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SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE DIVISION
INTELLIGENCE SECTION

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The Volkssturm in Action

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In the drive to the West bank of the Rhine, Allied forces have encountered numerous Volkssturm units. The following is a selection of stories of capture as told by VS officers and men who were taken prisoner.

VS MAENNER HUGO MEYER and OSCAR LUDWIN, both from SAARHOELZBACH, 4 Co. 40/31 VS Bn SCHREINER. Both 16 years of age.

The two boys were sent back from their evacuation areas by their parents to care for their property and to obtain food. On Feb 1, just after they had arrived in Saarhoelzbach, they were met by Oberlehrer Funk who told them that they were VS men from then on and would be considered deserters and shot if they attempted to return to their parents.

They were assigned to the fourth company, which consisted of about 117 men, all war weary and convinced of the hopelessness of their situation. Most of them were old and felt that they were sacrificed for the Nazi party. The boys were put to work building anti-tank defenses and caring for the village's cattle. They received eight days of military training, which consisted of firing a few rounds MG and rifle, as well as learning the theory of the Panzerfaust and hand grenade. On 21 Feb, they were sent to METTLACH where they received uniforms and then sent to the foremost bunkerline. In all only about 20-25 of the 117 men of SAARHOELZBACH were in the line. Many of the others had disappeared or had got out through connections. The boys were assigned to a bunker with three other VS men and four Landsers. The two spent most of their time standing guard.

The boys claimed that they decided to desert because they realized the hopelessness of their position. An opportunity presented itself when they were asked to go on a mission across the Moselle to find food in an area which they knew was occupied by the Americans. While crossing the river, they were fired on. The boys simply threw their rifles away and yelled "NICHT SCHIESSEN" (Don't shoot). They continued toward the American lines where they presented a PASSIERSCHEIN which they had saved for such an occasion.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L

VS ORDONNANZ OFFIZIER (rank of Co. CO) FRIEDRICH FIELITZ,
VS BN. RUWERTAL, brewery manager from TRIER, SA STURMFUEHRER,
age 56.

VS Bn RUWERTAL was formed in Dec 44 but, because of the lack of uniforms and weapons, they were unable to train their men. The Bn consisted of about 750 men divided into four companies, each one of which was headed by an active party leader. The Bn CO was the SA BRIGADEFUEHRER from KOBLENZ, while the overall administration and direction came from the KREISLEITUNG TRIER.

Recently they received some rifles and Panzerfaust, thus a limited training program was made possible. In RUWERTAL, the VS officers and NCO's reported two evenings a week for self-instruction, and on Sunday mornings they attempted to teach their charges what they themselves had learned during the week. The difficulty in this procedure was that the men had to be trained by those who were untrained themselves, even though some of them had been World War I officers and NCO's.

The Bn was supposed to get its collection of miscellaneous uniforms dyed field-gray, but since the local dye-works was destroyed, this was impossible. P/W himself wore his regular SA uniform.

In general, the P/W considered the VS a "ARBEITSSTURM" (worker's army) since only the ordinary little people, such as workers and employees were drafted into it, while those with connections managed to stay out. In his experience, those with connections managed to get into the second draft which was never called up.

He was captured on 3 March at the GRUENHAUS-MERTESDORF RR station, while on his way to visit his wife in SCHWEICH. His Bn had not been alerted or under any commitment orders, so he was able to obtain a pass.

VS Mann HEIMANNS, VS HOCH-NEUKIRCH, 45 years old, worker from HOCH-NEUKIRCH, married, children.

Drafted into the VS in his home town. The company there consisted of about 80 men, commanded by the local SA Sturm-fuehrer. They had about 8 rifles with some ammunition but had no complete uniforms. Most of the men wore their civilian overcoats, though some of them had army blouses.

About 4 Feb he was sent to GUSDORF, along with men from various other areas, for special training. There they dug fortifications in the morning and got some military training in the afternoon. When the situation became more serious, the training program was increased to the morning also. Most of the instruction was in the use of the rifle, machine gun, and Panzerfaust. Since most of the men had had no previous training it was rather hard on them. Some, however, did learn to shoot, but very few could take apart the weapons for repair or cleaning.

P/W was sent into the fight with a group of sixty other VS men on 1 March. They received the usual "to the last" order and were assigned a sector next to a small group of "regulars". They soon realized the utter senselessness of the whole affair and were quite fed up. They all felt that the whole thing would be over soon, "so why get killed in the last minute".

When they received their first artillery barrage, their squad leader, an ex-soldier, told them "Es hat keinen Zweck mehr zu kaempfen. Wenn die kommen ist es schnell vorbei." (It's useless to fight on. When they - the Americans - get here, it'll be over soon). Soon a group of Americans did appear and the "regualrs", there to support them, simply raised their hands and gave up. Nobody objected in the least to surrendering since they had already thrown away their weapons.

