

**HITLER'S TEENAGED ZEALOTS:
FANATICS, COMBAT MOTIVATION,
AND THE
12th SS PANZER DIVISION *HITLERJUGEND***

by

Michael E. Sullivan

Bachelor of Arts, Atlantic Baptist University, 1997

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the Graduate Academic Unit of History

Supervisor: Marc Milner, Ph. D., History

Examining Board: Gary K. Waite, Ph. D., History, Chair
R. Steven Turner, Ph. D., History
Barry Spinner, Ph. D., Psychology

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

April, 1999

© Michael E. Sullivan, 1999



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-46278-1

Canada

Before you leave here, you're going to learn that one of the most brutal things in the world is your average nineteen-year-old.

- quoted in Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. (New York : Penguin, 1997) p. 192

Abstract

This thesis examines the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend* in an attempt to formulate a theory of combat motivation for fanatical soldiers. Chapter 1 of this thesis examines the history of the division, from its inception to its virtual destruction in Normandy, and explains why the 12th SS can be classified as fanatical. Chapter 2 examines the historiography of combat motivation literature and explains the failure of this literature to provide an adequate explanation for the combat motivation of a fanatic. The combat motivation of the 12th SS, and for fanatical soldiers in general, can be broken down into two categories: *Ideological Motivators* and *Concrete Motivators*. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the Ideological Motivators, including the nature of the Hitler Youth, the influence of Nazism, and the concepts of *Volksgemeinschaft* and religious belief in Hitler. Chapters 5 and 6 look at the Concrete Motivators, including weapons, training, and the leadership cadres of the division. This thesis concludes that the holistic application of both sets of motivators are essential for the successful combat motivation of the fanatical soldier.

Acknowledgements

I could not have accomplished this work without the help and support of many people. To begin, I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Marc Milner, who steered me in the right direction from the start, thereby eliminating any problems that lack of focus can bring. I truly appreciated his advice and his suggestions, and I cannot imagine an easier person to work with on a subject such as this. I also am thankful for the assistance of the two secretaries in the Department of History, Carol Hines and Elizabeth Herrington, who helped me track down the right material and were always quite helpful (and cheerful) the times when I had questions (which were many). I would like to thank Professor Steven Turner and Professor Barry Spinner for the time that they took on my behalf to examine my thesis, and to Professor Gary Waite who chaired the examination. Their critiques and their suggestions were greatly appreciated. The staff who I dealt with at the various archives that I visited, including Steve Harris at the Directorate of History and Heritage (Ottawa), and Ron Haycock at the Royal Military College (Kingston) were also quite helpful, and my task would have been much more difficult without their assistance. On a more personal note, I would like to thank John Yahn for his assistance in translation and for his stories of his childhood in occupied Hungary and Nazi Germany. He aided me in putting this whole subject in a more human perspective. I would also be remiss if I did not thank my wife, Stacey, for all of

her love and support during the writing of this thesis. I am quite fortunate that I have been blessed with the life-long companionship of such a wonderful person, and without her understanding and her assistance I would never have been able to complete this work.

All mistakes, whether in translation or in interpretation, are entirely my own.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction -	Towards a Theory of Fanatical Combat Motivation -----	1
Chapter 1 -	The Birth of a Fanatical Combat Division: The Origins, Actions, and Atrocities of the 12th SS Panzer Division <i>Hitlerjugend</i> -----	12
Chapter 2 -	Scholars, Primary Groups, and Ideology: The Search for an Explanation of Combat Motivation -----	31
Chapter 3 -	Blind Obedience and Unquestioning Faith: Ideological Indoctrination and the Quest for the Development of a Fanatic -----	60
Chapter 4 -	For the Führer and the <i>Volksgemeinschaft</i>: The Importance of the Unquantifiable -----	101
Chapter 5 -	On Weaponry and Training: The Importance of the Quantifiable -----	121
Chapter 6 -	Big Men, <i>Draufgänger</i>, and Thugs: The Impact of Fanatical Leadership -----	140
Conclusion -	Fanatical Combat Motivation and the Legacy of the 12th SS Panzer Division <i>Hitlerjugend</i> -----	156
Bibliography -----		166
Appendices -----		174

List of Abbreviations

- Abt. Ia** - *Operationsabteilung* (Chief of Operations)
- Abt. IV** - *Nationalsozialistischer Führungsoffizier* (National Socialist Guidance Officer)
- DIV** - Division
- HJ** - *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth)
- LAH** - *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (Adolf Hitler's Bodyguard)
- NCO** - Non-Commissioned Officer
- NSDAP** - *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers Party)
- NSFO** - *Nationalsozialistischer Führungsoffizier* (National Socialist Guidance Officer)
- NSLB** - *Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund* (National Socialist Teacher's Association)
- PZ** - Panzer (Tank)
- RJF** - *Reichsjugendführung* (Reich Youth Leadership)
- SHAEF** - Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
- SA** - *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Troopers)
- SS** - *Schutzstaffel* (Elite Guard)
- WEL** - *Wehrtüchtigungslager der Hitler-Jugend* (Hitler Youth Military Instruction Camps)

INTRODUCTION

Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation

SS-Unterscharführer Emil Dürr found himself in a serious predicament.¹ As the rain fell during the morning of 26 June 1944, the sounds of an immense battle became progressively closer. As a member of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth), Dürr could consider himself a member of a unique and highly elite fighting force. This division, comprised entirely of seventeen and eighteen-year-old members of the Hitler Youth and whose officers and NCO's were either former members of the Hitler Youth or members of the elite 1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (LAH),² were quickly making a name for themselves as a formation fierce in defence, aggressive in counterattacks, and deadly to their prisoners. It was a reputation that Dürr was undoubtedly proud of.

Now in the third week of the Allied invasion of Fortress Europe, British General Bernard Montgomery was launching an attack in an effort to capture the city

¹ A list of comparative ranks for the Waffen-SS and the Canadian Army can be found in Appendix I. The background and story of Emil Dürr can be found in Chester Wilmont, *The Struggle for Europe*. revised ed. (London : Collins, 1965); Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*. trans. by H. Harri Henschler. (Winnipeg : J. J. Fedorowicz, 1994); Kurt Meyer, *Grenadiers*. trans. by Michael Mendé. (Winnipeg : J. J. Fedorowicz, 1994); and Craig W. H. Luther, *Blood and Honor: The History of the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitler Youth," 1943-1945*. (San Jose : R. James Bender, 1987).

² Literally translated as "Adolf Hitler's Bodyguard."

of Caen, a D-Day objective that never materialized. Operation EPSOM, developed to utilize General Miles Dempsey's Second Army, was designed to envelop Caen from the west. The VIII British Corps, with its force of 60,000 men, 600 tanks, 700 artillery pieces, and supported by three cruisers and a monitor, were to break through the German defences between Caen and Tilly, cross the Odon and Orne rivers, and establish its armour astride the Caen-Falaise road. Directly in the path of this assault were Dürr and his comrades who made up the two available under-strength battalions of the 26th SS Panzer-Grenadier Regiment and the 12th SS Engineer Battalion, both attached to the 12th SS Panzer Division.

