionen, Volkswerfer-Brigade 18 and Volks-Artillerie-Korps 40³⁶. The job of holding the Americans was aggravated by lack of supplies, with fuel and ammunition also being in especially short supply between 16 and 21 January. SS-Standartenführer Fritz Klingenberg took command on 21 January.

In February 1945, "G.v.B." was still under the XIIIth SS Army Corps of the 1st Army, Army Group "G" and on 10 February numbered 334 officers, 2231 NCOs and 10,687 other ranks. Its higher formation remained unaltered in March and on 2 March, the artillery regiment was strengthened from 3 to 4 Abteilungen³⁷. The first two weeks of March 1945 saw

³⁵It has also been found reported available (zur Verfügung) under 1st Army, Army Group "G" (i.e. without any mention of the SS Corps) in January 1945.

³⁶Stöber, op.cit., p. 66. The number "40" is believed to be incorrect (it does not appear in Tessin) as such an element should have been numbered in the 400+ series.

³⁷II. Abt., SS-Art.Rgt. z.b.V., 32. SS-Frw.Gren.Div., was added and became III. Abt. - thus the existing III. Abt. became the IV. Abt.

"G.v.B." in fierce fighting centered on Rimlingen. On 14 March the Division was still fighting around Zweibrücken and on that day the 7th U.S. Army dropped leaflets specially prepared for the men of the 17th SS Division, saying that the war was over and urging those who read them to surrender. In the middle of March, the formation was ordered to pull back and between 15 and 24 March, it withdrew eastwards through the Pfalzer Wald, past Landau, to cross the Rhine at Germersheim, some 20 miles south of Mannheim. The divisional HQ was set up at Germersheim and on 22 March, Fritz Klingenberg was killed. He was succeeded two days later by SS-Standartenführer Jakob Fick. Before pulling back further to the east, the Division was assembled in the area between Schwetzingen to the north and Wiesloch to the south.

The second half of March saw "G.v.B." fighting rearguard actions while pulling back through Eberbach (where the reconnaissance battalion and the IIIRD Battalion of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 38 were fighting on 28 March), Mosbach and Crailsheim. The bulk of the Division was refitted under Army reserve in the Walldorf-Wiesloch area towards the end of the month and on 27 March, the reconnaissance battalion and part of the artillery regiment and armoured battalion were reformed. On that day, Fick was replaced as divisional commander by the former commander of the 18. SS-Pz.Gren.Div. "Horst Wessel", SS-Oberführer Georg Bochmann, and the Division left the XIIIth SS Army Corps and came under the Army's Army Corps of that same number³⁸. On 28 March, the Division received 4,000 men from Amberg, including Marscheinheit "Schaffmann" which had seen service in Russia.

Between 3 and 12 April, "G.v.B." fought around the Jagst River against the U.S. 63rd and 100th Infantry and 10th Armoured Divisions. SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 38 was heavily engaged between the Jagst and Kocher Rivers between 6 and 11 April.

On 14/15 April, "G.v.B." was placed under the LXXXIInd Army Corps but on 17 April part of SS-Flak-Abt. 17 was back under the XIIIth SS Army Corps near Crailsheim.

³⁸XIII. Armee-Korps... also known as "Korps Bork" after its commanding general, Knight's Cross holder Generalleutnant Max Bork.

"G.v.B." began to pull back again in mid-April, in the face of continuous American pressure. It was at Crailsheim on 12 April and Ansbach on the 15th. On 21 April, the formation was fighting in Nuremberg along with 31 other elements, civilians and the old men and boys of the Volkssturm. The Division abandoned the city that had been the scene of the incredible pre-war Party rallies and headed first southeast to nearby Neumarkt, and then further south to cross the Danube at Donauwörth on 24 April (other elements crossed the river further east near Neustadt).

The Division fought in and around Munich in the last days of April, the majority of its survivors then heading to the south. They were in the Starnberg, Penzberg, Bad Heilbrunn area on 29/30 April and reached Bad Tölz on 2 May. This was a day after the spa town that had been the home of the main officer candidate school of the armed SS since 1932, had been declared "open". "G.v.B." was to make its last stand in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps and on 4/5 May its elements were assembled



around the Achen Pass and Lake Achen, to the northeast of Innsbruck. On 5 May, the Division veered back northwards across the present Austro-German border near Kreuth as a component once again of the XIIIth Army Corps (not SS)³⁹.

"G.v.B." capitulated to the Americans on 7 May 1945 and two days later marched under SS-Obersturmbannführer Rudolf Klaphake⁴⁰ into a temporary POW camp at Rottach-Egern on Tegernsee. On 12 May, the survivors were organized into two infantry and one transport regiment and on 21 May were sent to Munich. During May and the first part of June 1945, the former 17th Waffen-SS Division was kept in the area southeast of Munich-Baldham and only on 11 June was it finally disbanded when its men were dispersed to various POW camps.

The 17th SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Götz von Berlichingen" had existed for 17 months and had fought without respite for 11 of them. It was the only SS division to have fought exclusively on the western front and its name and deservedly earned tough reputation do not appear to have been tarnished by any involvement in war crimes.

³⁹ Also reported to have been under the 1st Cavalry Corps, C-in-C South East (I. Kav.-Korps, OB Südost) in May 1945.

⁴⁰ Commander of SS-Artillerie-Regiment 17.

Order-of-Battle

(COMPOSITE)

SS-Aufstellungsstab

Stab der Division/Divisionsstab 17

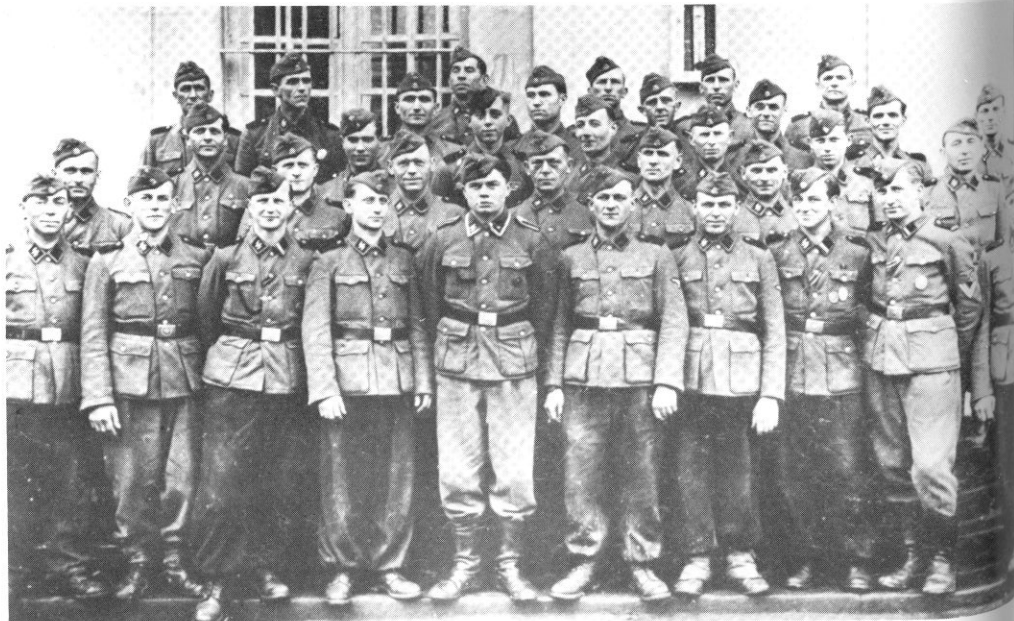
SS-Div. -Kartenstelle (mot.)

SS-Musikkorps 17

SS-Div. -Begleit-Kompanie 17/SS-Div. -Sicherungs-Kompanie 17

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 37 (ordered 3.10.43; on 22.10.43 numbered SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 35; on 12.11.43 renumbered to final title. 15.11.43 formed in France, partly from transfers from 10. SS-Pz.Div. "Frundsberg". Destroyed at Normandy and rebuilt September 1944 on basis of SS-Pz.Gren.Brig. 49 in Lothringen area. Rebuilt again in December 1944 when personnel were received from SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 38 (e.g. II/38 became new III/37)).

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 38 (ordered 3.10.43; on 22.10.43 numbered SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 36; on 12.11.43 renumbered to final title. 15.11.43 formed in France, partly from transfers from 10. SS-Pz.Div. "Frundsberg". Destroyed at Normandy and rebuilt September 1944 on basis of SS-Pz.Gren.Brig. 51 in Lothringen area. 22.11.44 destroyed at Metz and survivors transferred to SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 37 (e.g. II/38 became new III/37). 1.1.45 rebuilt at SS-Tr.Üb.Pl. "Böhmen" (Benešov) on basis of SS-Pz.Gren.Ausb.Rgt. (in fact SS-Pz.Gren.-Lehr-Rgt. from SS-Pz.Gren.Schule at Prosetschnitz).



I. ZUG (ZUG GOLDBERG), 14. FLAK-KP./SS-PZ.GREN.RGT. 38 AT SAUMUR, FRANCE IN 1943.

SS-Panzer-Abteilung 17 (formed November 1943 in France and equipped with assault guns).

SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 17 (formed June 1944 by renaming SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 17).

SS-Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 17 (formed November 1943; June 1944 became SS-Panzer-Jäger-Abteilung 17).

SS-(Panzer-) Artillerie-Regiment 17 (formed November 1943 on basis of III./SS-Art.Rgt. 10 of 10. SS-Pz.Div. "Frundsberg". August 1944 was reformed with men from artillery Abteilungen of SS-Pz.Gren. Brigaden 49 and 51. March 1945... a new III. Abt. was provided (ex-II. Abt. of SS-Art.Rgt. z.b.V. of 32. SS-Frw.Gren.Div.) and so existing III. Abt. was renumbered the IV. Abt. Beobachtungs- und Vermessungsbatterie was attached).

SS-Flak-Abteilung 17 (formed November 1943 in France and was first element to be combat ready...defending name-giving ceremony in April 1944).

SS-Nachrichten-Abteilung (mot.) 17/SS-Panzer-Nachrichten-Abteilung 17/SS-Nachrichten-Abteilung 17 (formed November 1943 in France).

SS-Fernsprech-Kompanie 17

SS-Funk-Kompanie 17

SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 17 (formed 24.11.43 at Thouars, France from part of 15th companies of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 21 and 22 of 10. SS-Pz.Div. "Frundsberg". May 1944...ready for action. June 1944... first element to engage the enemy at Normandy).

SS-Pionier-Bataillon (mot.) 17/SS-Pionier-Bataillon 17 (formed November 1943 in France. January 1944 absorbed 15th companies of SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 37 and 38 in Czechoslovakia).

SS-Pionier-Brückenkolonne 17

SS-Divisions-Nachschubtruppen 17 (formed November 1943 in France)

Kommandeur des SS-Divisions-Nachschubtruppen 17 (appointed November 1943)

SS-Nachschubtruppen-Abteilung 17

Stab Dinafü

SS-Nachschub-Kompanie 17

1.-6.⁴¹ SS-Kraftfahr-Kompanie 17

SS-Waffenwerkstatt-Kompanie 17

SS-Panzer-Instandsetzungs-Abteilung 17 (formed November 1943 in France)

SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 17/SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abteilung 17 (formed November 1943 in France and renamed on 15.8.44).

⁴¹Theoretical composition.

SS-Hauptkasse 17
 SS-Schlächtereier-Kompanie 17
 SS-Bäckerei-Kompanie 17
 SS-Verwaltungs-Kompanie 17
 SS-Sanitäts-Abteilung 17 (formed November 1943)
 1. SS-Sanitäts-Kompanie 17 (mot.)
 SS-Truppen-Entgiftungs-Zug
 2. SS-Sanitäts-Kompanie 17 (mot.)
 SS-Truppen-Entgiftungs-Zug
 SS-Feldlazarett 17 (unconfirmed - reported at Landstuhl)
 SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Kompanie
 SS-Feldpostamt 17
 SS-Kriegsberichter-Zug 17
 SS-Feldgendarmarie-Kompanie/Trupp 17
 SS-Feldersatz-Bataillon 17 (formed November 1943)

The following elements were either absorbed
 by the Division or attached at some time:

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Brigade 49 (formed March 1944 as SS-Kampfgruppe
 1; renamed 18.6.1944; disbanded and incorporated by 17. SS-Pz.Gren.
 Div. "G.v.B." in August 1944).
 SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Brigade 51 (formed March 1944 as SS-Kampfgruppe
 3; renamed 18.6.1944; disbanded and incorporated by 17. SS-Pz.Gren.
 Div. "G.v.B." in August 1944).
 SS-Regiment z.b.V. "Matzdorff" (commanded by SS-Stubaf. (Major der
 Schupo) Matzdorff, it was under the XIIIth SS Army Corps in Septem-
 ber 1944).
 SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Lehr-Regiment (absorbed under the name "SS-Pz.
 Gren.Ausb.Rgt." following an order of late December 1944 and on 1.
 1.1945 rebuilt into new SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 38).
 s. SS-Beobachtungs-Batterie 107 (later transferred from VII. SS-Pz.
 Korps to II. SS-Pz.Korps; attached to "G.v.B." in July 1944).
 SS-Marscheinheit "Schaffmann" (added to Division on 28.3.1945)
 SS-Bataillon "Klepmeier"
 SS-Bataillon "Schliechenmaier"
 Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 6 (attached on 20.6.1944)
 Fallschirm-Pionier-Bataillon 5 (attached in July 1944)
 Kampfgruppe "Heinz" (from 275. Infanterie-Division; commanded by
 Oberstleutnant Heinz; attached on 20.6.1944).
 Panzerjäger-Abteilung 657 (Heerestruppe - attached in July 1944)

Pionier-Bataillon "Angers" (Heer - from a Pionierschule at Angers and
 attached to Division on 14.6.1944).

MG-Bataillon 45 (attached in October 1944)
 Sturmbataillon A.O.K. 7 (attached on 20.6.1944)
 Ost-Bataillon 439 (attached on 20.6.1944)
 Ost-Bataillon 635 (attached on 20.6.1944)
 Panzer-Nahkampfbrigade "Ludendorf"

DIVISIONAL STRENGTHS*

| Date | Officers | NCOs | Men | Total |
|-----------------------|----------|-------|--------|----------------------|
| 31.12.43 | 142 | 817 | 10,188 | 11,147 |
| 30.6.44 | 351 | 2,029 | 14,596 | 16,976 |
| 20.9.44 | 348 | 2,820 | 11,648 | 14,816 |
| 31.10.44 | | | | 15,843 ⁴² |
| 1.12.44 | | | | 3,500 ⁴³ |
| 31.1.45 | 401 | 2,592 | 13,181 | 16,174 |
| 10.2.45 ⁴⁴ | 334 | 2,231 | 10,687 | 13,252 |
| 18.2.45 ⁴⁵ | 314 | 2,077 | 9,406 | 11,797 |
| 28.2.45 | 393 | 2,646 | 12,945 | 15,984 |
| 24.3.45 ⁴⁶ | | | | 6,065 |
| 1.4.45 | 315 | 2,032 | 8,966 | 11,313 |
| 7.4.45 ⁴⁶ | | | | 8,811 |

*Actual strengths (including men in
 hospitals, on detachment or on
 leave)/Iststärke.