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VS HAUPTMANN PAUL SEIBERT, CO, 1 Co, VS Bn TRIER, gymnastic teacher from TRIER, age 45.

VS of TRIER was organized into a Bn of four companies under the command of HAUPTMANN WEISS, a former officer recently discharged from the Wehrmacht. The first Co, with strength of about 164 men, was called out on 24 Feb and sent to the area of HOCKWEILER to make tank traps and dug-outs. Because of the swift advance of the Americans, they weren't able to start working there, and were sent then to OLEWIG. Here they had to dig steadily for twenty-four hours. The work was particularly hard for these old men, most of whom were business men and professionals. Finally, they were given a six hour rest, after which they again resumed their digging, now, however, under artillery fire and Jabo attack. The men after a time refused to continue the work and P/W, as Co CO called Bn Hq to try to get some relief for them. He then withdrew his men to a school for a much-needed rest. In the meantime all the regular infantry, artillery and PAK units were streaming by toward TRIER. This alarmed the VS, who realized that they were being sacrificed to fight the rear guard action alone. P/W then called his officers together, and after a short discussion it was decided that all weapons would be collected and that they would surrender. They settled down to waiting for the Americans. A message soon was received from the Wehrmacht officer in command of the area, ordering them to take up certain positions in the defense of TRIER. The order was just ignored. Two hours later American troops arrived and took them prisoner.

VS MANN ARTHUR SCHNEIDER, VS BIRKENFELD, farmer from SCHWOLLEN near IDAR-OBBERSTEIN, age 47

He was first called up on 22 Nov and sent to SAARBURG to lead cattle back from the combat areas to safer areas in the rear. However, instead, he was placed under the command of the local farming teacher and together with a group of other VS men ordered to occupy bunkers between ZERICH and TABEN. Their unit consisted originally of 200 men, but by the time of commitment, about fifty men had left because of party connections and being unfit even for the VOLKSSTURM. Always there was an inferiority complex among the men because they were constantly ridiculed by the Wehrmacht and everyone else. They were also quite bitter because the party had jurisdiction over the VS conscription and as a result many party members were still at home. They received no physical examinations, no training and no uniforms. After a week they received rifles which no one could use. Most of the time they were busy digging fox-holes in front of the bunkers. On the night of 21 - 22 Feb, they were ordered to withdraw and prepare fortifications in front of a bunker line more in the rear. While withdrawing, they were surprised by American troops who captured them without a shot being fired from either side.

VS HAUPTMANN ALBERT FUCHS, CO 3rd Co. 1 Bn, ERKELENZ, Reichsbahn inspector from RHEINDALEN, married, 11 children, age 65.

The 3rd Co., consisting of about 112 men, average age 45, no boys, was recruited from RHEINDALEN. They received their training from Wehrmacht NCO's stationed in the area. They gathered on Sundays from 8 till 12 in the local school house and learned the manual of arms and close order drill. Later on they received some WAFFENKUNDE (weapons instruction). There were two medics in the company, who, according to the P/W, were well trained. Their weapons were of all varieties, especially Belgian. He himself had a pistol of the last century. They had no MG's or Panzerfaust.

The company was the only one in the Bn that was committed. On 28 Feb the order for commitment was received from the WEHRMACHTSORTSKOMMANDO. They were sent to guard tank traps on the

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roads, though they had no anti-tank weapons. They were not briefed, and therefore did not know their exact functions or duties. Soon they received heavy artillery fire, which inflicted a few casualties. Without having fired a shot, they were quickly surrounded and by-passed by American tanks and infantry.

FUCHS was the only man in his Co with SOLDBUCH and uniform, which consisted of cotton cap a la AFRIKA KORPS, RAD coat, brownish blouse, regular Wehrmacht trousers, high leather boots, three stars on collar (denoting rank of Captain) and brassard on left arm with the inscription "DEUTSCHER VOLKSSTURM, WEHRMACHT"

VS MANN AUGUST FISCHER, Co KRUMM, Bn FINGER, high school teacher from TROYS DORF near KOELN, age 38.

The average age of the men in this unit was about 50 with some as old as sixty. Some of the men were in very poor physical condition. They had no rifles. They were issued work suits, which faintly resembled uniforms, for training purposes and arm bands. Before commitment a collection was taken up among the civilians which yielded all sorts of old uniforms which were then distributed among them. When leaving for action on 24 Feb, arms (Danish rifles and 6-9 rounds) were issued them. They also had a few MG's which no one could fire. From the beginning they had decided that it would be best to surrender or try to escape to the rear. They considered their treatment at the hands of the leadership as nothing short of murder.

On 24 Feb an EINSATZ BN, consisting of 110 men of which Company KRUMM was part, was called to SIEGEBURG. Here they received the usual pep-talks and threats about cowardice, and then were sent out to NOERVENIG. His company took up positions in the front lines, and, after NOERVENIG had been taken by the Americans, were withdrawn. They moved directly out of the lines and into the hands of American troops. After a short exchange of fire the men fled to various shelters and there surrendered.