The clouds and mist that covered the battlefield meant that the planned Allied air support for EPSOM did not materialize as Montgomery desired, but this fact was of little comfort to Dürr and the crew of the gun that he commanded as a member of the 1st Battalion of the 26th SS Panzer-Grenadier Regiment (I/26). As the thunderous artillery barrage crept closer and closer, and the troops of the VIII Corps overran the first lines of defence, Dürr and his comrades must have been mindful of the imminent danger. They were no strangers to battle. In fact, in the days up to the commencement of EPSOM the 26th Regiment had suffered approximately 500 casualties, with no replacements in sight. It was already three weeks into the campaign but Dürr and the rest of the 12th SS were still faced with the daunting task of holding up the Allied offensive until German reinforcements arrived.

As the battle progressed it soon became clear that the battalion headquarters of the I/26th, located on the Rots-Cheux road in St. Manvieu, would be overrun.

The only weapons available to the force defending the position were sub-machine guns, rifles, two mortars, magnetic explosives, and a handful of Panzerfausts, which were hand-held anti-tank weapons, similar to the bazooka used by the Allied forces. Dürr and his crew were a part of the handful of men that were available to defend the post. Already, fierce hand-to-hand fighting had developed in previous meetings of members of the *Hitlerjugend* Division and the Allied forces, and the defence of the command post would be no different. The soldiers knew that if the headquarters were taken, a clear hole would emerge that the British could break through and exploit. However, to stay and fight would also be suicidal, and in the unlikely event that the small group of defenders were successful in the short term, there was no chance of holding the position for any significant amount of time. The prospects of a handful of soldiers with no heavy weapons defending against a large force of tanks and massed artillery were slim, but it was a risk that the soldiers of the 12th SS were willing to take. For the Hitler Youth, indoctrinated for years with Nazi ideology and trained as efficient, elite soldiers, death in defence of the Fatherland was a far better option than failure.

The 15th Scottish Division soon infiltrated the village of St. Manvieu, but they were stopped momentarily by mortar fire. Once they realized the size of the force they faced, the 15th Scottish renewed their attack. They were cautious, though; they did not want to face the fanatical Hitler Youth in hand-to-hand combat again. After shelling the command post with their tanks, the 15th Scottish brought up a flame thrower tank to flush the Germans out. This weapon, feared by all German troops

who encountered them, soon commanded the path to the battalion headquarters, thereby cutting off many soldiers from the rest of their units. Just after his commander walked by shouting "That tank has to go," Dürre leapt into action.

Having already destroyed a tank earlier in the engagement, Dürre grabbed a Panzerfaust, jumped over the inner wall of the compound he was sheltering behind, and charged the flame-thrower tank. Shooting wildly, the Panzerfaust failed to pierce the tank, and almost as soon as he had released the projectile, Dürre was knocked to the ground by a shot in the chest. Angry at his failure, Dürre ran back, scaled the wall, picked up another Panzerfaust, went back over the wall, and charged the tank again. Wanting to immobilize it, Dürre aimed at the tank's track. The second shot ripped the track off and Dürre, again covered by machine gun fire, crawled back to the wall and jumped back behind cover.

Even though the tank was effectively immobilized, it was not destroyed, and Dürre looked for something to finish the job. Over the objections of his comrades, he grabbed a magnetic charge and scaled the wall for a *third* time. Stumbling because of his wounds and his loss of blood, he made it to the tank, oblivious to the bullets flying past him. He attached the charge to the hull of the tank and was on his way back to cover when he glanced back and realized that the magnet did not work and had fallen off the tank. Almost without thinking, Dürre grabbed the charge from the ground and held it against the tank until it exploded. The tank was destroyed, but Dürre miraculously survived the blast. Crawling back to cover, he was spotted by his comrades and was pulled back behind the line. He died four hours

later, his last words being "Do not be sad - there is nothing sad." For his act of bravery, SS-Unterscharführer Emil Dürr was posthumously awarded the Knights Cross.

This remarkable story, as implausible as it may seem, is only one of many similar stories that have been recorded about the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*. However one chooses to term the action, whether as brave, heroic, courageous, or stupid, the fact remains that Dürr was just one example among many of what fanaticism can do to the actions of a soldier. Through the stubborn (or if one prefers, suicidal) resistance by these isolated and under-strength elements of the 12th SS, EPSOM was slowed enough that reinforcements were able to arrive and the elusive prize of Caen remained in German hands. As British historian Chester Wilmont put it, "the 12th SS Panzer Division . . . fought with a tenacity and ferocity seldom equalled and never excelled during the whole campaign."³ And perhaps a more sobering point is that, as mentioned before, the 12th SS was comprised entirely of teenage soldiers who had never fired a shot in anger until a few weeks earlier.

The actions of the 12th SS on the battlefields of Normandy shed light on an issue that has long been neglected by military historians. The combat motivation for regular soldiers has been a constant source of examination since the conclusion of the Second World War, but virtually no scholarship exists examining the combat motivation of fanatical soldiers. Granted, fanatical soldiers make up but a small proportion of the members of any army, and it is usually difficult to differentiate

³ Wilmont, p. 343.

between fanatical soldiers and elite soldiers, but their extreme and radical actions and example directly affects the actions and the combat motivation of the other soldiers of their unit.⁴ Fanatical soldiers are usually quite effective, but their actions tend to infuriate their enemies and disgust their allies. Fanatics represent a dangerous and unpredictable element in both high- and low-intensity conflict, and the first step in effectively combating against them is through attempting to understand their motivation. The group chosen for this attempt at developing a theory of combat motivation for fanatical soldiers is the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitler Youth". It is rare when an entire regiment, company, or even a platoon can be considered fanatical, but it is unheard of to have an entire division which can be classified under this category. But such is the case with the 12th SS. It was comprised of over 19,000 soldiers⁵ whose main unifying characteristic was a religious belief in Nazism and in their Führer.

Before progressing any further, a working definition of what is meant by the terms "combat motivation" and "fanatical soldiers" is necessary. For the purpose of this paper, the term "combat motivation" will follow the definition of Anthony Kellett, who wrote that combat motivation can be viewed as:

⁴ See Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz. "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (Summer 1948): 286-8.

⁵ H. Meyer gives the total strength of the 12th SS as 19,090 soldiers, compared to 14,964 for a typical British or Canadian armoured division and 10,668 for an average American armoured division. He also gives the figure of 18,347 for the total strength of a British/Canadian infantry division and the figure of 15,289 for an American infantry division. See H. Meyer, pp. 358-9.

the conscious or unconscious calculation by the combat soldier of the material and spiritual benefits and costs likely to be attached to various courses of action arising from his assigned combat tasks. Hence motivation comprises the influences that bear on a soldier's choice of, degree of commitment to, and persistence in effecting, a certain course of action.⁶

A "fanatical soldier" is defined as one who, by strictly adhering in a religious manner to a seemingly plausible world view and having received superior training and equipment, takes extreme risks on a consistent and long-term basis without apparent thought of risk to oneself and in violation of many of the conventional and accepted forms of warfare and conflict. The subtleties and complexities of these definitions will become readily apparent upon further examination of the factors that entice soldiers to engage in fanatical combat. Chapter One will briefly examine the origins of the 12th SS and their actions to illustrate why they can be considered a division of fanatical soldiers who became the "most hated enemy unit in Normandy" for the Canadians who fought against them.⁷ By studying an element of the Waffen-SS, it is not meant to signify that the Germans were the only combatants during the Second World War who contained fanatical soldiers in their order of battle. However, it is rare that one would find over nineteen thousand fanatics grouped together in one division. By studying the 12th SS, one can obtain a macro view, rather than an isolated snapshot of what motivates fanatical soldiers in combat situations.