⁴²Stöber, op.cit., p. 49.

⁴³Ibid, p. 56. The "Kampfstärke" (battle strength) of which some
 1,000 were infantry (Panzer Grenadiere). At this time, the Division was
 also reduced to 20 tanks and assault guns.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 67.

⁴⁵Ibid, p. 69.

⁴⁶P.H.B. ("Tagesstärke").

Divisional Commanders

| | |
|--|---|
| October 1943 - January 1944 | SS-Standartenführer Otto Binge (47) |
| January 1944 ⁴⁸ - 15 June 1944 | SS-Oberführer (promoted 20. 4.44 to SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waf- fen-SS Werner Ostendorff (wounded) |
| 16 June 1944 - 18 June 1944 | SS-Standartenführer Otto Binge |
| 18 June 1944 ⁴⁹ - 30 July 1944 ⁵⁰ | SS-Standartenführer Otto Baum (51) |
| 1 August 1944 ⁵² - 29 August 1944 ⁵³ | SS-Standartenführer Otto Binge (54) |
| 30 August 1944 - September 1944 | SS-Standartenführer Dr. Ed- uard Deisenhofer (missing) |
| September 1944 - September 1944 | SS-Standartenführer Thomas Müller (substitute) |
| September 1944 - September 1944 | SS-Standartenführer Gustav Mertsch (substitute) |
| 21 October 1944 ⁵⁵ - 15 November 1944 ⁵⁶ | SS-Brigadeführer und General- major der Waffen-SS Wer- ner Ostendorff (died 1.5. 1945) |
| 15 November 1944 - 9 January 1945 ⁵⁷ | SS-Standartenführer Hans Lingner (taken prisoner) |
| 9 January 1945 ⁵⁸ - 21 January 1945 | Oberst Lindner ⁵⁹ |
| 21 January 1945 ⁶⁰ - 22 March 1945 ⁶¹ | SS-Standartenführer (promot- ed to SS-Oberführer) Fritz Klingenberg (died 22. 3. 1945) |
| circa 24 March 1945 | SS-Obersturmbannführer Vin- zenz Kaiser (62) (in tem- porary command) |
| 24 March 1945 - 26 March 1945 | SS-Standartenführer Jakob Fick (63) |
| 27 March 1945 ⁶⁴ - 9 May 1945 ⁶⁵ | SS-Oberführer Georg Bochmann |

⁴⁷ Binge was in charge of the formation staff (Aufstellungsstab).

⁴⁸ Ostendorff was selected as divisional commander on 26 November 1943, but only took command in January 1944.

⁴⁹ Also given as 16.6.1944 (Stöber, op.cit., p. 87) and 20.6.1944.



JOSEF SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES

HIMMLER, 1a SS-STURMBANNFÜHRER CONRAD AND BINGE (HERE AN SS-OBERSTURMBANNFÜHRER) DURING CEREMONIES AT THOUARS IN APRIL 1944.

⁵⁰ Also given as 20.10.1944 (Klietmann, op.cit., p. 212).

⁵¹ In temporary command. Took command of "Das Reich" Division on 31.7.1944.

⁵² Also given as 7.8.1944.

⁵³ Stöber, op.cit., p. 44, says Binge died on 8.9.1944 and was followed by SS-Standartenführer Dr. Deisenhofer. This of course clashes with the date given.

⁵⁴ In temporary command.

⁵⁵ Stöber, op.cit., p. 50, says he resumed command on 23.10.1944.

⁵⁶ P.H.B.

⁵⁷ He was taken prisoner on this date.

⁵⁸ Also given as 15.1.1945.

⁵⁹ Also found spelled "Lindtner" and referred to as an SS-Obersturmbannführer.

⁶⁰ Also given as 16.1.1945 (Klietmann, op.cit., p. 213).

⁶¹ Also given as 21.1.1945 (Klietmann, op.cit., p. 213) and 26.3.1945 (Stöber, op.cit., p. 87), but the latter is impossible as he had died four days before!

⁶² P.H.B. Previously commander of SS-Panzer-Lehrregiment.

⁶³ See Stöber, op.cit., p. 71.

⁶⁴ See Stöber, op.cit., p. 74. Also given as 11.2.1945 (Klietmann, op.cit., p. 213) and April 1945 (Stöber, op.cit., p. 87...which contradicts his statement on p. 74).

⁶⁵ The Division capitulated on 9.5.1945 but was not disbanded until 11.6.1945.



WERNER OSTENDORFF (HERE AN SS-STANDARTENFÜHRER)

JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES



EDUARD DEISENHOFER



FRITZ KLINGENBERG (PAUL HAUSER IS IN THE FOREGROUND)



JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES

THOMAS MÜLLER



GEORG BOCHMANN (HERE AN SS-OBERSTURMBANNFÜHRER)

JOST SCHNEIDER ARCHIVES

CHIEFS OF STAFF:

SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr. Carl-Heinz Conrad

SS-Sturmbannführer Max Linn⁶⁶

SS-Obersturmbannführer Hans Lingner

Major von Bothmer⁶⁷

SS-Sturmbannführer Wilhelm Krelle⁶⁸



MAX LINN (HERE AN SS-HAUPTSTURMFÜHRER)

Divisional and Unit Insignia

- (1) All elements wore the "Götz von Berlichingen" cuffband in Roman lettering (Bevo pattern)⁶⁹ and the SS runes on the right collar patch.

N.B.: Having been among the more stubborn defenders of Metz, the men of "G.v.B." who had served there were entitled to wear the silver and black "Metz 1944" cuffband (Ärmelband "Metz 1944"). Hitler authorized this decoration on 24 October 1944 (it is a true decoration and not to be confused with the divisional and regimental cuffbands of the Waffen-SS

⁶⁶Ia at 20 October 1944.

⁶⁷Ia at beginning of 1945.

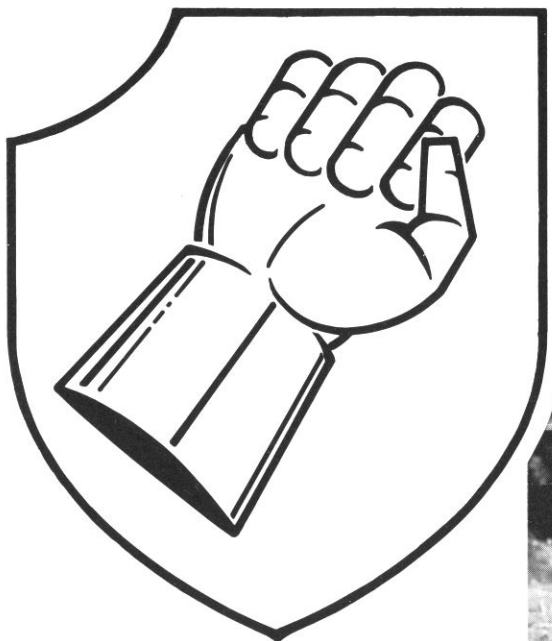
⁶⁸Also reported as "Major im Generalstab"...Ia on 1 April 1945.



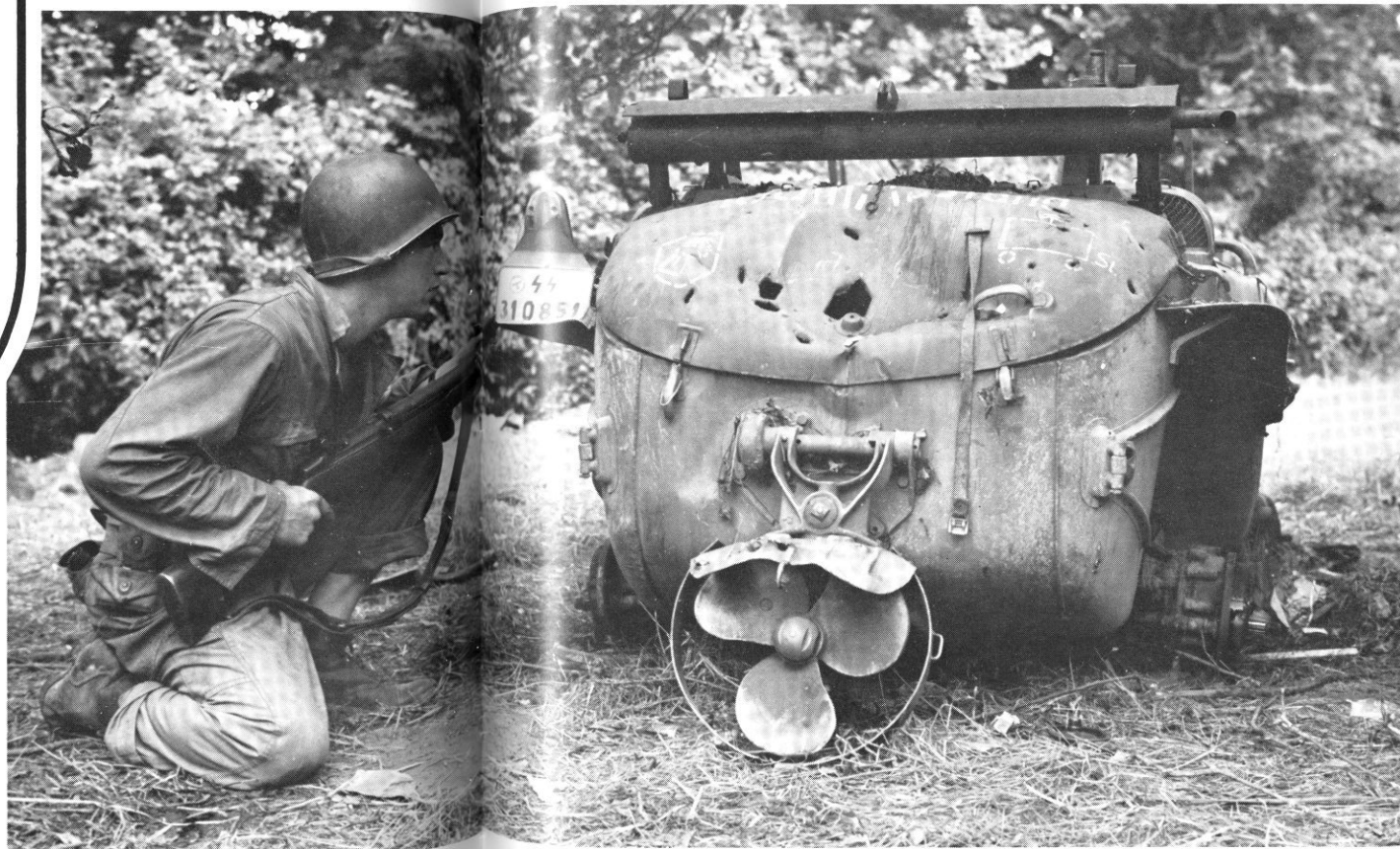
Götz von Berlichingen

⁶⁹This cuffband was authorized for the Division as early as 22 October 1943, but was not issued until 10 April 1944 when the Division was formally named at Thouars. Only a few were issued that day, the majority of divisional personnel receiving the bands from their commanders in the days that followed. (SS-FHA, Amt II Ia/II Org.Abt., Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22.Oktober 1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS.) The specimen illustrated by Stöber, op.cit., photograph 18, between pp. 16 and 17, is a post-war copy.

...the colour scheme was inspired by the colours of Metz and had nothing to do with the SS) but in spite of it being illustrated in post-war books (70), no evidence has been found that it was ever manufactured, let alone added to the left cuff of any member of the 17th SS Division (71).



A DESTROYED SCHWIMMWAGEN FROM THE "G.v.B." DIVISION, SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE, JULY, 1944.



US ARMY PHOTOGRAPH

DIVISIONAL VEHICLE SYMBOLS

- (1) The mailed fist of Götz von Berlichingen⁷². Of course, the emblems varied slightly as a result of differing means of application, colour of vehicle, etc., but two basic forms have been encountered:
 - a. In black on a white shield with a black border...a "bite" having been taken out of the top left corner (73).
 - b. In white within a white shield outline...the top left corner of the shield having been cut by a straight diagonal line (74).

⁷⁰E.g. in Stöber, op.cit., photo 114, between pp. 48 and 49.

⁷¹See Orders, Decorations, Medals and Badges of the Third Reich (including the Free City of Danzig), David Littlejohn and Col. C.M. Dodkins, Bender, California, 1968, p. 136.

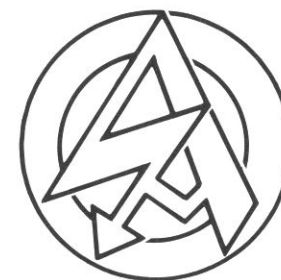
⁷²See note 4 on page 129.

⁷³Naturally, only suitable for application on light coloured vehicles, direction boards, etc. Reported by Allied Intelligence in July 1944 (MIRS (D)-EMB-1/45 German Divisional Emblems, Military Intelligence Research Section, London, January 1945, p. 10).

⁷⁴Confirmed in above photograph of a destroyed Schwimmwagen of Pionierzug (mot.), 5. Kompanie, SS-Pz. Aufkl. Abt. 17.



SS-STURMBANNFÜHRER ERNST SCHÄFER (FOREGROUND) AND MEN OF THE 1st MOTORIZED INFANTRY BRIGADE.



18. SS-Freiwilligen-
Panzer-Grenadier-Division
"Horst Wessel"

EVOLUTION AND TITLES OF 18. SS-FREIWILLIGEN-PANZER-GRENADIER-DIVISION "HORST WESSEL"

25 January 1944¹ - 30 January 1944 - 18. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division
30 January 1944² - May 1945³ - 18. SS-Freiwilligen-Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Horst Wessel"

History



The 1st Motorized SS Infantry Brigade⁴ was chosen as the basis for the 18th Division of the Waffen-SS. This Brigade had been formed in the summer of 1941 from the 8th and 10th SS "Totenkopf" Regiments⁵, to carry out mopping-up operations in the wake of the German Army's eastward drive. Like the division that was later to evolve from it, the Brigade depended to a large degree on that vast pool of "Germanic" manpower beyond the frontiers of Hitler's Third Reich, the "Volksdeutsche" or racial Germans. In April 1943, the Brigade was ordered to receive those racial Germans from North Schleswig who were up to the standards required by the German Army but not by the Waffen-SS, and in June 1943, Himmler announced his intention to designate the formation "Volksdeutsche Brigade"⁶. As a component of Himmler's HQ Staff (Kommandostab RF-SS), the Brigade was engaged on the eastern front for many months, and having suffered

¹SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 179/44 g.Kdos., v. 25. 1.1944, Umgliederung bzw. Neuaufstellung der 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.) zur 18. SS-Panz. Gren. Div. (T-175, Roll 141, Frame 2669348).