VS MANN HEINRICH KLUENERS, construction worker from UERDINGEN, married, age 45.

Drafted into the VS in his home town in the middle of Feb. and assigned to the 4th Co. in KREFELD. The company consisting of men of average age 49-59, was commanded by a well-known delicatessen store operator from KREFELD, with no military background. They were equipped with obsolete Italian rifles and Panzerfaust which most of the men feared very much. Their uniforms consisted of anything they could get. P/W himself was among the more fortunate, since he wore an old policeman's uniform that had been turned in at the VOLKSOPFER. They had only been issued WEHRPASS and were still waiting for their SOLDBUECHER.

Their training consisted of some theoretical training, aiming exercises and close order drill in the mornings and usually in the afternoon also. Conditions at the camp (ADOLF VON NASSAU KASERNE) were very bad, particularly the food. Of the 330 men located there, about 20-30 used to sneak out and go home every night, coming back the next morning in time for the training. This was well known to the officers who simply ignored this breach of discipline. The consensus of opinion among the men was that the VS is a KINDERVEREIN (a club for kids).

They were committed near KREFELD and, after one night, raised their hands in surrender at the sight of the first American tanks that appeared.

VS MANN PETER ERKENS, 2 Co. 183 Bn DUESSELDORF, Prokurist (head clerk) from RHEYDT, age 47.

On 23 Oct 44 a pre-induction meeting was held, which few of

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those required actually did attend. On 12 Nov they took their oath. From that date on they were required to take part in a regular training program, every Sunday morning, which consisted of the most simple close order drill. Usually about a third of the members appeared, a situation which resulted in a series of threats from party authorities. The leadership was entrusted to a party leader, while serving as ordinary VS men, there were three men who had been regulars with service in this war.

The Bn had rifles sufficient for about a third of the men. These were, for the most part, French K 1886 and a few K98's with enough ammunition only for the K98's. They had an abundance of Panzerfaust (about 100 in his company) and they had been trained in the theory of the weapon. Each man had fired at least 3 or 4 rounds.

On 1 Feb after a terrific air raid, they were called out and put to work cleaning up and maintaining order. On 18 Feb they were KASERNIERT (put into barracks) and on 27 Feb were sent to STEINFURT, east of RHEYDT, presumably for training, but they were put to work diggin trenches. Soon forward elements of American tank units arrived and took them prisoner.

VS MANN HEINRICH MOLDERS, attached to 1 Bttry, 404 Regt., gardeners apprentice from KNECHTEDEN, age 16.

Drafted into the VS on 17 Jan because he refused to join the HJ. He was then sent to FLAKKASERNE LUENENSCHIED for one month's training which consisted only of close order drill, during the bitter cold weather of early Feb. On 15 Feb he was sent out with the First Battery (7 Ack-Ack guns) and trained in the raising and the lowering of the barrel. Later, though he was used only ammunition bearer.

On 2 Mar he slipped away from his gun crew during the confusion that existed with the intention of returning to his mother. On his way he heard that the Americans were approaching so he simply waited and was taken prisoner the next morning.

VS HAUPTMANN KNORR, CO 41 VOLKSSSTURM BN, GAU12, Director of a Volksschule (elementary school) in ERKELENZ, married, AGE 60.

When the battalion was formed in October 1944, KNORR was immediately placed in command, because of his military experience in this war and the last. The battalion received no uniforms, only 50 arm bands, 100 pay books and 100 dog tags. They had just a few rifles so that it was possible to use them only for instruction. About 24 Feb, however, they received 180 Danish rifles, but no ammunition, four to six MG's and 100 Panzerfaust.

The official training began in December and consisted of three-hour sessions for three successive Sundays. The program ended abruptly when KNORR was wounded by an accident. In general it was mostly drill, with some theoretical instruction in the rifle, and the firing of the Panzerfaust.

The battalion was committed around ERKELENZ when the American offensive reached the area. It was placed under the tactical command of the 138 Inf. Div. Only one company of the Battalion was actually engaged in the town itself while the others were in the villages outside the town. KNORR, as Bn CO, was ordered to remain at the CP of the Wehrmacht commander defending ERKELENZ to assist in the operation. The one VS Co. in the town was divided into three platoons, one for defense, one for digging fortifications, and one for the tank barriers. All the platoons were improperly equipped and led. At 1600 hours on 26 Feb they began to receive heavy artillery fire. The officers

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withdrew to a bunker and there discussed the futility of the situation. The general opinion was "impossible to continue resistance". Rather than wait in the bunker and risk being blown up by American artillery, P/W went out to search for American troops. He met a patrol on the street and explained the situation to them. Then he led them to the bunker and ordered all the remaining out to surrender.

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