Chapter Two of this thesis deals with the historiography of combat motivation

⁶ Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation: The Behaviour of Soldiers in Battle*. (Boston : Kluwer Nijhoff, 1982) p. 6.

⁷ Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), 76/166, folders on Wilhelm Mohnke.

literature. Much has been written about this subject, both in the field of history and in the social sciences, most notably in sociology and psychology. In this chapter, the major themes of the literature will be discussed, like the theory of small-group cohesiveness and the role of the unquantifiable elements (like political ideology) in combat motivation and behaviour. While these theories are important to this study, it will be shown that this literature is lacking with reference to the explanation of combat motivation among fanatics. Granted, most of the authors dealt mainly with troops who were comprised mainly of civilians, so therefore they were not concerned about the small proportion of troops who could be accurately labelled as fanatics. It is this gap in the historiography that this thesis will attempt to fill.

The thesis is divided into two different sections, both dealing with the theory of fanatical combat motivation. The first section, comprising Chapters Three and Four come under the heading of *Ideological Motivators*, while Chapters Five and Six come under the heading of *Concrete Motivators*. One must not assume that these two motivators are mutually exclusive. Indeed, if one existed without the strong presence of the other, the whole premise for fanaticism would disintegrate. Ideological motivators are necessary to help the soldier adhere to the desired world view, but the desire for action fades without being nurtured by strong tangible motivators.

The section on Ideological Motivators will deal with the impact that a tangible and radical world view would have on the combat motivation of a fanatical soldier. The importance that ideological indoctrination has in the communication of the world view is the subject of Chapter Three. Ideological indoctrination is key to

keeping the fanatic focused on his cause. The infiltration of a rival world view into the life of a fanatic could have the effect of destroying the supremacy of their world view in their mind. Also, exposure to direct criticism of their world view could serve to destroy the belief of the fanatic. Systematic and total indoctrination by the leaders of the ideological system ensures the continuation of their struggle in the lives of the fanatic. The content of the indoctrination will be examined in Chapter Four, which deals with two very important factors in the motivation of the fanatic. First, if a soldier, or even a potential soldier, can be converted to hold a religious belief in an ideological cause, and if the goals of this cause seem obtainable and imminent, the world view will become the driving force and purpose for the soldier's life. The aim of the world view must be presented in a way that obtaining the goals must be desirable enough to die for, with the hope that the death of the fanatic would in some way speed this process. Secondly, this chapter will deal with the example of the god-like leader on the thought processes of a fanatic. Although fanatics may sometimes be willing to lay down their life for an abstract cause, it is likely the case that they are more willing to act in this particular manner out of devotion to a deified leader. This deified leader is in essence the personification of the world view that the soldiers would fight to obtain (or maintain, as the case may be), and the presence of the leader, whether through stories, legends, or an actual physical presence, will give the soldier the pretence needed to maintain their fanatical actions. Even more encouraging to the fanatical troops would be direct personal appeals to them from the god-like leader. The possibility of an acknowledgement of a job well

done from the leader, or the threat of censure over failure, can be a powerful motivator for the fanatic.

The concrete motivators are as equally important as the ideological motivators, and they are more easily identifiable and are more readily quantifiable. However, it must be remembered that an effective combat soldier can exist with only the concrete motivators, while the fanatic cannot exist without either set. Chapter Five deals with the training and equipping of the fanatic and the importance that this would have on their combat motivation. The relationship between fanatical troops and superior equipment is essentially reciprocal; if the fanatic is provided with the best support available, they will be able to give a better performance in combat. As the successes in combat increases, both group cohesion and the belief in the superiority of their cause will increase as well. It is to the advantage of the leaders of the system to provide the fanatic with the best possible equipment and training, since a living fanatic is far more effective in combat than a regular soldier.

Chapter Six deals with the roles that experienced comrades play in the conduct of the fanatic. One sure way for a fanatic to keep their focus through tough combat situations is through the example and leadership of a fellow combatant who has had considerable experience in the ongoing struggle. This type of leader, aside from giving the fanatic an example to strive for, serves to maintain primary group cohesion with a strong focus on the ideological system for which they are fighting.

As with almost every other study conducted on the Hitler Youth, the Waffen-SS, or Nazi Germany in general, this is a cautionary tale. It is meant to show what

can happen when an entire society lives their lives along the lines of a morally corrupt *Weltanschauung*.⁸ One cannot help but shudder to think about what could have happened if Hitler had been able to raise a couple of Corps of soldiers as fanatical as the 12th SS. Understanding what happened is the first step in preventing it from ever happening again.

⁸ The most common translation for this term is "world view." The clearest study regarding what the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* consisted of can be found in Eberhard Jäckel's *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power*. trans. by Herbert Arnold. (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1995). The two main aspects of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* was racial superiority and the quest for *Lebensraum*, or "living space." This would explain why, during their war in Russia, instead of sending trainloads of supplies to the front, the Nazis were sending trainloads of Jews to their death.

CHAPTER 1

The Birth of a Fanatical Combat Division: The Origins, Actions, and Atrocities of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*

The impetus for the formation of the 12th SS came as a result of the disaster of the German 6th Army at Stalingrad. On 2 February 1943, the remains of this once mighty force capitulated to the Russians, leading to a crisis of disbelief among the German military and political leaders. They realized that in order to ultimately prevail in the war, "a turn-around could only be brought about by uncommon efforts."¹ This reorganization of German society and the German economy to support this new effort has been labelled by most as "Total War," and it was the as a result of this new program that the idea for the creation of the 12th SS was developed.