²Führerbefehl v. 30. Januar 1944. The word "Freiwilligen-" may not have been added until a few days later (see Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 5. Jg., Berlin, 15.2.1944, Nr. 4, Z. 72). When Tessin (op.cit., Vol. 4, p. 108) states the adjective was not added until October 1944, he means that the field post office number lists were not brought up to date until October.

³Divisional commander Hinrich Petersen committed suicide on 9 May 1945. Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215, is certainly wrong in suggesting that the Division continued to exist as such until June 1945, especially in view of the fact that the main part of the formation had fallen into the hands of the Russians.

⁴1. SS-Infanterie-Brigade (mot.).

⁵SS-Totenkopf-Standarte 8 & 10. The word "Totenkopf" was dropped from the Regiments' titles on 25.2.1941 (PHB).

⁶PHB. This renaming did not in fact ever take place.

serious losses in the fighting around Smolensk, was so reduced by late 1943 as to be fit only for defensive tasks. It was, however, described in a report of 1 October of that year as being able to provide the basis for a new brigade or division. Yet in December 1943, it was still fighting as a battle group on the Dnieper and at Bobruisk under the XXXVth Army Corps, 9th Army, Army Group "Center". At the end of the year it numbered 129 officers, 859 NCOs and 3,137 other ranks for a total of 4,125⁷.

It appears that the original idea was to convert the Brigade into an infantry (Grenadier-) division and therefore three numbers (39, 40 and 41) were allocated from the series of Waffen-SS infantry regiments. It was to become a mechanized infantry division, in fact, and thus the third regiment was never formed. Consequently, the number "41" was never used and remained vacant throughout the history of the Waffen-SS.

The majority of the Brigade elements were ordered to the Army's military training area (Tr. Üb. Pl.) at Stablack in East Prussia (Wehrkreis I) for resting and expansion to a division. In January 1944, they were transferred to the Zagreb/Celje⁸ area of Croatia, where on arrival they were formed into the 18th SS Division. The following instructions were given by the SS-FHA on 25 January 1944⁹:

- The new Division was to be called "18. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division".
- The commander of the former Brigade, SS-Standartenführer Wilhelm Trabandt, was to assume temporary command (10).
- The divisional elements were listed. These appear below, marked with an asterisk to distinguish them from those other elements which, surprisingly, were not given in the order:
 - *Div. Stab. _____ (divisional staff - from Stab der 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))
 - Div. Kartenstelle _____ (divisional map office - formed by SS-Art. Schule I)
 - *Div. Begl. Kp. 18 _____ (divisional escort company - from 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))

⁷Gesamtstärke der Waffen-SS am 31. Dezember 1943 (see Klietmann, op.cit., p. 507).

⁸"Agram/Cilli" in German.

⁹See footnote 1 above.

¹⁰"mit der Führung beauftragt" or "m.d.F.b.".

- *SS-Panz. Abt. 51/18_ (armoured battalion - while the Brigade had no armoured unit of its own, SS-Stu. G. Btr. 6 of 6. SS-Geb. Div. "Nord" had been attached to it and was used)
- *SS-Panz. Gren.
Rgt. 39 & 40_____ (mechanized infantry regiments - in spite of an early plan to give the Division three infantry regiments, only two were formed)
- *SS-Flak-Abt. 18_____ (AA battalion - based upon SS-Flak-Btr. 8 & 9 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.) with additional men and equipment being supplied by the SS-Flak-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-Regiment)
- *SS-Art. Rgt. 51/18_____ (artillery regiment - based upon SS-Art. Abt. 51 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.) which became I. Abt. of Regiment, with other elements provided by SS-Art.-Ausb.-u. Ers.-Rgt.)
- *SS-Nachr. Abt. 51/18_ (signals battalion - based on SS-Nachr.-Kp. 51 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))
- *SS-Panz. AA. 51/18_____ (armoured reconnaissance battalion - based on SS-Kradschützen-Kp. of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.) with men and equipment being supplied by SS-Pz. Aufkl.-Ausb. Abt. 1)
- SS-Pi-Btl. 18_____ (engineer battalion - formed by Inspektion 5 of SS-FHA)
- *SS-Panz. Inst.
Abt. 18_____ (tank repair battalion - Inst. Abt. 18 - based on SS-Werkstatt-Zug 51 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))
- *SS-San. Abt. 18_____ (medical battalion - based on SS-San. Kp. 51 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.) and had 2 San. Kp. and 3 Kr. Kw. Züge.... existed for a short time only)
- *Feldgend. Kp. (mot.)_ (motorized military police company - formed from SS-Feldgendarmerie-Trupp 51 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))
- Dinafü 51_____ (divisional supply officer - taken over from 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))
- *SS-Wi. Btl. 18_____ (logistic battalion - formed from Ers. Abt. des SS-Verwaltungsdienstes)
- SS-Feldersatz-Btl. 18_ (field replacement battalion)

Thus, the new Division had an experienced cadre upon which to be built but of course it required considerably more manpower of all ranks, for even if the entire Brigade had been used (which was not the case) then

only about half of the required numbers of officers, NCOs and men would have been available.

Hitler wanted the ranks of the new SS Division to be filled with volunteers from the SA and that it should carry the name of the most famous storm-trooper of them all, Horst Wessel¹¹. This was not the first attempt by the Waffen-SS to tap this pool of manpower¹², but Hitler was naive or short-sighted when he ordered on 30 January 1944 that the Division should be "formed mainly of SA volunteers and named "Horst Wessel"". On the one hand, certain elements of the Wehrmacht had already been earmarked for SA members and on the other there was extremely bad blood between the SA and SS. Rivalry during the so-called "Kampfzeit"¹³ between the Nazi Party's vast, unruly SA and its far more disciplined and elite SS had turned to hatred, fear and distrust on 30 June 1934, when select SS elements carried out the bloody purge of the SA leadership in the "Night of the Long Knives"¹⁴. As a reward for the absolute loyalty and blind obedience shown by the SS on that and succeeding days, Hitler widened the breach between the two paramilitary organizations still further by taking control of the

¹¹See "Horst Wessel" box on pages 166-168.

¹²An attempt in 1940 necessitated the special sleeve lozenge bearing the SA runes (illustrated on page 101 of Vol. 1 of this series). Many Brownshirts did join the Waffen-SS.

¹³The years in which Hitler and his Nazi Party struggled to gain power in Germany.

¹⁴The SS elements that took part in the purge of the SA leadership started on 30 June 1934, were two companies of Sepp Dietrich's "Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler" (temporarily attached to the Landespolizei-gruppe "General Göring") and men of Theodor Eicke's SS-Totenkopfverbände. Firing squads at Munich's Stadelheim prison and at Gross-Lichterfelde in Berlin were manned by members of the LSSAH. The actual shooting of Ernst Röhm has been attributed to Theodor Eicke, an SS-Brigadeführer at the time who was promoted to SS-Gruppenführer on 11 July 1934, and one of his SS-TV officers, SS-Obersturmbannführer Michael Lippert. According to a trial held in Munich in 1957, these two were "aided and abetted" by Sepp Dietrich, an SS-Gruppenführer since 18 December 1931 who was promoted to SS-Obergruppenführer on 1 July 1934. Ten years after the "Night of the Long Knives", when Hitler thought of bolstering a Waffen-SS division with SA volunteers, Eicke was dead (killed in Russia on 26 February 1943 as commander of the 3rd SS Armoured Division "Totenkopf"), Lippert was an SS-Standartenführer attached to the SS-FHA and Dietrich, an SS-Obergruppenführer und Panzer-General der Waffen-SS, was commanding the 1st SS Armoured Corps "Leibstandarte".

Horst Wessel

Son of a parson, Horst Wessel was born in Bielefeld on 9 October 1907. In the summer of 1922 he joined the nationalist "Bismarck Youth" ("Bismarck-Jugend") and was a member of the para-military "Viking Union" ("Wikingbund") from December 1923 until the autumn of 1926. In December of that year, he fell under the spell of Adolf Hitler and joined the infant Berlin SA, formed on 22 March 1926 from elements of Kurt Daluege's "Frontbann Nord". Horst Wessel's duties within the SA involved taking charge of a Berlin block of buildings (Strassenstelle) in October 1928 and on 1 May 1929, SA-Mann Wessel of SA-Sturm 1 of SA-Standarte IV took over command of SA-Trupp (squad) 34. When SA-Trupp 5 at Königstor was disbanded on 4 May 1929, Horst Wessel's squad took over the lower number and thus became SA-Trupp 5. Ten days before Wessel had taken command, on 20 April 1929, the squad had numbered 37 men but its youthful and energetic new leader was soon able to raise this strength to 83 by 15 May 1929. As a result of this growth, SA-Trupp 5 was upgraded to SA-Sturm (company) 5 on 19 May 1929, and Horst Wessel became an SA-Sturmführer. He was to climb no higher in the up-and-coming Nazi Party, but the circumstances of his fall have been variously described. The "official" Nazi Party version has it that Wessel, surprised by Communists at his home at Grosse Frankfurter Strasse 62 on 14 January 1930, was shot in the mouth^a and died nine days later on 23 February. Other more critical, but possibly more objective reports, go so far as to claim he was a procurer of prostitutes and was killed in a brawl over a girl.

Goebbels immediately made propaganda of this athletic young SA officer's death but Horst Wessel was to outshine all the other "heroes" of the Nazi Party's rise to power for one of the marching songs he had written during his years in the Berlin SA (b). "Die Fahne hoch!" ("Raise the Flag!") was a rousing stormtrooper song set to music (that some claim had been borrowed from an existing score). It was first performed by Wessel and his SA-Sturm 5 at the "Sanssouci" Hotel in Frankfurt an der Oder on 26 May 1929. Goebbels had been looking for just such a marching song as an official anthem for the NSDAP and of course it was doubly suitable, having been written by a sporty young Nazi, "murdered by Communists".



HORST WESSEL LEADING HIS STURM IN NUREMBERG, 1929.



THE "HORST WESSEL" SA-FELDZEICHEN.

Horst Wessel's song thus became the Party anthem, played on all important occasions along with Germany's national anthem "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles", and the young man of doubtful character became the Party's prime fallen hero. No sooner had Hitler come to power than buildings, streets and squares in Germany changed their names in his honour. The first and most significant instance was in Berlin on 8 March 1933, when the former Communist HQ was renamed from "Karl-Liebknecht-Haus" to "Horst-Wessel-Haus" and the square in which it stood was also renamed, from "Bülowplatz" to "Horst-Wessel-Platz". In the years that followed, the young Berlin SA-Sturmführer's name was to be found in towns and villages throughout Germany.

^aJournal des SA-Oberarztes Ost, Dr. Leonardo Conti. Conti joined the SS as an SS-Standartenführer on 12 June 1933, became Reich Health Leader, was promoted to SS-Obergruppenführer on 20 April 1944 and committed suicide at Nuremberg in 1945.

^bAlthough by far the best known of his marching songs, "Die Fahne hoch!" was not Horst Wessel's only work. Others included "Edelweisslied" and a song dedicated to his own SA-Sturm 5, "Wir tragen an unserm braunen Kleid..."

The SA naturally honoured their fallen comrade and almost immediately after his death (February/March 1930) his old company became known as "Horst Wessel Sturm 5" and by the end of March 1931, Sturmbann V z. b. V. (Vth Special Purpose Battalion - it contained SA-Sturm 5 "Horst Wessel") had been similarly named. This battalion was upgraded to SA-Standarte (regiment) 5 "Horst Wessel" in August 1931 and a standard (SA-Feldzeichen ... today often referred to as a "Deutschland erwache" standard) for the Regiment, bearing the inscription "Horst Wessel" was presented on 21 October 1931 at an SA rally held in Braunschweig(c). SA-Standarte 5 "Horst Wessel" was enlarged to become SA-Brigade "Horst Wessel" in September 1933, and this was numbered as SA-Brigade 28 "Horst Wessel" the following month.

On Hitler's 46th birthday, 20 April 1935, the SA, reduced in size and influence since the 30 June 1934 "Night of the Long Knives", presented their supreme commander with the aircraft for a fighter squadron (Jagdgeschwader 134) which the Führer named "Fliegergeschwader Horst Wessel", on 24 March 1936 (d). This Luftwaffe squadron later became Zerstörergeschwader (pursuit fighter squadron) 142 and finally ZG 26 (e).

Wessel's name had thus been used on street signs and as a commemorative "honour" name within the SA and Luftwaffe before it was chosen by Adolf Hitler on 30 January 1944, as the name of the 18th Division of the Waffen-SS.

^cSA-Sturm 5/5 had a special flag... "Horst-Wessel-Fahne". In addition to the Arabic numeral "5" at the top corner closest to the pole, a black strip of cloth was added with the inscription "Horst Wessel".

^dOn that same day, Hitler ordered that all personnel of the "Fliegergeschwader Dortmund" should wear a cuffband with the inscription "Geschwader Horst Wessel" (Order No. 457 of 6 April 1936, published in Luftwaffen-Verordnungsblatt of 15 April 1936.

^eSee Bender, Air Organizations of the Third Reich: The Luftwaffe, p. 128, and Tessin, Formationsgeschichte der Wehrmacht 1933 - 1939, pp. 81, 89 and 214-15.

SS from the new Chief of Staff of the SA and elevating it to the status of an independent organization within the NSDAP on 20 July 1934¹⁵.

¹⁵The following statement from Hitler was published in the Party newspaper "Völkischer Beobachter" of 26 July 1934: "In consideration of the very meritorious service of the SS, especially in connection with the events of 30 June 1934, I elevate it to the standing of an independent organization within the NSDAP". It is worth noting that the SS-TV and later the Waffen-SS itself owed their very existence to the rôle played by the SS in the "Night of the Long Knives". Had the infant military SS not removed the real or imagined threat to the German Army, presented by Ernst Röhm's vast and dissatisfied SA, it is unlikely that the High Command would have permitted the SS to build up a military force at all (see Mollo/Taylor, Uniforms of the SS - Volume 3 - SS Verfügungstruppe).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that so few SA men were available for the new Division that the whole idea had to be abandoned. An alternative source of manpower had to be found and when it was known that racial Germans in Hungary were soon to be obliged to join the Waffen-SS¹⁶, the decision was taken to make use of them¹⁷. The Division was thus brought up to strength in the Bačka area of northern Croatia, some 40 miles southwest of the Hungarian town of Szeged. Even with the recruitment difficulties previously mentioned, the formation retained the totally inappropriate name "Horst Wessel" and both the collar patch and a divisional vehicle symbol were designed bearing the runic "SA" symbol of that organization. In February 1944, the Division took on the title of a "volunteer" (Freiwilligen-) formation, a designation reserved for predominantly non-German troops.