On 9 February 1943, SS-Gruppenführer Gottlob Berger, who was the Chief of the Waffen-SS Recruiting Office, met with Helmut Möckel, who was the Chief of Staff of the *Reichsjugendführung* (Reich Youth Leadership - RJF), to discuss the formation of a division of soldiers comprised exclusively of members of the Hitler Youth for the Waffen-SS. They decided that the new division should consist of 17-year-old boys who were born in 1926, and that the new soldiers should partake in

¹ Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12.SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*, 1994, p.1.

intensive pre-military training to prepare them for life in the SS.² The idea was presented on the next day to Hitler, with the assurance that this new division "would possess the quality of the super-elite 1st SS *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* Panzer-Grenadier Division;³ he also expressed [*Reichsjugendführer* (Reich Youth Leader) Artur] Axmann's wish that the division be designated in a manner that would clearly indicate its origin and solidarity with the HJ."⁴ Hitler, enthusiastic about the idea, authorized Axmann to begin recruitment, and indicated that the compulsory Labour Service would be waived for the new recruits.⁵

In his meticulously detailed history of the division, Obersturmbannführer Hubert Meyer, the Abt. Ia (Chief of Operations) of the 12th SS, recorded the plan that was agreed upon by the RJF and the SS leadership during a meeting on 16 February 1943 concerning the recruitment of the new division. He noted that the volunteers were to be recruited from those born during the first half of 1926, the minimum height for admission to the infantry was 170 cm, and the minimum height for the admission into communications, Panzer, and motorcycle units (or if the boy

² Craig W. H. Luther, *Blood and Honor*, 1987, pp. 24-5. Evidently the Army had the same idea, but it came after the idea had been presented by the SS, so it was soundly rebuffed by Himmler. See National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Microcopy T-175/108/2631233, Himmler to Generalmajor Schmutd, 22.3.1943.

³ The LAH was later reorganized into a Panzer Division.

⁴ Craig Luther, *Blood and Honor*, 1987, p. 26.

⁵ NARA, T-175/108/2631255, Himmler to Axmann, 13.2.1943.

had any other special training) was 168 cm.⁶ They needed to be physically fit, and they should, if possible, have possession of the Hitler Youth Merit Badge. These requirements would ensure the SS and the RJF that only the elite among the Hitler Youth would be able to join the new division. Recruitment began in mid-February, and a training schedule was enacted to make sure that the members of the 12th SS attended a *Wehrtüchtigungslager der Hitler-Jugend* (Hitler Youth Military Instruction Camps - WEL) before their induction into the division.⁷

The official directive for the establishment of the 12th SS was issued by Obergruppenführer Hans Jüttner, who was the head of the Waffen-SS Operational Headquarters (*SS-Führungshauptamt*), on 24 June 1943.⁸ In July and August of 1943 the first 10,000 recruits, fresh from their training at the WELs, arrived at the Beverloo training grounds in Belgium. Basic training commenced immediately, and with the gradual arrival of additional recruits the division was almost at full strength by the end of September.⁹

By far the biggest problem that the planners experienced while forming the division was the assigning of officers. To solve this problem, officers from the 1st SS

⁶ The height requirement for admission into the 1st SS was 180 cm. See H. Meyer, p. 1.

⁷ See Luther, pp. 29-31; H. Meyer, pp. 1-2; NARA, T-175/108/2631235-38, Aktenvermerk, 9.3.1943. The structure and training schedule of the WELs will be discussed in the following chapters..

⁸ See H. Meyer, Appendix 1 and 2, pp. 340-3, for these documents and their English translations. Originally, the 12th SS was a Panzer Grenadier Division, but like the 1st SS it was later reorganized and equipped as a Panzer Division.

⁹ Luther, p. 59.

LAH were transferred to take up the leadership roles within the 12th SS, bringing their aggressive and radical style of fighting to their new charges. The LAH lost many officers, NCOs, and other specialists to their new sister division, including the new commander of the division, SS-Brigadeführer Fritz Witt, and the eventual commander of the division, SS-Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer.¹⁰ The LAH and the 12th SS were later assigned together in the I SS Panzer Corps in Normandy.¹¹

The spring of 1944 saw the transfer of the 12th SS to France, occupying an area stretching from Elbeuf, near the Seine, all the way to Sées, southeast of Argentan, and then to Dreux, located west of Paris. They remained there until the Allied landings at Normandy, when they were advanced to the front on 7 June 1944. Their first engagement came against the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division on the afternoon of 7 June, where they effectively ground the Canadian advance to a halt. For the next three months they battled fiercely against the Allied forces, fighting in the battles for Norrey, Bretteville-l'Orgeilleuse, Putot, Brouay, Caen, Cristot, le Mesnil-Patry, Rots, St. Manvieu, Fontenay, and the Carpiquet airfield. They were also in no small part responsible for the blunting of the Allied attacks of EPSOM, GOODWOOD, TOTALIZE, and TRACTABLE, suffering decimating casualties but still remaining very stubborn and quite effective in the defence of their positions. The few soldiers of the division that were left at the end of the campaign in

¹⁰ Kurt Meyer was no relation to Hubert Meyer.

¹¹ Luther, pp. 56-7; H. Meyer, p. 3. See also Michael Reynolds, *Steel Inferno: 1st SS Panzer Corps in Normandy*. (New York : Dell, 1997).

Normandy were instrumental in keeping the gap at Falaise open, but after this battle the division was but a shadow of its former self.¹²

It is not the operational aspects of the 12th SS that are the concern of this thesis. The focus of this thesis is on the combat motivation of the soldiers, which in turn influenced their style of fighting. There is little debate that the soldiers of the 12th SS were excellent fighters - the debate comes on whether they should be classified as elite or fanatical. After the war many apologists have come to the defence of the 12th SS, claiming that they fought out of an inflated sense of professionalism, not because they had been systematically indoctrinated into fanatical soldiers. In his autobiography *Grenadiers*, Kurt Meyer wrote that his philosophy of dealing with young soldiers was to lead them on a loose rein with few words. The soldiers would not be "uniform dummies held together by a slavish zombie-like obedience," but rather "young individuals who believe in themselves, their own value, and their own ability."¹³ In the preface to this book Heinrich Eberbach, himself a Panzer general, wrote:

Such exceptional accomplishments would have been impossible if the soldiers [of the 12th SS] had been drilled into zombie-like obedience. The young

¹² There is considerable debate about how many casualties the division suffered in Normandy. Although some historians claimed that there were only about 500 soldiers left after the Normandy campaign, a more conservative estimate is that there were approximately 12,500 personnel left (about 40% losses). A safe estimate is that there were between 9,000 and 11,000 casualties, with most of the casualties coming from the infantry and the armoured battalions. The 12th SS also lost almost all of its armoured fighting vehicles, armoured personnel carriers, and artillery. See Luther, p. 236; H. Meyer, pp. 224-5.

¹³ Kurt Meyer, *Grenadiers*, 1994, p. 41.

soldiers were trained to act independently; thanks to the exemplary education and training that had itself grown out of the practical experience of war. Behind all this was the love for the Fatherland.¹⁴

Hubert Meyer closely mirrored the sentiments of Kurt Meyer and Eberbach. In explaining the soldier's will to fight he wrote:

Members of all other units of the Division met with similar occurrences [family losses due to Allied bombing raids] which put a heavy burden on the young soldiers. These matters were discussed in closer as well as wider circles of comrades. Each one had to prepare for the possibility of receiving such notification some day. However, the consequence was not despair or fanaticism of the men, rather a determination to apply oneself in the coming combat with all one's force in order to bring about a change of fate. It was reported repeatedly by the enemy later, and even still seen in that way by the former enemies after the war, that the young soldiers of the "Hitlerjugend" division had fought fanatically. This was attributed to the instructors' having trained the soldiers in hate and fanaticism. This was reported to have been most obvious by the fact that, even in hopeless situations, they did not surrender but fought on.

On the whole, this is certainly not correct. Without question, the terror bombing of the home land, losses in the families, the demand for unconditional surrender by Roosevelt and Churchill reinforces the existing determination to fight, but there was no hatred because of this for the soldier on the opposite side. The enemy, in the knowledge of his vast numerical superiority and immense quantities of material, fought differently from the German soldier who strove to overcome the shortages and disadvantages of his side through great personal skilled use of occasionally superior weapons and a *special courage*. The men were trained in that spirit. They did not receive directions on how and when they were supposed to surrender as prisoners but rather how to fight the best.¹⁵

If one took these quotes at face value, one would conclude that the spirit of the soldiers had less to do with adherence to the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* and more to do with a sense of loyalty to their families and to their country. Hubert

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵ H. Meyer, p. 10. Emphasis added.

Meyer even went as far as to suggest that the real reason that the 12th SS fought the way that they did was due to the Allied actions against the German people during the war. Upon closer examination, though, these assertions fall apart. The explanations that Meyer gave for the will of the troops, specifically Allied bombings of German cities and the unconditional surrender demand, did not effect the 12th SS in isolation. Every other German soldier was faced with the same dilemma, and so to follow Meyer's logic one would assume that every German soldier should have fought with the same degree of intensity as the 12th SS. But as history shows, this was not the case. For example, the 716th Infantry Division "had been obviously smashed" after the initial Allied landings at Normandy, essentially crumbling at the sight of the Allied invaders without putting up much of a fight, and not nearly as motivated as the boys of the 12th SS.¹⁶ Other research has shown that the demand for unconditional surrender had little to no effect on the combat motivation or behaviour of the German units in the field.¹⁷ Perhaps a more accurate indicator of the motivation for the 12th SS can be found in what Hubert Meyer termed "a special courage." This "special courage," although Meyer would vehemently disagree, came as a direct result of systematic indoctrination, the context and methods of which will

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 40. Of the six battalions present at the beginning of the day, only 80% of one battalion remained. There were "only handfuls of demoralized soldiers [left], sufficient three days later to furnish a single battle group of 292 officers and men." See John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy: From D-Day to the Liberation of Paris, June 6th - August 25th, 1944*. (New York : Viking, 1982) p. 141.

¹⁷ See Morris Janowitz, "Civic Consciousness and Military Performance." *The Political Education of Soldiers*. ed. by Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Wesbrook. (Beverly Hills : Sage, 1983) p. 61.

be described in detail later.

Kurt Meyer disputed the fact that the young soldiers were indoctrinated so that they would act, seemingly without emotion, in a "slavish zombie-like obedience." There is no disputing that Meyer is partially correct. The *Hitlerjugend* soldiers were not slavish or zombie-like, but they were definitely indoctrinated and fanatical. The difference lies in the fact that the *Hitlerjugend* soldiers, along with their officers, positively enjoyed the combat environment. The Hitler Youth were indoctrinated to believe that combat would somehow purify the German Volk, and that their willing sacrifice would be the key to this transformation. Once the word came that the Normandy invasion had begun, the soldiers were absolutely anxious to get in on the action. At the gathering points, while awaiting marching orders, soldiers and officers hugged each other, cheered, and threw their hats in the air. At some places there was a "mood of exuberance" which gripped the soldiers, a mood that could not be explained but was "just there and . . . felt." Some soldiers were scared that the initial German defensive forces would repel the Allied landings and therefore they would not be able to engage in combat.¹⁸ Kurt Meyer noted that before their first engagement with the enemy, the "magnificent young grenadiers look at us with laughter in their eyes. They have no fear. They are confident, they have faith in their strength and the will to fight."¹⁹

This positive spirit did not wane after the fighting began. Again, Kurt Meyer

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁹ K. Meyer, p. 117.

noted that he was "struck dumb by the positive attitude and spirit of the grenadiers. . . [The artillery and our attacks have been] the baptism of fire they expected. They know that hard days and weeks lay ahead of them. Their attitude deserves respect."²⁰

Almost two weeks after the initial Allied landings, he also observed that:

battle weary grenadiers wave to me yelling out jokes, their eyes shining. It mystifies me when these youngsters are getting the strength to live through such a storm of steel. They assure me again and again that they will defend the rubble to the last round and will hold their positions against all comers.²¹

The attitude of the 12th SS was also noted by the German General Staff Officers. Kurt Meyer noted that Field Marshall Karl von Rundstedt expressed "his admiration for the young grenadier's *unique* attitude."²² A note on 14 July in the War Diary of the German Supreme Command West stated that

the losses were emphasized, as was the outstanding attitude of the "Hitlerjugend" division. Its commander, Standartenführer Meyer, personally reported to the Feldmarschall. The discussion centred on relieving the worn-out division and the bringing forward of new ones. . . . Losses since the start of the invasion: 12.SS-Pz.Div."HJ": approximately 5,000 men.²³

One would have a difficult time in finding a division in any army during the Second World War who had an "outstanding attitude" after losing over a quarter of their strength after just over a month of combat, with most of the casualties coming from the combat elements of the division.

This positive spirit of the 12th SS in Normandy defies all logical explanation.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

²¹ Ibid., p. 135.

²² Ibid., p. 152. Emphasis added.

²³ H. Meyer, p. 152.

Although the 12th SS were somewhat effective fighters, they did not record one major offensive victory. Indeed, their "victories" only came when they slowed down the overwhelming Allied advance, failing in their ultimate goal of pushing the Allies back off of the continent.²⁴ The absence of any clear offensive victory in battle, coupled with the decimating losses suffered by the 12th SS, should have led to a complete breakdown of morale and motivation on the part of the soldiers.²⁵ Montgomery has written that "the best way to achieve a high morale in wartime is by success in battle,"²⁶ but this was not the case of the 12th SS. Indeed, it seemed that as the battles got more difficult, and as the casualty list grew and grew, the combat motivation of the 12th SS remained unchanged. If anything, the actions of the 12th SS became more radical and more fanatical.

There is no doubt that the actions of the 12th SS were viewed as unacceptable by their opponents. An investigation by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) Court of Inquiry determined that "the conduct of the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler-Jugend) presented a consistent pattern of brutality and ruthlessness." Significantly, this view was also shared by the 12th SS's German comrades. The SHAEF report stated that the 12th SS gained for itself "a most

²⁴ During the early hours of 7 July 1944, Kurt Meyer is quoted as saying about the Allies: "Little fish! We'll throw them back into the sea in the morning." See Reynolds, p. 75.

²⁵ See Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation: The Behaviour of Soldiers in Battle*. (Boston : Kluwer Nijhoff, 1982) pp. 258-63, 300.