Training and forming in Croatia in early 1944 was not a simple task, complicated when the Army High Command authorized the C-in-C Southwest to use the SS men on 3 January and 2 March¹⁸. In this period the Division was widely spread out and real training is believed to have been carried out in Hungary, rather than in Croatia. This distribution accounts for the confusion over just where the Division was forming and training in the summer of 1944. The SS-FHA order of 25 January 1944 had prescribed the Zagreb/Celje area, yet in fact part of the Division was some 200 miles further east around Bačka.

The Division was listed by Allied Intelligence¹⁹ as forming in northern Croatia in March 1944 under the XVth Mountain Army Corps, 2nd Armoured Army, Army Group "F"²⁰ and in that month divisional field post numbers appeared for the first time. Elements were transferred from Bačka to the Zagreb/Celje area where they took on partisans under the OKH/

¹⁶They had had the option to do so on the basis of agreements of 1 February and 1 June 1943 (PHB).

¹⁷Certain post-war writers are not alone in believing that "Horst Wessel" really had been based on SA volunteers: according to Mabire (La Brigade Frankreich, p. 220) members of the French SS assault brigade believed it to be so in August 1944.

¹⁸OKW/KTB entries of these dates.

¹⁹Manpower Study.

²⁰XV. Gebirgs-Armee, 2. Pz. Armee, Heeresgruppe "F".

OKW between April and June 1944²¹. Elements were in Untersteiermark (Wehrkreis XVII) and in March/April others were in the St. Vrbas/Sambor area.

The German position in Hungary in early 1944 was extremely precarious, for with the Red Army drawing ever closer to the frontier there was a strong threat of Regent Horthy abandoning the Axis and signing a treaty with the Russians. Therefore Hitler put Operation "Margarethe", conceived the previous September, into effect and "Horst Wessel" moved north. Between the 19th and 31st of March 1944, SS Divisions "Florian Geyer", "Reichsführer-SS" and "Horst Wessel" took up positions as occupation troops²². In early April, "Horst Wessel" was under the XXIInd Mountain Army Corps²³, with a battle group in the strength of a reinforced battalion operating under the command of the 1st Cossack Division²⁴. The rest of the 18th SS Division was still incomplete and only able to provide alarm units.

The agreement by which racial Germans from Hungary were obliged to join the Waffen-SS was signed on 14 April 1944, and thus many of them



RACIAL GERMAN VOLUNTEERS IN THE WAFFEN-SS, FROM HUNGARY, RECEIVING THEIR FIRST MAIL FROM HOME WHILE STATIONED AT BAČKA.

joined "Horst Wessel" during the summer months²⁵, in the Bačka area. Field post numbers show that the Division was refitting in the Zagreb/Celje area between April and June, whereas Allied Intelligence²⁶ gives it as forming under the OKW in reserve of Army Group "E" in May, and again in reserve of the OKW (but with no reference to the Army Group) in June. Between May and November 1944, the major part of the Division was being brought up to a state of combat readiness in the Bačka area of northern Croatia and around Debrecen in eastern Hungary and Oradea (Grosswardein in German), just over the border in Rumania²⁷. On 1 July 1944, Wilhelm Trabandt was promoted to the rank of SS-Oberführer and possibly this marked his taking over full command, since some previous reports had continued to credit him with only "temporary command". Training in Hungary was continued from July to October 1944 under the C-in-C of the Armed Forces²⁸. As a result of the Russian offensive of June 1944, a divisional battle group was raised and dispatched to an area southeast of Lvov to try and hold the Russian attacks on the Galician capital²⁹.

²¹Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215 and Tessin, op.cit., Vol. 4, p. 108. According to Herr Schneider (letter of August 1972) it was in the "Agram-Cilli-Novi Sad" area from March.

²²Stein, op.cit., p. 219.

²³Manpower Study. The XXII. Geb.-Armeekorps took part in Operation "Margarethe" under the OKW.

²⁴Formed in August 1943, this Division was "at disposal" of the 2nd Armoured Army, Army Group "F" at the time and serving in Croatia. In December 1944, the Division was taken over by the Waffen-SS and was used to form the 1st and 2nd Cossack Divisions of the XVth SS Cossack Cavalry Corps.

²⁵Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215.

²⁶Manpower Study.

²⁷German Red Cross (and Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215) gives Bačka and Oradea but makes no mention of Debrecen. Tessin, op.cit., Vol. 4, p. 108, gives the Division in the Debrecen/Oradea area between June and October 1944 for further forming (OKW/Gen. St. d. H./Org. Abt. I Nr. 17837 v. 1.7.1944).

²⁸Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber (W.Bfh.) Ungarn - Tessin, op.cit., Vol. 4, p. 108.

²⁹Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215. MID, German OB; mistook the battle group for the whole Division as being transferred to southern Poland

SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 40 had been reinforced to provide this battle group and regimental commander SS-Sturmbannführer Ernst Schäfer was to lead it. Thus it was shown as SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer", although the form SS-Kampfgruppe "Horst Wessel" has been found in various documents and was undoubtedly also used. For the sake of simplicity in this study, the form SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" will be used exclusively.

Against vastly superior enemy forces, SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" was unable to achieve much and Lvov fell to the troops of the 2nd White Russian Front on 27 July. It is reported, however, to have helped disengage elements of five German divisions, cut off in the Brody pocket on 19/20 July³⁰.

SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" fought on in Galicia and in August 1944 was reported to the southwest of Lvov³¹ under both the XXIVth Armoured Corps, 1st Armoured Army of Army Group "North Ukraine" at Brody and the LIXth Army Corps, 17th Army of the same Army Group³².

The battle group was engaged in a difficult sector of the front near Sanok and the situation was aggravated by a large Russian penetration through lines held by men of the Wehrmacht east of the town³³. The SS battle group had been called in to seal the breach but in spite of throwing in his last reserves, by 8 August, Trabandt³⁴ had only been able to stabilize the right wing of his sector... the left was uncontrolled and all attempts to establish contact with the neighboring German forces had failed. Faced

on the central sector of the eastern front in July 1944. Duprat, op.cit., p. 361, makes the same mistake.

³⁰Duprat, op.cit., p. 361. The 14th SS Division's destruction at Brody has been dealt with earlier in this book... only 1 man in 5 managed to escape and not all of these elected to rejoin the Germans.

³¹Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215, shows it there until November 1944.

³²Manpower Study gives "XXIV. Pz., A.Gr., Reus., N.Ukr." Army Group "North Ukraine" had been at Brody in July but was further to the west, south of Warsaw in the area of the San and Visloka Rivers of Poland in August and September (Tessin, op.cit., Vol. 4, p. 54... this source only gives a higher formation for the battle group in August).

³³According to Mabire, op.cit., pp. 235 & 314, Trabandt was bitter at the Wehrmacht's failure to hold the positions and made no attempt to hide his scorn from the French SS officers.

³⁴Trabandt appears to have been in direct command of the battle group in spite of this being led by Schäfer.

with such a problem, at a time when his infantry companies were reduced to 40, 30 and even as few as 25 men³⁵, Trabandt was relieved when the French soldiers of the 1st Battalion of SS Assault Brigade "France" under SS-Hauptsturmführer Pierre Cance were attached to his battle group in early August³⁶ as the IVth Battalion³⁷. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Companies reached their positions on 8 August and the 3rd was at once placed at the disposal of the SS battle group. The French were given concise orders: they were to try and establish contact with the German troops to the left of the battle group's positions or, failing that, were to cover its left flank. On 9 August the 3rd Company moved forward and made contact with the SS company holding the extreme left of the battle group's front. Under SS-Untersturmführer Tämpfer, the sole surviving officer, it had only 20 survivors and so at that time the left flank of the battle group was held by ten times more French SS than German. The French battalion suffered heavy losses at the hands of the Red Army and partisans and rested on 11 August before joining the men of "Horst Wessel" in launching a counterattack the following day. Trabandt had received orders from General der Panzertruppen Hermann Balck, C-in-C 4th Armoured Army³⁸, to bring the front up to the line of the Cracow/Sanok railway and this offensive was to be led by the French SS battalion and SS-Pz.Gren.

³⁵Trabandt gave these figures to SS-Hstuf. Cance in the evening of 8 August 1944 (Mabire, op.cit., p. 235).

³⁶The French SS-Hauptsturmführer's name has been found spelled so far in three different ways... "Bance" by Mabire... "Lance" by St. Loup but "Cance" by André Brissaud (Pétain à Sigmaringen, Paris, 1966) and others. The last of these has been adopted in this study. The 1st Battalion of SS-Sturmbrigade "Frankreich" (also known as "Franz. SS-Freiw.-Sturmbrigade" and "SS-Sturmbrigade (französische)") became IV. Btl. of SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer". According to Mabire, op.cit., p. 220, Cance told his officers of the attachment on 5 August 1944, and they in turn told their men the following morning. Steiner, Die Freiwilligen, p. 20, gives the entire "SS-Sturmbrigade (französische)" as being attached to the 18. SS-Division on 10 August and Littlejohn, op.cit., p. 265, states that the whole assault brigade, numbering 1,688 men, was part of the "Horst Wessel" Division. While this is to be found in contemporary documents, in fact only the 1st reinforced Battalion was attached to (never a part of) SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer", and the 1,688 men refer to the total strength of the entire assault brigade as of 30 June 1944 (Gesamtstärke der Waffen-SS am 30. Juni 1944, see Klietmann, op.cit., p. 510). Possibly the French Brigade sent in reinforcements while the IVth Battalion of SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" was engaged.

³⁷OKH/Gen.St.d.H./Org.Abt. II Nr. 46423 v. 30.7.1944.



GENERAL DER PANZERTRUPPEN
HERMANN BALCK, C-in-C 4th
ARMOURED ARMY.

Rgt. 40 of SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer". Following heavy artillery and rocket bombardment of the enemy positions, the German and French SS troops moved off from their starting positions on the edge of the Dundoukami wood. The French again suffered heavy losses on 14 August and the following day, Cance urged for a final effort to try and reach the Cracow/Sanok railway line. The objective was unattainable, however, and this was the last day for the French SS in this sector. Before leaving, they were again able to assist their German comrades of the Waffen-SS. Not far from their position, an SS company of the battle group had been cut off by partisans and its commander, SS-Untersturmführer Kammer, asked his regiment for help. Schäfer had no men available for the rescue mission and so turned to the French. A section of the 1st Company under SS-Standartenoberjunker Aimé Chabert managed to cross the 2 kilometers of hostile terrain to reach the Germans and brought Kammer and his wounded survivors back to safety.

At last, some degree of relief came to SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" and the French SS battalion. The Army had left the Sanok pocket open, the Waffen-SS had been called in to seal it, and now the time had come for them to hand the sector back again to the Army. The three French companies

³⁸ Mabire, op. cit., p. 295, yet SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" does not appear to have been under this Army.

pulled back to the village Wollika (site of the battle group's dressing station) and counted their losses...60, 50 and 20 men dead or wounded from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Companies respectively³⁹.

SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" pulled out of the Sanok sector and parted company with their French comrades of but a few days who, on 19 August, were transported by lorry the 100 kilometers northwest to Mielec, there to hold positions along 2 kilometers of the Visloka River⁴⁰. The services rendered to "Horst Wessel" by the French during their short stay were cited in divisional orders of 24 August...58 Iron Crosses had been awarded, many posthumously⁴¹.

The men of "Horst Wessel" continued to serve in Galicia and fought a running battle from Stry, 40 miles south of Lvov, northwestwards past Drohobych and on to Sambor. In the latter part of August, SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" is reported as holding a position near Dubrovka⁴².

A revolt against the pro-German government of President Joseph Tiso of Slovakia broke out on 23 August 1944. While an ad hoc SS-Pz.Gren.Regiment was raised in the neighbouring Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, a reinforced battalion group from the "Horst Wessel" Division was formed and ordered to proceed from Galicia to Slovakia and attacked the rebels from the east. The 14th SS Division was also involved in the quelling of this revolt⁴³.

The Division received further racial Germans from Hungary in the Papa area in September 1944⁴⁴. The main body of the Division stayed in the

³⁹ Mabire's figures conflict with those given by St. Loup.

⁴⁰ According to Mabire, op. cit., p. 388, the French battalion received orders from "Horst Wessel" on 21 August to halt a Russian advance and although only attached to SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" until 15 August, is believed to have served with it until 23 August (Steiner, op. cit., p. 290).

⁴¹ Mabire, op. cit., p. 424. St. Loup (p. 93) refers to Trabant issuing 40 Iron Crosses, 29 of which were posthumous awards. Although the totals do not correspond (possibly as St. Loup's report only concerns a part of the total number of medals awarded) this gives a good indication of the proportion of posthumous awards.

⁴² Mabire (op. cit., p. 397) and St. Loup (p. 79).

⁴³ See pp. 38-39 of this book.

⁴⁴ PHB.

Bačka/Oradea area until November 1944⁴⁵. It continued to prepare itself for combat readiness under the orders of the C-in-C Armed Forces during September and October but in the latter month was transferred to Slovakia to fight partisans⁴⁶. This it continued to do into November when it was listed as being "at disposal" ("zur Verfügung") before being moved southeast of Budapest to come under the LVIIth Armoured Corps, 6th Army, Army Group "South" later that month⁴⁷. Heavily engaged, it remained under this higher formation into December but in the last days of the year (at least by New Year's Eve), the Division was part of Armoured Corps "Feldherrnhalle" of the 8th Army⁴⁸. The fighting at Budapest was fierce and in December, SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer", which had been fighting in Galicia since August, was ordered to rejoin its Division⁴⁹. The battle group was transferred southwest towards Altsohl in the Banská Bystrica area of Slovakia and then turned due south to cross the Slovak/Hungarian border and reach Budapest.

"Horst Wessel" took part in the desperate fighting around Budapest but was not among the 50,000 men encircled in the Hungarian capital by New Year's Eve 1945⁵⁰. Escaping the total destruction of the elements that fought desperately for their lives until the garrison fell to the Russians on 12 February 1945, the 18th SS Division moved the 40 miles eastwards

⁴⁵Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215.

⁴⁶MID, German OB, states the Division was transferred to Slovakia in October 1944 and there fought partisans into November. Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215, confirms that the Division was so engaged in November.

⁴⁷The Division was under this higher formation on 26 November but not on 5 November. According to Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215, November 1944 was the last month in which the Division was in the Bačka/Oradea (Batschka/Grosswardein) area.

⁴⁸The IVth Armoured Corps, under the 6th Army, Army Group "South" at Budapest from October to December 1944, was renamed Panzerkorps "Feldherrnhalle" on 27 November 1944. On 31 December 1944, the Corps was under the 9th Army and contained the 4th and 18th SS Divisions, SS-Sturmbrigade "Dirlewanger" and two Army divisions. The 8th Army was known as Armeegruppe "Wöhler" from April to the end of November 1944, after its commanding general, General der Infanterie Otto Wöhler.

⁴⁹According to Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215, November 1944 was the last month in which the battle group was fighting southeast of Lvov.