²⁶ See Bernard Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K. G.* (London : Collins, 1958) pp. 83-4.

unsavory reputation, even among the rest of the German Armed Forces, [which] is evident from the fact that German prisoners taken, admit that it was called the 'Murder Division.'²⁷ A member of the Polish Army also recorded that the 12th SS had a general reputation among the German troops that he came in contact with as being reckless and as being murders.²⁸ Grenadier George Mertens, a member of the 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which was one of the two infantry regiments attached to the 12th SS, claimed that he did not know that they had a bad reputation, but he heard it in a prison camp. His reaction was "I could hardly believe it." In retrospect, though, he believed that the label was deserved, and he also admitted that he heard the term "Murder Division" in his company.²⁹

There is no doubt that the label of "Murder Division" was entirely justified. In his book *Conduct Unbecoming: The Story of the Murder of Canadian Prisoners of War in Normandy*, Howard Margolian documented the murder of 156 Canadian

²⁷ National Archives of Canada (NAC), Record Group 24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Court of Inquiry re Shooting of Allied Prisoners of War by 12 SS Panzer Division (Hitler-Jugend) in Normandy, France, 7-21 June, 1944*, pp. 1, 4.

²⁸ NAC, RG24, Vol 12838, 67/Falaise/1, Recorded Evidence of Pte. Bogdan-Andricj Ziolk, Polish Army in England, 25 July 1945.

²⁹ NAC, RG24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 6, Testimony of Gren. George Mertens, pp. 3-6. Another soldier that was in the same company as Mertens, Grenadier Bernhard Herholz, tried to convince his captors that there were *two* Hitler Youth Divisions. He claimed that he was not attached to the one that had the bad reputation, but to the other one. There was, of course, only one Hitler Youth Division. *Ibid.*, Exhibit 7, Testimony of Gren. Bernhard Herholz, pp. 4-5.

prisoners of war at the hands of the 12th SS.³⁰ In one instance, soldiers from the 12th SS men shot at a group of forty Canadian prisoners in a field off of the Caen-Fontenay road on 8 June 1944, killing thirty-five of them.³¹ In another case, after shooting eight unarmed Canadian prisoners in Authie on 7 June 1944, soldiers from the 12th SS pulled their bodies out into the middle of the road so that they could run over the corpses with tanks.³² What is more disturbing is the mannerisms that the soldiers of the 12th SS displayed when they were taking the Canadian prisoners. Major John Learmont of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders described the mannerisms of the troops as being "wildly excited and erratic."³³ He noted that they "shouted and screamed and behaved in an exceedingly disorderly manner. Their actions were such as might possibly be attributed to drugs."³⁴ Another member of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders who survived capture by the 12th SS stated:

They behaved like maniacs, firing their weapons indiscriminately and acted as if they had been doped, their faces were flushed and they danced and jumped

³⁰ There is a possibility that the actual number of Canadian prisoners killed was as high as 178. See Howard Margolian, *Conduct Unbecoming: The Story of the Murder of Canadian Prisoners of War in Normandy*. (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1998) p. 123.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-4.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 60. See also NAC, RG24, Vol 12842, #364, Statement by Major J. D. Learmont, North Nova Scotia Highlanders; NAC, RG24, Vol 12842, #351, Statement by Sgt C. B. Morris, North Nova Scotia Highlanders.

³³ Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings (revised) of the Trial by Canadian Military Court of S. S. Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer held at Aurich, Germany, 10-28 December, 1945*, Vol I, p. 132.

³⁴ NAC, RG24, Vol 12842, #366, Statement by Major J. D. Learmont, North Nova Scotia Highlanders.

around in a very amazing manner. I was with a group of about 10 men, some being of my platoon and others from "A" company and we were literally chased across a field, the Germans firing the sub machine guns at our heels and shouting and acting like Indians.³⁵

If their actions were not disturbing enough, it seemed that the soldiers who were a part of these atrocities were *proud* of their "accomplishments." For example, Untersturmführer Karl-Walter Becker, a member of the reconnaissance battalion attached to the 12th SS said:

I asked [Obersturmführer] Palm who had committed this act [of shooting POWs] and was told that it had been Oberscharführer Stun and men of the M/C DR section. Stun had been particularly eager to distinguish himself by committing this atrocity.³⁶

Other members of the Wehrmacht also noted this attitude of pride for the actions that they had done. A member of the 271 Infantry Division stated that he ran into members of the 12th SS who informed him that they had shot five or six Canadian POWs, and that the "Canadians had apparently asked the Nazis not to shoot, but as Preining's informant jocularly remarked 'a machine pistol fired by accident.'"³⁷

³⁵ NAC, RG24, Vol 12842, #353, Statement by Sgt C. B. Morris, North Nova Scotia Highlanders. Another soldier actually claimed that "a number of them were actually frothing at the mouth. See NAC, RG24, Vol 12842, #180, Statement by Pte. J. M. MacDonald, North Nova Scotia Highlanders.

³⁶ NAC, RG24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 29A, Voluntary Declaration by Untersturmführer Karl-Walter Becker, 2 Coy, Recce Bn, 12th SS, p. 3.

³⁷ NAC, RG24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 25, Report of the Interrogation of Schtz. Otto Preining, 271 Inf Div, p. 1. There have been recent attempts made by revisionist historians, most notably Karl H. Theile, to place the actions of the 12th SS in a different light. Theile blames the actions of the 12th SS as a by-product of actions of Canadian soldiers on 25 June 1944 at Fontenay, although no specific examples of Canadian atrocities were given. Theile also claimed that many of the alleged occurrences were "twisted, exaggerated or simply made-up

The 12th SS did not receive their reputation for being fanatical solely because of their actions against their prisoners. The 12th SS gained the label of fanatical also as a result of their actions during the battle. The story of Emil Dürr is but a single scene in what would be a nightmare for their Allied opponents. The soldiers of the 12th SS were informed by their officers that they were "not to give themselves up and must commit suicide if there is no other choice left."³⁸ They internalized this order, along with the years of ideological indoctrination that they were subject to, and transferred these beliefs onto the battlefield. Kurt Meyer once described a fanatic that he had observed in Russia in the following way:

Bitter fighting is going on, especially on the right of the road. Here a young, spirited commissar is spurring his unit on again and again. It is not only his yelling which fires his men, but also his bold example which keeps them coming on. I shall never forget the last picture of this man pulled up to his

tales." This, of course, goes against every shred of evidence that can be uncovered. Theile's error is even more glaring when it becomes evident that most of the atrocities of the 12th SS occurred in the first two weeks of the invasion, well before the date given for the alleged Canadian atrocities. See Karl H. Theile, *Beyond "Monsters" and "Clowns" - The Combat SS: De-Mythologizing Five Decades of German Elite Formations*. (Lanham, Maryland : University Press of America, 1997) pp. 402-6.