⁵⁰See Vol. 3, p. 34.

to Jászberény and then turned to the north towards Slovakia. Still under Panzerkorps "Feldherrnhalle" of the 8th Army, it crossed the Czech border and came to Lučenec⁵¹ before being transported 120 miles north/northwest to the north of Ostrava (Mährisch Ostrau) in Moravia for a brief refit. It stayed there until 5 February 1945 and fought partisans⁵². The Division was then transferred to Untersteiermark for reforming⁵³.

Wilhelm Trabandt handed his command over to SS-Standartenführer Georg Bochmann on 3 January 1945, and went on to command SS-Pz.Gren.Schule Kienschlag⁵⁴ and a battle group⁵⁵. Bochmann, an SS-Standartenführer since 9 November 1944, had won the Knight's Cross and then the Oakleaves while in the "Totenkopf" Division, and before taking over "Horst Wessel", had commanded the armoured regiment in "LSSAH". He was to add the Swords on 30 March 1945 as commander of the 18th SS Division.

"Horst Wessel" was listed "at disposal" of the 1st Armoured Army of Army Group "Center" from at least 19 February to 1 March 1945. Its survivors were fighting north of Ostrava in southeastern Silesia around Leobschütz (now Glubczyce), Ratibor (Racibórz), Gnadenfeld, Rybnik and just over the Moravian border at Krnov (Jägerndorf in German). It is reported to have assisted in the retaking of the town of Beuthen (now Bytom), a few miles northeast of Gleiwitz (now Gliwice) in Silesia⁵⁶.

On 13 March 1945, SS-Kampfgruppe "Schäfer" was under the command of a battle group of the 371st Infantry Division and the Division's Pz.Jg.Abt. was under the LIXth Army Corps.

Faced by a massive Russian attack, Bochmann's surviving members of the "Horst Wessel" Division along with elements of the German Army, totalling some 9,000 men, were surrounded by a vastly superior Russian force and were driven into an area at Oberglogau measuring barely 1 1/2

⁵¹Klietmann, op.cit., p. 215, calls the town "Losono" which is incorrect.

⁵²MID, German OB.

⁵³Manpower Study.

⁵⁴He commanded this school from 17 February to April 1945.

⁵⁵SS-Kampfgruppe "Trabandt".

⁵⁶Duprat, op.cit.

kilometers by 1/2 kilometer⁵⁷. As the German front was pushed westwards away from this tiny pocket, Bochmann and his men managed to break out and, after bitter hand-to-hand fighting, were able to reach the receding German lines by then 22 kilometers away. The Division was



GENERALFELDMARSCHALL FERDINAND SCHÖRNER

then under the orders of General Field Marshal Ferdinand Schörner⁵⁸ (as a component of Army Group "Schörner"⁵⁹) who is said to have had Bochmann replaced for having refused to obey what the latter considered to be an impossible order to attack⁶⁰. Bochmann could not have been in too much disgrace for it was Hitler in person that presented him with the

⁵⁷Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 110.

⁵⁸On 1 January 1945, Schörner was C-inC of Army Group "North".

⁵⁹The Division did not come under Army Group "Schörner" as early as November 1944, as stated on page 24 of Volume 2.

⁶⁰Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 110.

Swords to his Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 30 March⁶¹ and at that time he was given command of the "Götz von Berlichingen" Division⁶². His successor and the last commander of the "Horst Wessel" Division was Heinrich Petersen, an SS-Standartenführer since 9 November 1943, previously with the "Prinz Eugen" Division and, before his appointment, commander of the SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 39⁶³.

The Division assembled for a rest in the Leobschütz area in the south-eastern corner of Silesia close to the Czech border and then withdrew the short distance northwards to Neustadt (now Prudnik). In Moravia, it fought around the Praděd (Altvater) mountain and nearby Karlova Studánka (Bad Karlsbrunn). In early April 1945, the Division may have been under Army Group "C"⁶⁴ but all survivors were placed at the disposal of the 17th Army of Army Group "Center" by the middle of the month... this Army had been involved in the defense of Breslau (now Wrocław) since

DEETER COLLECTION



AFTER BITTER STREET FIGHTING IN A BRESLAU SUBURB, WAFFEN-SS GRENADIERS INSPECT A KNOCKED-OUT RUSSIAN TANK.

⁶¹Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 110, states that he was awarded the Swords in spite of his disobedience and that the award was more in recognition of the sacrifice of the "Horst Wessel" Division as a whole, than for the achievements of its commander.

⁶²See page 145 of this book.

⁶³Kommandeurstellenbesetzungsliste, Stand vom 1.3.1945.

⁶⁴Manpower Study.

28 January 1945 with the Division's replacement battalion⁶⁵. By 7 May, the Division had come under the 17th Army's VIIIth Army Corps⁶⁶ and was then being referred to as a battle group rather than a full division⁶⁷. At the very end, the majority of the survivors, having withdrawn some 60 miles west of Breslau to Hirschberg (now Jelenia Gora), surrendered to the Russians. A number broke away and, heading west, tried to reach the American lines. Some of these are said to have been killed by Czechs and others captured by the Russians⁶⁸, and it was only a very few who fell into the much sought-after American captivity and were interned. Divisional commander Petersen committed suicide in Czechoslovakia on 9 May 1945⁶⁹.

Order of Battle

(COMPOSITE)

Divisions-Kommando/Stab der Division (from Stab 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.) 18 (formed by SS-Art.Schule I)

SS-Div.-Begleit-Kompanie 18 (from elements of 1. SS-Inf. Brig.(mot.))

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 39 (originally formed in 1941 as SS-T.-Sta. 8...became SS-Gren.Rgt. 8 in August 1943. When in 1. SS-Inf.-Brig. (mot.) was renumbered on 22.10.1943 to SS-Gren.Rgt. 37 and on 12.11.1943 to SS-Gren.Rgt. 39. Became element of 18. SS-Div. on 25.1.1944 in Croatia under final title)

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 40 (originally formed in 1941 as SS-T.-Sta. 10...became SS-Gren.Rgt. 10 in August 1943. When the 1. SS-Inf.-Brig. (mot.) was renumbered on 22.10.1943 to SS-Gren.Rgt. 38 and on 12.11.1943 to SS-Gren.Rgt. 40. Became element of 18. SS-Div. on 25.1.1944 in Croatia under final title)

N.B. Regiment 41 was not formed since the original decision to make the formation a Grenadier-Division was changed. Consequently, the number "41" was left vacant in the series of infantry regiments during the entire history of the Waffen-SS.

⁶⁵SS-Pz.Gren.Ers.Btl. 18.

⁶⁶This Army had been engaged in the defense of Breslau since February.

⁶⁷Tessin, op.cit., Vol. 4, p. 109.

⁶⁸Duprat, op.cit., p. 362.

⁶⁹Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 241.

SS-Panzer-Abteilung 18 (formed 25.1.1944 on basis of SS-Sturmgeschütz - Batterie 6...previously attached to 1. SS-Inf.Brig. (mot.))

SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 18 (formed spring 1944)

SS-(Panzer-?) Artillerie-Regiment 18/SS-Artillerie-Regiment 18 (mot.) (formed as SS-Art.Rgt. 18 (mot.) on 25.1.1944 through SS-Art. Ausb.-u.-Ers.Rgt. on basis of SS-Art.Abt. 51 of 1. SS-Inf.Brig. (mot.), which became I. Abt. "Pz.-" believed to have been added by at least 1.3.1945 (70) and later that month the Regiment was reorganized into 4 Abt.)

SS-Flak-Abteilung 18/SS-Flak-Kompanie 18 (formed 25.1.1944 through SS-Flak-Ausb.-u.-Ers.-Rgt. from 1. SS-Inf.Brig. (mot.)...in summer and autumn 1944 down to company strength. Had one battery of 3.7cm and three batteries of 8.8cm guns)

SS-Nachrichten-Abteilung 18 (formed 25.1.1944 from SS-Nachr.Kp. 51 of 1. SS-Inf.Brig. (mot.))

SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 18 (formed 25.1.1944 through SS-Pz.-Aufkl. Ausb. Abt. 1 from an available Kradschützen-Kp. "RFSS" which had been serving with the 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.)...viz. SS-Kradsch.-Kp. 51)



A LORRY ASSIGNED TO THE SS-PANZER-GRENADIER-REGIMENT 40.

SS-Pionier-Bataillon 18 (formed autumn 1944 from 16. Pi.Kp. 39 and 40 and SS-Pi.Kp. 18 (71))

SS-Pionier-Kompanie 18 (formed 25.1.1944...after summer 1944 joined 16. Pi.Kp. 39 and 40 to become SS-Pi.Btl. 18 (71))

Kommandeur SS-Divisions-Nachschubtruppen 18 (formed 25.1.1944 using Nachschubeinheiten 51 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.)...Kw.Kol. 51, Fahr. Kol. 51)

SS-Nachschub-Kompanie 18

SS-Panzer-Instandsetzungs-Abteilung 18 (formed 25.1.1944 from SS-Werkstatt-Kp. 51)

1. u. 2. SS-Werkst.Kp.

SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 18 (formed 25.1.1944 from Ers.Abt. des SS-Verwaltungsdienstes...15.8.1944 renamed SS-Verwaltungsgruppen-Abteilung 18)

SS-Sanitats-Abteilung 18 (formed 25.1.1944 using SS-San.Kp. 51 and Kr. Kw. Zug 51 of 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.))

1. SS-Sanitats-Kompanie 18

2. SS-Sanitats-Kompanie 18

SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Kompanie

1. - 3. SS-Krankenkraftwagen-Zug

(SS-Feldlazarett)(72)

SS-Feldpostamt 18 (formerly SS-FPA 51, it was a component of the Wi.-Btl.)

SS-Feldgendarmarie-Kompanie 18 (formed 25.1.1944 from SS-FG-Trupp 51)

SS-Feldersatz-Bataillon 18 (formed March 1944)

SS-Kampfschule

SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Ausbildungs-Bataillon 18 (existed in summer and autumn of 1944, then became SS-FEB 18, later reformed again) (71)

⁷⁰ Kommandeurstellenbesetzungsliste, Stand vom 1.3.1945.

⁷¹ Klietmann, op.cit., p. 217.

⁷² The Division does not appear to have had a field hospital, in spite of Mabire stating that one existed at Wollika in Galicia in August 1944. This was probably only a dressing station (H. V. Pl.). The SS-Kampfgruppe seems to have had a San.Kp. (mot.) consisting of two Zuge (PHB).

⁷³ Approximate figure.

⁷⁴ Probably refers to number of combat-worthy troops.

⁷⁵ Trabandt had commanded the 1. SS-Inf. Brig. (mot.) since 18 October 1943, and received the Knight's Cross as such on 6 January 1944

DIVISIONAL STRENGTHS*

| Date | Officers | NCOs | Men | Total |
|---------|----------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| 1.3.44 | 409 | 1,939 | 7,888 | 10,236 |
| 1.4.44 | 414 | 2,295 | 8,806 | 11,515 |
| 30.6.44 | 226 | 1,765 | 6,539 | 8,530 |
| 20.9.44 | 193 | 1,209 | 8,661 | 10,063 |
| 16.2.45 | 318 | 2,022 | 9,258 | 11,598 |
| 17.2.45 | 320 | 2,137 | 9,350 | 11,807 |
| 18.2.45 | 314 | 2,077 | 9,406 | 11,797 |
| 1.3.45 | 345 | 2,071 | 9,715 | 12,131 |
| 13.3.45 | | | | 13,000 ⁷³ |
| 23.3.45 | | | | 2,000 ⁷⁴ |

*Actual strengths (including men in hospitals, on detachment or on leave)/Iststarke.

Divisional Commanders

25 January 1944⁷⁵ - 3 January 1945__ SS-Standartenfuhrer (promoted on 1 July 1944 to SS-Oberfuhrer) Wilhelm Trabandt

3 January 1945 - March 1945⁷⁶_____ SS-Oberfuhrer Georg ("Schorsch") Bochmann

April 1945 - 9 May 1945_____ SS-Standartenfuhrer Heinrich Petersen(77)

CHIEF OF STAFF:

Major im Generalstab Wind (as of 1 March 1945)

(Kratschmer, op.cit., p. 258). He was listed as temporary commander of the Division in the SS-FHA order of 25.1.1944 (see note 1 on page 162) and Klietmann, op.cit., p. 312, gives him as such until 1 July 1944, when he was promoted to SS-Oberfuhrer and took over full command. One source gives Trabandt as commander on 30 January 1944. According to Schneider, Demelhuber formed the Division in the spring of 1944 and Trabandt only took over command on 1 July 1944, the date of this promotion to SS-Oberfuhrer. This same source also gives SS-Obersturmbannfuhrer (Walter?) Schmidt as having taken over temporary command from Trabandt.



WILHELM TRABANDT

BUNDESARCHIV



HEINRICH PETERSEN, HERE AN OFFICER IN "PRINZ EUGEN".

⁷⁶Bochmann was in command on 1 March 1945, and was awarded the Swords on 30 March 1945 as divisional commander. Schörner is said to have had him replaced for refusing to obey an order (Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 110) but in any case he had been given command of the "Götz von Berlichingen" Division on 27 March.

⁷⁷Petersen commanded SS-Pz.Gren.Rgt. 39 on 1 March 1945, and is said to have taken command in the "last days of the war". He committed suicide at surrender in Czechoslovakia on 9 May 1945 (Krätschmer, op.cit., p. 241).



GEORG BOCHMANN RECEIVING THE OAKLEAVES TO HIS KNIGHT'S CROSS FROM HITLER (17. 5.43) AS A BATTALION COMMANDER IN THE "TOTENKOPF" DIVISION.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Divisional and Unit Insignia

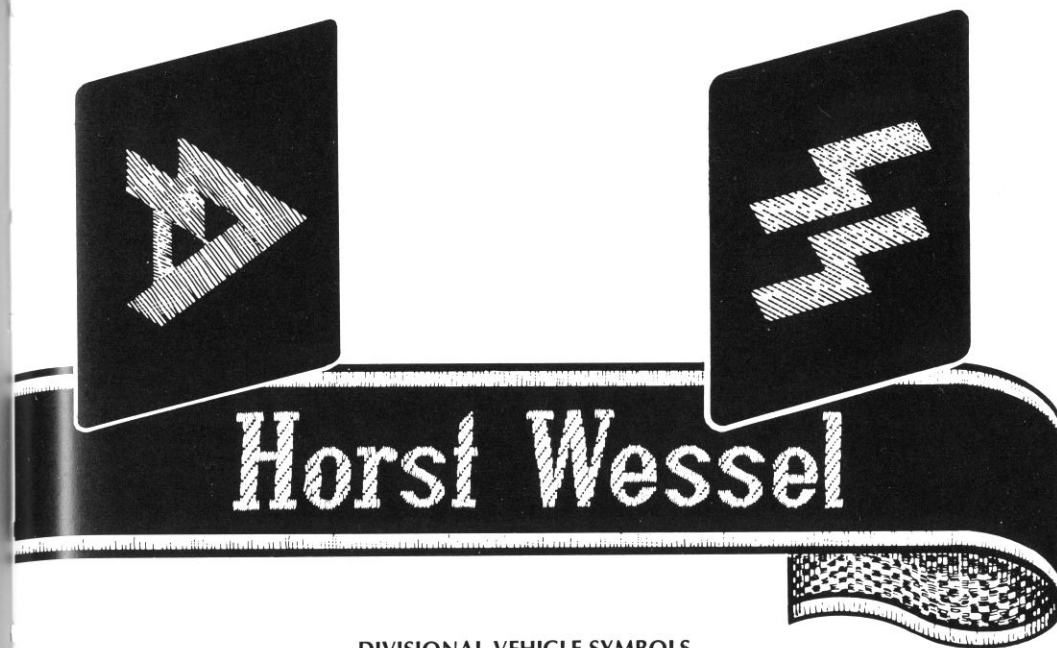
(1) After the naming of the Division on 30 January 1944, a cuffband with the inscription "Horst Wessel" in Roman lettering was manufactured, issued and worn by all elements⁷⁸. A collar patch with a replica of the "SA" runes in aluminum-coloured thread was manufactured but the only insignia confirmed to have been worn on the collar were the SS runes⁷⁹.