³⁸ This order was one of the so-called secret orders given by the 12th SS officers to their troops weeks before the invasion began. The entire order reads: "Attitude at the front: The SS troops shall take no prisoners. Prisoners are to be executed after having been interrogated. The SS soldiers shall not give themselves up and must commit suicide if there is no other choice left. The officers have stated that the British do not take prisoners as far as SS soldiers are concerned." The authenticity of these orders were disputed during the trial of Kurt Meyer for the murders of Canadian POWs, but there is considerable evidence that orders similar to these were given to the troops. For a complete list of the secret orders, see Appendix 3. See DHH, 159.95.023 (D7), Vol I, pp. 42-3, 71, 83, 297; Vol II, p. 556; NAC, RG24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 6, Testimony of Gren. George Mertens, p. 8; NAC, RG2, 18 Central Registry Files, Vol 209, W-41 (v. 1), Petition by Kurt Meyer, 8 December 1950, pp. 5-6.

full height, throwing his last grenades at Mahl's section. Even so he solemnly drops the last one to the ground in front of him and covers it with his body. A quick lift and a shudder of the body, a fall of the shattered corpse, that is the end of a fanatic.³⁹

This description is surprisingly similar to the actions of the boys who fought under his command. During the battles around Falaise, Kurt Meyer noted that they "all know that the battle can only end with death or capture, but nobody is ready to stop fighting."⁴⁰ Many of the soldiers would not accept capture as an alternative during the fighting, and the lengths that they took this desire was incredible. For instance, Untersturmführer Reinhold Fuss and a few members of his platoon found themselves trapped in a church cemetery by the Canadians. They found a bush-covered hollow and "prepared for defence to the last." However, the Canadians just left them alone, probably thinking that they would come out and surrender once their food had run out, since nobody wanted to risk their lives trying to capture a few fanatical teenagers who would, in all likelihood, not surrender without a fight. This proved to be a smart move on the part of the Canadians, because these soldiers had no intentions of surrendering. The soldiers took turns sleeping and working at digging a hole through a stone wall with a bayonet. After six days, all without food and water, they had dug a hole big enough to escape, which they did during the night.⁴¹

Where escape was not an option for the 12th SS soldiers, death was usually the end result. For example, SS-Mann Alfred Matthei, who was a member of the

³⁹ K. Meyer, p. 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

⁴¹ See H. Meyer, p. 57.

2nd Engineer Training Battalion, noted that when he was taken prisoner by the Canadians, most of his comrades "declared they would fight to the last man."⁴² The War Diary of 1st Battalion of The Canadian Scottish Regiment recorded an incident during the fighting for Pt. 168 on 15 August 1944 when one young grenadier committed suicide instead of being captured.⁴³ Perhaps the most disturbing example of this type of attitude by the 12th SS occurred during the final battles around Falaise. Hubert Meyer recorded an instance when a group of fifty to sixty Grenadiers were forced behind the walls of a school. This German stronghold had to be eliminated by the Canadians, since it severely hampered the advance of the Allied forces. A systematic attack on the pocket of resistance began after weaker attempts had failed. Two Grenadiers managed to leave this stronghold to report to the divisional staff. None of the 12th SS soldiers wanted to leave their comrades to deliver the report, even though they all knew that remaining in their position probably meant death or capture, so the group had to draw lots to see who had to leave their comrades and probably spare their life. Eventually, the stronghold was eliminated, and there were only four prisoners left to be taken by the Canadians. Meyer called it "an outstanding example of the gallantry and willingness to sacrifice themselves."⁴⁴ It is more properly seen as the death of teenagers who were

⁴² NAC, RG24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 19, Declaration on Oath by SS-Mann Alfred Matthei, 2. Engineer Training Battalion, p.3.

⁴³ NAC, RG24, Vol 15038, War Diary, 1st Battalion The Canadian Scottish Regiment, Appendix 11.

⁴⁴ H. Meyer, p. 191.

systematically moulded into fanatical fighters by years of ideological indoctrination by the Nazi leadership.

The world view to which these fanatics adhered was thoroughly imbedded with the glorification of war, and this led to puzzling, radical, and abominable behaviour, like the actions of Dürer and the actions of his comrades who ground the bodies of their Canadian prisoners under the tracks of their armoured vehicles. These, though, are not the only examples of collective deviant behaviour by the members of the 12th SS. For example, one soldier was very upset because his wound came from a piece of falling brick. Untersturmführer Gerhard Amler recalled that Hauptsturmführer Heydrich "cried on my shoulder . . . Not even a proper wound! How would it look, him standing there and having to admit that a chunk of brick had fallen on his head." However, later Heydrich could be happy because his arm was in a plaster cast, thereby being "properly wounded and would not have to be ashamed any longer."⁴⁵ For the soldiers of the 12th SS, there was a certain kind of romance to be found in the battlefield. The interrogators of Kurt Meyer noted:

To [Meyer] the battle of Caen-Falaise was magnificent in the best Wagnerian tradition. As he described his actions and those of his men, it seemed as though he liked to consider himself as Siegfried leading his warriors to their death. When he described how he came out of the Falaise Gap with sixty men, it is likely that the familiar strains of the "Twilight of the Gods" were echoing in his ears.⁴⁶

But these romantic images could not explain the positively brutal fighting espoused

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 135-6.

⁴⁶ NAC, RG24, Vol 12840, 67/Kurt Meyer/(5), Evidence File, Special Interrogation Report, p. 2.

by the members of the 12th SS. One report stated:

Later in the evening, the outstanding 46th Royal Marine Commando attacked the hand-picked boys of the *Hitlerjugend*. "They fought like lions on both sides. The dead were lying body to body," wrote the historians of the Chaudières [Regiment] who reached the village the next morning. "We searched every house, every yard, to prevent ambushes. That is the confirmation of how brutal the fighting of last night must have been. The commandos were lying dead in rows next to the dead SS-men. Hand grenades were scattered everywhere in the streets and front doors of the houses. At one spot we saw a commando and an SS-man who died virtually arm-in-arm, one killing the other. At another spot we found a German and a Canadian tank, having crushed each other. They were still smoking and from each of the smoke-blackened turrets hung the dead bodies of the machine gunners. Over there was a squad which had run toward a small wall to seek cover. They had been shot down before they reached it. And then, at the church, as the vanguard of "C" Company and the Carettes swung around the corner, they encountered three Germans. Only three. But one of them immediately drew his pistol and hit one of our men. A machine gunner killed two of the three SS-men, but the survivor did not surrender. He tricked us and disappeared. Now you will understand what fanatics we were fighting.⁴⁷

Kurt Meyer even stated that he knew of at least *three* separate cases between 9 June 1944 and 7 July 1944 when one of his men had tied explosives to his body and then jumped onto an Allied tank to destroy it.⁴⁸ No man, let alone a teenage boy, will instinctively do such a thing, unless he has been instructed and indoctrinated into this fanatical style of fighting.

These actions led this division to be positively hated by their Canadian opponents,⁴⁹ but revered by their SS comrades. Kurt Meyer remained a committed

⁴⁷ Quoted in H. Meyer, pp. 70-1.

⁴⁸ NAC, RG24, Vol 12840, 67/Kurt Meyer/(5), Evidence File, Special Interrogation Report, p. 4.

⁴⁹ The hate felt by the Canadians towards the 12th SS ran so deep that some wanted to kill them once they had been taken prisoners, perhaps as retribution. See DHH, file BIOG / Mackenzie, Lorne A.