MEMBERS OF "HORST WESSEL" AT BAČKE, WEARING THE RUNIC SS COLLAR PATCH.

⁷⁸This cuffband did not appear in the list published in *Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS*, 5. Jg., Berlin 15.2.1944, Nr. 4, Z. 64, which gave "Götz von Berlichingen" as the highest numbered division. Yet, under Ziffer 72 in the same issue, the replacement elements of the "Horst Wessel" Division were listed. Cuffbands in lettering other than Roman (i.e. Gothic) are believed to be post-war reproductions.

⁷⁹When the original intention to bolster this Division with SA volunteers was changed, the collar patch became as inappropriate as the formation's name. Original collar patches exist with the "SA" runes and it is more than likely that these came from the storage bins at Dachau, where standard-issue W-SS insignia was manufactured as well as prototype in-

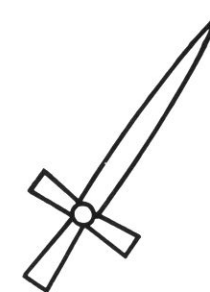


DIVISIONAL VEHICLE SYMBOLS

- (1) White "SA" runes⁸⁰
- (2) A tilted sword⁸¹



(1)



(2)

NOTE:

No vehicle symbol had been identified for this Division by Allied Intelligence as late as 1 March 1945 (82).

signia for potential wear by members of newly formed formations. To the authors' knowledge, these "SA" patches were never issued to or worn by men of this Division. The photograph appearing in Beadle/Hartmann, op.cit., p. 57, is suspect.

⁸⁰This emblem appears to have been used at first.

⁸¹The second pattern, according to Landemer, op.cit., p. 363. This emblem had become available when the SS Cavalry Brigade became the SS Cavalry Division on 1 June 1942 (see Vol. 3, p. 41).

⁸²*German Divisional Emblems*, Military Research Section, London, MIRS(D) - EMB, January 1945 and 2nd supplement, MIRS(D-1) - EMB/3/45, 1 March 1945.

Appendix

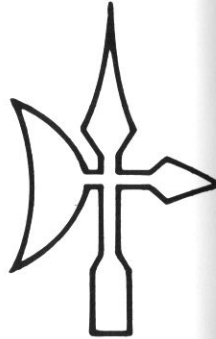
(CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS)

PAGE:

VOLUME 1

11. Steel Helmets: The helmet insignia illustrated were worn from September 1935. In March 1940 (not early 1941 as stated) it was decided to omit the swastika shield for camouflage reasons (Mollo, Vol. 6, p. 15). On 1.11.1943, an order was published prohibiting the wearing of the SS runes shield for the duration of the war (Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 4. Jahrgang, Berlin 1.11.43, Nr. 21, Z. 402) but this is known to have been ignored in many cases.
13. Illustration: Parachutists' smocks in SS camouflage drill material had the SS eagle sewn onto the rightbreast (Mollo, op.cit., p. 62).
- 20/21. Top Box: The button with embossed death's head worn on the field service cap was at first in white metal, later painted field grey (Mollo, op.cit., p. 10).
31. Panzer Caps: The machine-embroidered death's head and SS eagle worn on the Panzer beret were of a special design (see Mollo, op.cit., p. 55). A field-grey beret also existed (an example is in the collection of Dave Delich).
35. Fez: In the "Handschar" Division, the field-grey fez was worn with service dress, whereas the red version was for wear with parade and walking-out dress. Officers of this Division were permitted to wear the mountain cap for walking-out instead of the fez(1).
70. Sleeve Eagles: Three other patterns are to be described; (Mollo, op.cit., p. 75)
- a. light khaki eagle on black backing for tropical uniform (as illustrated on p. 50 of Vol. 1);
 - b. brown eagle on black backing for autumn camouflage uniforms;
 - c. bright green eagle on black backing for spring camouflage uniforms.
86. Belt Buckle: This version of officers' belt buckle is held by some to have been a post-war invention, not even a prototype as suggested on p. 162 of Vol. 2. No concrete evidence has yet been found to resolve this problem.
110. The lower ranks based on those of the Army (SS-Oberschütze, etc.) were introduced by Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 2. Jahrgang, Berlin 15.7.1941, Nr. 14. The circular rank badge of the Army's Oberschütze and the other Army badges of rank for the lowest SS ranks are now known to have been introduced earlier than 1940. Photographically confirmed as having been worn in October 1938 (FM-Zeitschrift, Folge 11, Berlin 1.11.1938) and possibly introduced in March 1938, when Army pattern shoulder straps were introduced (Mollo, op.cit., pp.98/99).
111. Lines 7/11: The new rank of SS-Oberstgruppenführer was ordered by Hitler, following which Himmler issued a directive to this effect from the FHQ dated 19 April 1942. To avoid possible confusion with this rank and the existing "SS-Obergruppenführer", Himmler ordered that it be hyphenated thus: "SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer"(2)
113. The special rank designations listed were in use by March 1943 (Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 4. Jahrgang, Berlin 1.3.1943, Nr. 5, Z. 94). All SS-Bewährungs-Einheiten (not just SS-Jäger-Btl. 502) had the special rank designations "SS-Bewährungsschütze" & "SS-Bewährungs-Oberschütze" (Sonderanhang zum Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin 1.11.1944, Nr. 21, Z. 110).
136. Light Grey: Not used in late 1939 but by May 1940 worn by staff of main offices & general officers. In June 1942, worn by general officers and personal staff of the RF-SS. Finally, the latter adopted dark grey and light grey was worn only by general officers (Mollo, op.cit., pp. 105/106).
136. Bright Red: Rocket or Projector Units (Werfer-Einheiten) finally wore the bright red Waffenfarbe of Artillery and A.A., not Bordeaux (Bordorot - claret).
136. Orange Red: At first worn only by staff of recruiting offices (Ergänzungsstellen) and then for special services (Sonderdienste: Verw.-, Gerichts.-Techn.-, u. Ergänzungsdienst u. d. Ang. d. Standortkommandanturen), who previously had retained the Waffenfarbe of their former unit (Mollo, op.cit., pp. 104 and 106).
137. Light Green: In fact it was "grass or ivy green" (Wiesergrün), not "lightgreen" (Hellgrün), that was worn finally by mountain troops (Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 4. Jahrgang, Berlin 15.9.43, Nr. 18, Z. 334).
137. Golden Yellow: At first for cavalry regiments of the SS-TV, by June 1942 it was worn by cavalry and reconnaissance units, schools and replacement elements of the Waffen-SS.
137. Lemon Yellow: SS-Feldpost wore it until February 1943... thereafter they wore lightblue (Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 4. Jahrgang, Berlin 1.2.1943, (Nr. 3, Z. 37).
137. add: Copper Brown (Kupferbraun)... listed in November 1939 and May 1940 for reconnaissance battalion and replacement units of the SS-VT and SS-TV. Not listed in June 1942, by which time golden yellow had been adopted (Mollo, op.cit., p. 104).

²Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 3. Jahrgang, Berlin 15.6.1942, Nr. 12, Z. 192. For a detailed study of this rank see article "SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer und Generaloberst der Waffen-SS - Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Rang- und Dienstgradabzeichen der Waffen-SS" by Klietmann in Feldgrau, January 1967, pp. 15-18.



PAGE:

17. Symbol of I. Flak-Abt., Kdo.-Stab RF-SS.
24. Army Group "Steiner": Tessin (op.cit., Vol. 3, p. 194) states the HQ was formed in Pomerania on 26.11.1944 - reformed March 1945 - surrendered 21.4.1945. Elements included Höh.Arko AOK 11, Korück AOK 11 and Nachr.Rgt. der 11. Armee.
33. IInd SS Corps: For "SS-Sich.-Kp. 102" read "SS-Korps-Sicherungs-Kompanie 102". In 1943, the San.Abt. was composed of the following:
1. SS-Lazarett (mot.)
 2. SS-Lazarett (mot.)
- Stab Korps San.Abt.
le. San.Kol.
1. Kr.Kw.Zug
 2. Kr.Kw.Zug
- Add:
SS-Korps-Nachr.Abt. 102
Instandsetzungsstaffel des II.SS-Pz.Korps
SS-Feldersatz-Brigade 102
33. Chiefs-of-Staff: Werner Ostendorff was also Chief of Staff of the SS-Pz.Korps.
34. IIIRD SS Corps: Read "(germanisches)" for "(Germanisches)". Corps troops also included:
- Arko 138 (of the Army - attached in 1945)
schw. SS-Art.Abt. 503
35. Kleinheisterkamp was general commanding the III. SS-Korps on 4.2.1945.
36. IVth SS Corps: Corps troops also included:
- SS-Arko 104
SS-Werfer-Abt. 104/504 (formerly numbered "107")
SS-Nachr.-Abt. 104 (formerly numbered "107")
37. Commanders: SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS Walter Krüger was listed as commanding this Corps on 30.1.44.
39. Vth SS Corps: For "SS-Korps-San.Abt. 5" read "SS-Korps-San.Abt. 5/SS-San.Abt. 105".
40. VIth SS Corps: SS-Flak-Abt. 106/506 was formed from the 2 Flak-Abteilung of the 15th and 19th Latvian SS Divisions, which were left with a 2cm Fla-Kp. apiece for their own protection.
42. IXth SS Corps: For "(Kroatisches)" read "(kroatisches)". Corps troops also included:
- SS-Arko 109
SS-Nachr.Kp. 109
43. Xth SS Corps: The Corps' signals element was Nachr.Abt. (X.SS-Corps)/SS-Nachr.Abt. 110 (formed March 1945).
44. XIth SS Corps: At first this higher formation was called XI. SS-Armeekorps - by 1.2.1945 it had been renamed to XI. SS-Pz.Korps.
46. XIIIth SS Corps: SS-Korps-Nachr.Abt. 113 became SS-Nachr.Abt. 513. Corps troops also included:
- SS-Arko XIII
SS-Korps-Art.Abt. 513
Volkswerferbrigade 7
- Chiefs of Staff:
- August 1944 - 13.1.1945: Oberst i.G. von Einem
13.1.1945 - May 1945: SS-Obersturmbannführer Ekkehard Albert.
47. XVth Cossack Cavalry Corps: The number "55" was also used to indicate elements of 5. SS-Freiw.Sturmbrigade "Wallonien".
48. Note: Since space only permitted Vol. 3 to cover upto and including the 13th SS Division, the study of the uniforms and insignia of the three Cossack Cavalry divisions of the Waffen-SS will not appear until later in this series.
49. XVIIIth SS Corps: SS-Nachr.Abt. (XVIII. A.K.)/SS-Nachr.Abt. 118 is reported to have been formed in April 1945.
49. Commanders: Reinefarth's rank was more correctly SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS und der Polizei. Keppler was in command as early as 4.2.1945 (Aktenvermerk v. 5.2.1945 I-FG/Tr. Besprechung mit SS-Ostufaf. Grothmann am Sonntag, den 4. Februar - T-175/191/2729608.
50. The correct abbreviations for "Pionier-" were "Pi.-" or "Pion.-"..."Pio.-" was incorrectly used.
55. Line 27: The decision was taken with Volume 3 to enter into more detail with the formation histories than just keeping them as "simple and un-involved as possible". Authors and publisher hope this decision meets with readers' approval.
56. Photo: The SS-Obersturmbannführer is Friedemann Goetze, commander of SS-Heimwehr Danzig, who was killed as a regimental commander of the "Totenkopf" Division in France in June 1940.
57. Line 2: Read "Hermann (not Herman) von Salza".
62. History - 2nd paragraph: The motorized SS Regiment "Adolf Hitler" was allocated by the OKH to General Blaskowitz's 8th Army, which was von Rundstedt's left flank of Army Group "South". It was close to the 10th Army's boundary but was not allocated to that Army. (Maj. Robert M. Kennedy, The German Campaign in Poland, U.S. Dept. of the Army Pamphlet No. 22-255, Part II, Chapter 5, p. 62, 1939).

67. Photo: The "LAH" Knight's Cross holders are in fact (from left to right): Theodor ("Teddy") Wisch, Josef ("Sepp") Dietrich, Fritz Witt, Kurt ("Panzer" Meyer) Meyer.

71. Order-of-Battle: In 1943 the war correspondents' element was listed as a Kompanie rather than a Zug.

Add:

SS-Panzer-Instandsetzungs-Abt. 1
SS-Instandsetzungs-Abt. 1
SS-Wirtschafts-Btl. 1/SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abt. 1
SS-Sanitäts-Abt. 1
1. SS-Sanitäts-Kp.
2. SS-Sanitäts-Kp.
SS-Feldlazarett 1
1. SS-Kr. Kw. Kol.
2. SS-Kr. Kw. Kol.
3. SS-Kr. Kw. Kol.
SS-Feldpostamt 1
VII. LSSAH

74/75. The metal "LAH" shoulder strap cyphers were gold coloured for officers and were also worn in aluminum by senior NCOs (SS-Oberscharführer, SS-Hauptscharführer, SS-Sturmscharführer and SS-Standarten-Oberjunker).

86. Order-of-Battle: A 1943 field post number list showed SS-Schützen-Regiment "Langemarck" and SS-Kriegsberichter-Kp. 2 and SS-Feldgendarmarie-Kp. 2 (rather than a Zug and a Trupp respectively).

Add:

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)
SS-Panzer-Instandsetzungs-Abt. 2
SS-Instandsetzungs-Abt. 2
SS-Sanitäts-Abt. 2
SS-Feldlazarett 2
1. SS-Sanitäts-Kp. 2
2. SS-Sanitäts-Kp. 2
1. SS-Kr. Kw. Zug
2. SS-Kr. Kw. Zug
3. SS-Kr. Kw. Zug
SS-Feldpostamt 2

87. Divisional Commanders: Paul Hausser was listed as commander on 30.1.1942, when SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Kleinheisterkamp was in fact only in "temporary command" (Zt. b.m.F. SS-Div. Reich).

89. Divisional Commanders: SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Heinz Lammerding was listed as commander of the Division on 9.11.1944, i.e. when SS-Standartenführer Otto Baum was in "temporary command".

89. Photo: The group photo shows divisional commander SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS Walter Krüger congratulating SS-Oberscharführer Josef Lainer at the time of the latter's award of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 9.10.1943. The

SS-Obersturmbannführer in the background is Sylvester Stadler, then commander of the "Der Führer" Regiment.

89. Chiefs of Staff: Add: SS-Sturmbannführer Stückler.

97. Vehicle Symbol: See addition to p. 170 of Vol. 3.

105/106. Order-of-Battle: See p. 170 of Vol. 3 and add:

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)
SS-Instandsetzungs-Abt. 3
SS-Wirtschafts-Btl. 3/SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abt. 3
1. SS-Sanitäts-Kp. 3
2. SS-Sanitäts-Kp. 3
SS-Genesenden-Abt. 3 (convalescent battalion)
SS-Feldpostamt 3

107. Divisional Commanders: SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Max Simon commanded the "Totenkopf" Division between Keppler and Priess (confirmed as such on 15.5.1943 - he later took command of the 16th SS Division "Reichsführer-SS" on 16.10.1943).

110. Photo: SS-Sturmmann Fritz Christen, who became the first enlisted man in the "Totenkopf" Division to receive the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (20.10.1941).

121/122. Order-of-Battle: Add:

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)
Nachschub-Dienste 300 (Army)
SS-Nachschubabteilung
Instandsetzungs-Abt. (Army)
SS-Instandsetzungs-Abt.
Wirtschafts-Btl. 300 (Army)
SS-Feldlazarett 4
SS-Feldpostamt 4

123. Divisional Commanders: Friedrich-Wilhelm Bock, commander of the divisional Artillery Regiment, led a battle group between the dates shown and was never in fact divisional commander (Kliemann, op.cit., p. 132).

123. Chief of Staff: Add: SS-Obersturmbannführer Wilhelm Radtke (reported as Ia on 1.3.1945).

124. Divisional Insignia: The following information concerns the Polizei-Division between 1939 and 1942 and was kindly supplied by Ing. F. Ollenschläger:

1. Generals: Same collar patches as for Army generals but light green trouser stripes and overcoat lapels and a gold eagle on bluish dark green on the left sleeve.
2. Officers: Waffenfarben for collar patches and as shoulder strap underlay as for Army, except light green for divisional infantry regiments (Pol.-Schtz.-Regter.).
3. NCOs and Men: No silver piping around collar patches. Bluish dark green shoulder straps with Army Waffenfarben, except light green for divisional infantry regiments.
4. Black underlay to sleeve chevron (Gefreiter-Winkel).

5. Waffen-SS belt buckle for NCOs and men.
6. Waffen-SS sleeve eagle on black underlay for officers, NCOs and men.
7. Bluish dark green cap band as for Army.
8. Rank titles as for Army - officer candidates named "Junker" and "Oberjunker".
9. Army salute...not Roman salute as practiced by Waffen-SS.

129. Divisional Vehicle Symbols: Appendix 24 on p. 639 of the 2nd volume of Husemann's exhaustive divisional history illustrates and describes four vehicle symbols:

1. As "A" on p. 129...used in France and during invasion of Russia upto the north of Luga. Significance unknown, it was generally known as "the cylinder" (Zylinder).
2. As "C" on p. 129...used in Russia until the end of 1942. The Hagal-Rune at left symbolized the "police star" (Polizeistern) and was painted in gold...the green vertical bar presumably represented the Roman ordinal "I".



3. Upright "sun wheel" as illustrated on p. 145 of Volume 2. Probably used in the summer of 1943. Confirmed on vehicles of divisional cadre in area south-west of Belgrade.
4. Stylized "wolf's tooth" (Wolfsangel) introduced in December of 1944 on instructions of SS-Standartenführer Harzer.

Husemann makes no mention of the symbol illustrated as "B" on p. 129 of Volume 2.

132. "Wiking": The order implementing Hitler's instruction that SS-Div. "Germania" be renamed with effect from 1.1.1941 was dated 30.12.40 (SS-Division Germania, v. 30.12.40 - T-354/161/3806705).

135/136. Order-of-Battle: The Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS was III./SS-Gren.Rgt. "Nordland". On 1.10.1943 SS-Ober-

sturmbannführer Hans Collani was listed as commanding "III. Finn. Btl. SS-Pz.Gr.Div. "Wiking"".

135/136. Order-of-Battle: Add:

SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)
 SS-Pz.Abt. Wiking (named as such in 1942)
 SS-Bekleidungs-Instandsetzungs-Kp. 5
 SS-Feldpostamt 5

138. Divisional Commanders: Felix Steiner was not promoted to SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Waffen-SS until 1.7.1943. As an SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS he was still commanding "Wiking" on 15.5.1943.

150/151. Order-of-Battle: Add:

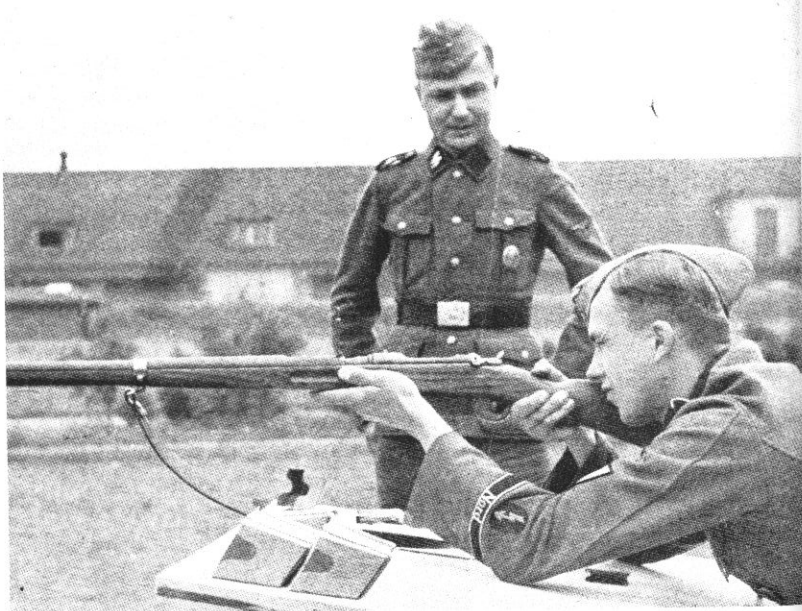
SS-Div.-Kartenstelle (mot.)
 SS-Instandsetzungs-Abt. 6
 SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 6/SS-Verwaltungstruppen-Abt. 6
 SS-Sanitäts-Abt. 6
 1. SS-Gebirgs-Sanitäts-Kp.
 2. SS-Gebirgs-Sanitäts-Kp.
 SS-Gebirgs-Veterinär-Kp. 6
 SS-Pferdelazarett
 SS-Pferdelager
 SS-Feldpostamt 6
 SS-Kriegsbericht-Zug 6
 SS-Feldersatz-Btl. 6
 SS-Lager Kuusamo

The following order-of-battle for this Division in June 1942 has kindly been supplied by the Helsinki War Museum:

SS-Gebirgs-Jäger-Rgt. 6 "Reinhard Heydrich"
 SS-Gebirgs-Jäger-Rgt. 7
 SS-Gebirgs-Jäger-Rgt. 9
 SS-Artillerie-Rgt. "Nord"
 SS-Gebirgs-Pionier-Btl. 6
 M.G.-Btl. 4
 Panzer-Jäger-Abt. 99
 SS-Schützenbataillon "Nord"
 SS-Nachrichten-Btl.
 SS-Aufklärungs-Abt. "Nord"
 Radfahrerschwadron 234
 Beobachtungs-Abt. 38
 Feldersatz-Btl. 99

151. Divisional Commanders: According to the Helsinki War Museum, Demelhuber commanded until 2 May 1942 and Debes until 22 May 1944. SS-Standartenführer Hans Scheider (not Schneider) was commander of SS-Inf.Rgt. 6 on 30.1.1942. Klietmann, op.cit., p. 148, states he commanded the 6th SS Division between October 1941 and 30.3.1942. Kleinheisterkamp had only temporary command from 1.4.1942 until 20.4.1942...from that date until 15.12.1943 he held full command.

152. Divisional Commanders: Schreiber on p. 384 of his divisional history gives Brenner as holding command from 1.9.1944 until April 1945 and himself in temporary command on 10.3.1945.
153. Divisional Insignia: The statement that members of the 6th SS Division "Nord", with the exception of certain elements, wore the "Nord" cuffband has caused a degree of controversy. Some believe it was never worn by members of the "Nord" Division, basing their view on the obvious but as yet still unexplained absence of any mention of such a cuffband from contemporary documents (3). This theory was supported by the total lack of photographs showing the "Nord" cuffband being worn on a Waffen-SS uniform . . . of course it was worn by all ranks on the staff of SS-District "North" (SS-Oberabschnitt "Nord") of the Allgemeine-SS.



The long-awaited discovery of the accompanying photograph, the only example as yet known to the authors, reopens the controversy and leads one to consider three possible explanations. Least likely would be that a "Nord" cuffband was in fact authorized for the 6th SS Division, even though it never appears to have been mentioned in contemporary documents and orders. More likely is the solution put forward in Der Freiwillige (Heft 11, November 1969, p. 22) that in rare cases former members of SS-Oberabschnitt "Nord" of the Allgemeine-SS (to be more precise, men who had previously been on the staff of SS-Oa "Nord") continued to wear their cuffband when they volunteered for the "Nord" Division. Such a practice would naturally have been unofficial and doubtless un-

³SS-FHA, Amt II Org. Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. 1574/43 g.Kdos., v. 22. 10.1943, Bezeichnung der Feldtruppenteile der Waffen-SS und Verordnungsblatt der Waffen-SS, 5. Jahrgang, Berlin 15.2.1944, Nr. 4, Z. 64.

popular amongst those not having the cuffband. This would explain why it was worn so rarely. A third solution was offered by the Helsinki War Museum and to quote from a letter addressed to HPT by their Superintendent dated 16.2.1973: The "Nord" cuffband was "unofficial, designed and worn by some men in 6. SS-Gebirgs-Division".

162. Vol. 1 - page 86: Belt Buckle: See correction above.

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PAGE:

15. Photo: In fact shown are men of the "Wiking" Division during the campaign in northern Russia in the Caucasus mountain area.
17. Order-of-Battle: Contemporary documents referred to SS-Pz. Abt. 7, but this was an Abteilung in name only since it had no HQ and consisted of merely: 1. Pz.Kp. and SS-Panzer-Werkstatt-Zug.

Similarly SS-Kav. Abt. "Prinz Eugen", or SS-Kav. Abt. 7, was listed but this had no HQ and only consisted of the 1. and 2. SS-Reiter/Kavallerie-Schwadron.

Add:

SS-Instandsetzungs-Abt. 7
 SS-Feldgendarmerie-Trupp (ber.) 7
 SS-Feldgendarmerie-Trupp (mot.) 7
 SS-Feldpostamt 7
 SS-Zweigfeldpostamt 7

- 35/36. Order-of-Battle: 1943 field post number list showed SS-San. Abt. 8, 3 (not 2) SS-Kr. Kw. -Züge and an SS-Kriegsberichter-Kompanie (not Zug). Delete "SS-Verwaltungsgruppen" and replace with "SS-Wirtschafts-Bataillon 8/SS-Verwaltungsgruppen-Abt. 8".

Add:

SS-Sicherungs-Kp. 8

- 37/38. Brigade and Divisional Commanders: The note on p. 38 raised the possibility of SS-Standartenführer Gustav Lombard assuming temporary command of the Division in the period between 1 Nov. and 31 Dec. 1943. In a letter to HPT dated 20.10.1975, Herr Lombard corrects this as follows: "General Bittrich was the first commander of the "first SS-Kav.Div." The Division was formed in June, July and August 1942 by Bittrich. In November 1942, Bittrich was ordered to headquarters and I commanded the Division temporarily until late in January or even the beginning of February, when Freitag arrived as Bittrich's successor. Fegelein commanded the Division from May or June 1943..."

53. Order-of-Battle: Tessin, op.cit., Vol. 3, p. 158, gives the two medical companies as forming SS-Sanitäts-Abt. 9.
54. Divisional Commanders: Sylvester Stadler was promoted to SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS after 9.11.1944. . . . the exact date is still unknown.

64. Order-of-Battle: Delete "SS-(Panzer-) Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10/SS-Panzer-Pionier-Bataillon 10" and replace with:

SS-(Panzer-) Aufklärungs-Abt. 10
SS-(Panzer-) Pionier-Abt. 10

Add:

SS-Sicherungs-Kp. 10

66. Divisional Commanders: SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Lothar Debes was commander of SS-Pz. Gr. Div. "KdG" on 15.5.1943.

89. Top right photo: Shown is Felix Steiner and not Joachim Ziegler of whom no clear photograph has been found to date.

126. Divisional Commanders: Fritz Witt was still listed as an SS-Oberführer on 30.1.1944 and so may have been promoted to SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS after 31.1.1944.

126. Note: SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Fritz Kraemer was a staff officer of the 6. SS-Pz. Armee on 9.11.1944.

127. Chief of Staff: Hubert Meyer was Chief of Staff of the 12th SS Division "Hitlerjugend" from July 1943 until the surrender on 8.5.1945 (letter from Hubert Meyer dated 2.9.1972).

154. Divisional Commanders: The authors are grateful to Herr Jost Schneider for the constructive and very interesting criticism of coverage of the "Handschar" Division contained in his letter dated 13.7.74. The most salient points require comment:

1. Herr Schneider's view that von Obwurzer never actually commanded the Division may be true but he was certainly entrusted with its establishment (see fn. 69 on p. 154 of Vol. 3).
2. Sauberzweig assumed command of the Division in October 1943. This was possibly on 1.10.1943, the date of his promotion to SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS.
3. Obersturmbannführer Jakob Hauser's command of the "Müselmanische Freiwilligen-Division" is absolutely unknown to Herr Schneider and other veterans of the Waffen-SS with whom he discussed this point. Yet such is stated in Hauser's obituary appearing with a photograph on p. 24 of *Der Freiwillige*, 2. Jahrgang, März 1957.
4. Herr Schneider and those with whom he has consulted claim that Hussin-Beg. Biscevic never belonged to the "Handschar" Division. It is, however, unlikely that the French Intelligence report (see fn. 73 on p. 155 of Vol. 3) should have invented him. If he did hold Waffen-SS rank then it would have had the "Waffen-" rather than the "SS-" prefix.
5. Hans Hanke, promoted to SS-Obersturmbannführer on 30.1.1945, is said never to have commanded the Division or its remnants. Hampel remained in command until the end of the war. Refer to 2nd paragraph of fn. 56, p. 150, Vol. 3.

155. Chiefs of Staff: Herr Schneider (see above) claims that four former staff officers of the "Handschar" Division had no recollection of either SS-Sturmbannführer Eberhardt or SS-Sturmbannführer Sander being the formation's Ia. They consequently contradict contemporary evidence, for example Sander is confirmed in SS-Personalhauptamt, Personalamt der Waffen-SS Amt VII/I: Kommandeurstellenbesetzungsliste - Stand vom 1.3.1945.



FRITZ WITT AND
HUBERT MEYER,
THE DIVISIONAL Ia,
LATE SPRING 1944.

170. Pages 96/97 and fn. 16: An earlier order introducing the "Kampf-rune" for SS-Div. "Germania" was dated 18.12.1940 (SS-Division Germania, Ia/V, v. 18.12.40, Taktische Kennzeichen an Kraftfahrzeuge - T-354/161/3806698).

171. Illustration: The dot is missing from the first "i" in "Division".

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*especially Knight's Cross holders of all branches of the Wehrmacht.



Cover Illustration: George Petersen

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Volume 4

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- 6/57 14. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS (ukrainische Nr. 1): For another detailed account of this Division's history in English, see Siegrunen No. 19 (April 1980) pp. 5-10; No. 20 (June 1980) pp. 8-14; No. 22 (November 1980) pp. 11-16; No. 24 (March 1981) pp. 12-15; No. 27 (September 1981) pp. 10-12.
- 18 footnote 32: The correct Ukrainian spelling of Rivno (the Russian spelling) is Rivne (Równe in Polish, Rowno in German, and Rovno in English). Stupnytskyi (said to have been a Colonel, not a General) was named Leonid, not Anatol (P. C. T. Verheye).
- 21 footnote 38: According to P. C. T. Verheye (letter of 30.6.1976) no unit of the U.P.A. ever fought "for" the Germans, and there is no German or Ukrainian record indicating any such cooperation.
- 28 The English translation of the oath should more correctly end: "... and as a brave soldier I will always be ready to lay down my life for this oath."
- 35 line 25: read "seemingly" for "seamingly."
- 40 line 17: read "Nazis" for "Nazi's."
- 44 Post-war commemorative badge of the 1st Division of the U.N.A. (from an illustration in the 1953 Ukrainian Book Club of Winnipeg history of the Ukrainian armed forces).
- 48 footnote 109: Walter Schimana was of German nationality but born in Troppau in Czechoslovakia. As SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Polizei he was "mit der Aufstellung und Führung beauftragt SS-Freiw.-Div. Galizien 15.7.1943 - 3.9.1943" (from his service record, via P. A. Nix).
- 52 footnote 120: Possibly genuine examples of the Galician sleeve shield with a black border have been found (Jim van Fleet).
- 55/56 There was also a round version of the Ukrainian Trident cap badge.
- 60 Evolution & Titles & footnote 6: The inclusion of the word "Waffen-" in the title was indicated by V.O. SS 1495 of 16.5.1944.



- 63 last paragraph: Latvians still cannot agree over the circumstances leading up to and the reasons behind the coup d'état of Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis on the night of 15 May 1934, and readers wishing to pursue the matter further are referred to the bibliography. Explanations for Ulmanis' action (a bloodless coup that led to what was considered a mild dictatorship that lasted until the Russians invaded Latvia on 17 June 1940) range from Ulmanis' personal ambition to his desire to save his country from chaos. The reasons we gave for the coup were taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica: "pro-Nazi" tendencies of the Baltic Germans and the threat of an overthrow of government by the right-wing "Thundercross" organization." Artūrs Silgailis contests this view, saying the left-wing Social Democrats' "SSS" (Stradnieku Sports un Sargs - Workers' Sport & Guard) presented as much if not more of a threat than the Right. He says the "Thundercross" cannot be held responsible for what took place, and that Hitler had not been in power long enough for any real German threat to have developed - the "pro-Nazi" activities of the younger generation of Baltic Germans coming later, after the coup. Mussolini and Hitler may, however, have provided examples for Ulmanis (P. H. Buss).

Silgailis suggests that the real cause was the inadequacy of the Latvian constitution, which in turn had led to a possible overthrow of government. This constitution had been drawn up in the turbulent years following the First World War, and its very wording prevented the establishment of a stable and workable government. Its highly liberal parliamentary election rules favored the formation of small political parties and groups, every elected parliament having representatives from at least 15 different parties (27 following the 1931 election!) and sure enough, no government managed to last for very long. Faced with possible civil war and a very definite public dissatisfaction, Silgailis maintains that something drastic had to be done. The coup was greeted favorably at the time by the majority of the Latvian people but was losing some ground of support for Ulmanis in the latter 1930s. Nevertheless, Ulmanis was trusted by the majority of Latvians to the very moment of his forced abdication on 21 July 1940.

- 67 The proclamation raising the Estonian SS Legion was made on 28.8.1942, the first anniversary of the liberation of Estonia's capital, Tallinn (Reval), from the Russians. 1.10.1942 was the date the men were to assemble at SS-Tr.Üb.Pl. Debica by order of the SS-FHA dated 29.9.1942. See fn. 1 on pg. 122 of this book.



Round version of the Ukrainian Trident cap badge.

- 68 Line 22 & footnote 22: Although the 16th, 19th, 21st, and 24th police battalions were absorbed by the Latvian Legion, strictly speaking only the 19th and 21st were actually serving under the 2. (mot.) SS-Infanterie-Brigade at the time of the conversion (the 16th was resting in Latvia after a year at the front with the Wehrmacht in the Dno area, and the 24th was attached to the Army's 380th Infantry Regiment near Petershof on the Leningrad Front). It is possible that the 16th and 24th were still considered as belonging to the 2. (mot.) SS-Inf.-Brig., or that the authorities in Berlin were unaware of the detachments.
- 70 Oath: The English translation should more correctly end: "... and as a brave soldier I will always be ready to lay down my life for this oath." General Bangerskis and Legions-Standartenführer Silgailis were the first Latvians to take the oath; they signed it on 20 March 1943.
- 70/71 Silgailis' date of birth was incorrectly shown as 13 November 1892 on the enlistment order of 19 March 1943 (reproduced on page 96 of Volume 4) - he was, in fact, born exactly three years later on 13 November 1895 and so was 48 years old when appointed Chief of Staff of the Division.
- 72 footnote 42: Only the 28th Latvian Police Battalion was, in fact, absorbed by the 15th SS Division. Latvian Police Battalions 17 and 27 were disbanded at about the time the Latvian Legion was formed and their men absorbed by other police battalions. The 269th Latvian Police Battalion became a frontier guard unit (Silgailis & Buss).
- 73 footnote 47: Only alternative a) is correct, according to Silgailis.
- 73 footnotes 48 & 49: Delete (Silgailis).
- 76 footnote 65: The correct number of the anti-aircraft unit was "SS-Flak-Abteilung 506" - the number "106" being used only at the beginning of the merger of the units of the 15th and 19th divisions (Silgailis).
- 78 Photo caption: Col. C. M. Dodkins, not Shape Pictorial Section.
- 81 Last paragraph: It was not just 'lack of barracks and supplies' that prompted some desertions, but mainly the sustained defeats of the German Army, the loss of a great part of the Baltic area, and mostly the lack of hope of avoiding the occupation of Latvia by the Bolsheviks (Silgailis).
- 82 Hinrich Lohse, in fact, had no involvement with the 15th SS Division.
- 83 footnote 83: SS-Art.-Rgt. 15 had survived the Russian summer offensive of 1944 almost intact and with the exception of its Ist detachment was taken over by the 19th SS Division and served with it to the end of the war. I./SS-Art.-Rgt. 15 was disbanded in November 1944 and its manpower taken to Germany as cadres for a newly-raised artillery regiment for the 15th SS Division.
- 84 footnote 87: "The figures given by Daugavas Vanagi must be correct. The figure of 20,000 included: remnants of the 15th Division, men of disbanded police battalions and other units as well as new recruits. At that turbulent time it was, in fact, impossible to account exactly the number of men transferred from Latvia to Germany on any given day" (Silgailis).
- 86 Line 16: read "Lübgust" for "Lüngust" (Silgailis).
- 87 The 19th Division did not lose "much of its ardor" once Latvia was

- retaken by the Red Army (see divisional coverage in this volume).
- 87 Last paragraph & footnote 97: In fact, SS-Kampfgruppe "Janums" was made up of "lettisches Füsilier-Battalion 15" and the first battalions of the 32nd and 33rd regiments. During the move to Berlin, Füsilier-Btl. 15 was separated from the battle group and took part in the defense of Berlin, where the survivors were taken prisoner by the Red Army. For details of the surrender of all elements of the 15th SS Division, see pp 24/28 of this volume.
- 89 32nd Regiment & footnote 99: Silgailis confirms the unit's title as "SS-Freiwilligen- und Ausbildungs-Regiment" and adds: "In reality, it was an early designation of the 32nd Regiment. The name was assigned for the regiment not by higher command but was chosen only as a temporary name by SS-Brigadeführer Hansen to indicate the primary task of this unit - to train the first batches of recruits as training cadres for the whole Division. Therefore, the word "Ersatz-" was left out on purpose. As soon as the assigned task was completed, the unit was referred to by its proper name "SS-Freiwilligen-Rgt. 1 (lettische Legion)."
- 90 footnote 105: After the 34th Regiment received its Latvian number "5," this number was never altered back to "3." "I assume reference to the 34th Regiment as 'Latvian No. 3' must have arisen from a printing error in the SS-FHA order" (Silgailis).
- 90 footnote 107: Since Grobina is situated quite close to Liepāja, elements of the "SS-Waffen-Panzerjäger-Abt. 15" were dispersed among both locations at that time. The unit's H.Q. was at Liepāja. (Silgailis)
- 91 footnote 113: Delete (Silgailis).
- 92 SS-Pionier-Bataillon 15 was reorganized and sent to Pomerania by SS-Pionier-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-Regiment 1, Dresden.
- 92 SS-Versorgungs-Regiment 15 could also have been known as SS-Nachschub-Regiment 15, depending on date.
- 92 SS-Feldgendarmarie-Trupp 15 shared the same field post number as the military police element of the 19th SS Division (SS-FG-Trupp 19 - F.P.Nr. 34 062), possibly because one sprang from the other. (P. H. Buss)
- 92 SS-Feldersatz-Bataillon 15 was reformed near Berent in West Prussia in August/September 1944. It consisted of a number of companies and an Alarm Einheit and numbering eight officers and 375 other ranks was then under command of a German Major Jahnke. Combat elements of the battalion were organized into a battle group under the Latvian Waffen-Hauptsturmführer Ansis Eglitis. Eglitis was killed in action and the battle group suffered heavy losses in the fighting near Marienburg. Sent to defend Danzig, the battle group arrived on 7.3.1945 and the following day was disarmed and on 13.3.1945 disbanded and its men scattered among the German forces defending Danzig and Gotenhafen. Those of SS-F.E.B. 15 who had not been organized into the battle group were sent to Gotenhafen under the Latvian Waffen-Hauptsturmführer Jansons. He succeeded in transferring the medical battalion (2 companies with 68 officers and 604 other ranks) over Swinemünde to Korser in Denmark, where it was on 9.5.1945. (Indulis Kažociņš).

- 93 footnote 115: Delete (Silgailis).
- 93 footnote 116: Himmler made the decision at a meeting with the operations officer (Ia) of the 15th SS Division, SS-Obersturmbannführer Erich Wulff at his H.Q. Fuchsbau. Unfortunately, the copy of Himmler's letter addressed to the Chef des SS-FHA, Jüttner, did not bear any date. The copy was received by the General Inspector of the Latvian Legion in early December 1944. In accordance with this letter, the SS-FHA (by its order Amt II, Org.Abt. Ia/II, Tgb.Nr. II/-20908/44 geh.) changed the subordination of these units, ordered by its previous order of 29.11.1944 (Tgb.Nr. II/19982/44 geh.).
- 94 Actual strengths at 17 April 1944 were: 417 officers + 1,542 NCOs + 13,777 men - a total of 15,736.
- 95 footnote 118: SS-Waffen-Art.-Rgt. 15 was listed separately because its II. & III. Abteilungen were attached to the 19th Division at the time (Silgailis).
- 95 footnote 120: See page 29 of this volume.
- 96 CHIEFS OF STAFF: SS-Sturmbannführer Erich (not Horst) Wulff was Ia of the 15th SS Division until his death at Flederborn on 3.2.1945 and was recommended for the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross (BA/DÖ 9.5.1945 - Stöber, Die lettischen Divisionen, pg. 338). SS-Sturmbannführer Kopp took over as Ia and held this post until the end of the war.
- 96 footnote 122: Nikolaus Heilmann was commander of the 28th SS Divison "Wallonien" from 12.12.1944 to his death on 30.1.1945 (from his service record, via P. A. Nix).
- 97 Photo: Latvian experts suspect this photograph of being retouched because of the lack of the cap eagle and the generally strange shape of the peak.
- 98 Sleeve shields: See page 40 of this volume.
- 102 Cuffbands: See page 48 of this volume.
- 103 Colors: See page 50 of this volume.
- 103 Divisional Vehicle Symbol: Assigned but never used, see page 51 of this volume.
- 115 Marzabotto: Thorough and objective research of what actually took place at Marzabotto still needs to be done and would warrant a complete volume. The source for the 2,700 Italian civilians massacred by "RFSS" in reprisal for the activities of a partisan brigade in the Apennines is Reitlinger (The SS - Alibi of a Nation, pg. 245, nf. 3) which Stein merely copied (op.cit., pg. 276). According to a more recent coverage by Renato Giorgi (see bibliography), the following numbers of civilians (not partisans) were killed in the borough ("Comune") of Marzabotto (made up of 13 mountain villages) during the period between 29 August and 3 September and on 1 October 1944: 184 (Coprara); 195 (Casaglia); 104 (Cadotto); 111 (Sperticano); 95 (Villa Ignano); 560 (S. Martino) = 1,249 plus 421 who were left unburied in the mountains.
- 129 Photo caption: SS-Hauptsturmführer Josef Kiermaier was an SD officer on the staff of the RF-SS (Stab RF SS, Reichssicherheitsdienst), which explains why he wore a plain black right hand collar patch.
- 153 Photo caption: The tall SS-Sturmbannführer in the center of this photograph cannot have been the Division's Ic (intelligence officer)

SS-Hauptsturmführer von le Coq (not SS-Sturmbannführer La Cocq in any case).

157 photo: The combination of officer's and NCO's insignia is, of course, due to this young man's having been an SS-Standartenoberjunker.