Nazi and idolized Hitler long after the war had ended, a fact that he did not keep secret.⁵⁰ Indeed, other members of the 12th SS indicated that they would rejoin the SS if they had the opportunity.⁵¹ Only fanatical fighters, thoroughly indoctrinated by their leaders to act in a socially deviant way, would remain as non-repentant as these soldiers of the 12th SS. The inescapable conclusion is that if they were given the chance, these boys would have done it all over again. In order to prevent this from happening again, and on an even larger scale, the combat motivation of fanatics must be understood. Before an examination of these factors begins, though, an examination of the historiography of combat motivation is essential to place this study into its proper context.

⁵⁰See Reynolds, p. 351.

⁵¹ See NAC, RG24, Vol 12837, #432. This document is a report written on 8 January 1946 regarding POWs of the 12th SS who could be released.

CHAPTER 2

Scholars, Primary Groups, and Ideology: The Search for an Explanation of Combat Motivation

The distinguished military historian John Keegan reflected on the issue of combat motivation in 1995, observing:

"A rational army would run away." . . . I am confident we all endorse the point that the unnamed author is making, which is that, while war may be rational, combat is not. It defies one of the strongest of all human instincts, that of self-preservation. Animals may be reactively impelled to combat when violation of distance mobilizes their fight rather than flight reflexes; but animals do not reason. Man is also subject to the fight/flight reflex: but in him reason moderates its operation. Why?¹

Keegan has not been the only one to question this seemingly contradictory action taken by soldiers. Since the conclusion of the Second World War there has been an abundance of literature on the issue of combat motivation, much of it conflicting. Perhaps that is not surprising. As Keegan later pointed out, "outside of the hard sciences, there are no universally valid theories of exact explicative value" to explain what motivates men to fight on the battlefield.² Although this truth seems self-

¹ John Keegan, "Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation." *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939-1945*. ed. by Paul Addison and Angus Calder. (London : Pimlico, 1997), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

evident, many socialists, psychologists, and historians have attempted to explain the *main* motivator for soldiers to engage in combat, with the usual statement to the effect of: "We know that there are many reasons and factors in combat motivation, but this factor is the most important one." Of the many who have written on the subject, only Keegan and Anthony Kellett have seriously attempted to formulate an all-encompassing theory of combat motivation. In order to understand why fanatics, and specifically the 12th SS, fought with such intense motivation, a holistic theory in the manner of Kellett and Keegan must be developed. This approach does not and will not invalidate the other theories. Rather, it will place these single-issue theories in a more proper perspective.

The first major single-issue theory concerning combat motivation came about with the publication of an article by Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz entitled "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II."³ The authors, both attached to the American Army during the war, asked German POWs why they stayed together on the battlefield to fight even when the odds against them were hopeless. Their conclusion was that the Wehrmacht maintained their cohesion due to the influence of *primary groups*. The idea of primary groups was not new. Primary group theory was first developed by American sociologist Charles H. Cooley in his book entitled *Social Organizations*, published in 1909. Perhaps the best explanation of what a primary group is can be found in the work of sociologist Michael S.

³ Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration," 1948, pp. 280-315.

Olmsted. He defined the function of primary groups in his book *The Small Group*, where he stated:

In the primary group, members have warm, intimate, and "personal" ties with one another; their solidarity is unselfconscious, a matter of sentiment rather than calculation. Such groups are usually of the small, face-to-face sort, spontaneous in their interpersonal behaviour and devoted, though not necessarily explicitly, to mutual or common ends.⁴

Shils and Janowitz were the first to take the concept of primary groups and apply it in 1948 to the realm of the military.

There were four basic hypothesis that Shils and Janowitz developed in their important study. First, they concluded that a soldier's ability to resist was a function of the capacity of their immediate primary group (either their squad or section) to avoid social disintegration. Second, the capacity of the primary group to resist disintegration was dependant upon the acceptance of political, ideological, and cultural symbols (called secondary symbols), only to the extent that the secondary symbols became directly associated with primary gratifications. Third, once disruption of primary group life occurred there was very little "last-ditch" resistance among the German soldiers. Last, as long as the primary group structure of the component units of the Wehrmacht persisted, most attempts by the Allies to cause disaffection by the invalidation of secondary and political symbols through propaganda were mainly unsuccessful.⁵

⁴ Michael S. Olmsted and A. Paul Hare. *The Small Group*. 2nd ed. (New York : Random House, 1978), p. 7.

⁵ Shils and Janowitz, p. 281.

To Shils and Janowitz, the primary group was the major source of social and psychological sustenance for any individual. While in the army, the soldier was cut off from their civilian primary groups (like family and friends), and hence became more dependant on his military primary group.⁶ The major causes of small-group cohesion were identified as experience and "hard core" Nazis. These "hard core" Nazis were highly motivated to fight, and their example rubbed off on the other soldiers in their group, thereby maintaining cohesion, while the various battle experiences of the group served to strengthen the primary group ties. Other sources of cohesion were the relationship between the soldier and the officer, as well as the perceived sense of honour that each soldier felt about their duty to fight.⁷ Disintegration occurred when the soldiers were isolated from their primary groups, or when the soldier perceived a stronger bond to their civilian primary group. Concerns about one's personal survival also weakened the cohesion of the primary group.⁸

Shils and Janowitz concluded that ideology was not a factor in maintaining cohesion in the Wehrmacht. They based this conclusion on the fact that Allied propaganda did little to dissuade the German soldier from fighting.⁹ They also concluded that the average soldier seemed to ignore secondary symbols (like Nazi

⁶ Ibid., pp. 284-5.

⁷ Ibid., pp 286-8, 293-4, 297.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 288-92.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 308-9, 311-14.

party slogans and symbols) as motivation, even though many of the soldiers remained fiercely loyal to Hitler, even in capture.¹⁰ Since Allied propaganda was centred around attacking the secondary symbols, and since this propaganda effort seem to have little effect on the German soldier, Shils and Janowitz concluded that the average soldier must have been apolitical. If the soldier was not motivated to fight because of political or ideological reasons, they must have fought out of loyalty or devotion to their primary group.

Another advocate of the primary group theory that emerged after the war was S. L. A. Marshall. In his classic study *Men Against Fire*, published in 1947, Marshall tackled the issues of morale and motivation by linking them with factors of primary groups and firepower. He wrote that it was "one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapons is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade."¹¹ He also believed that once the group perceives that the weapons of their enemies are able to "deal greater death or fear of death" than they can respond with, morale, motivation, and consequently the small group will disintegrate.¹²

Psychologist F. M. Richardson also tried to explain combat motivation in terms of morale and the primary group. He believed that the soldier's "natural instincts of self-preservation, which would counsel them when in real danger to run

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 304-5.

¹¹ S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War*. 1968 ed. (New York : William Morrow, 1947), p. 42.

¹² Ibid., p. 67.

away, are balanced by acquired herd instincts compelling them to face up to and overcome danger and fear for the sake of the group."¹³ These feelings of attachment to the group, and consequently the soldier's motivation to fight, can be divided into three parts. The first part was the soldier's personal or individual morale. Individual morale consists of physical factors, like rest, food, and supplies, and mental factors, like an understanding of the cause for which they are fighting, self-confidence in their fighting abilities, religious and moral principles, and the communicated morale of the officers and NCOs attached to their unit. The second element of a soldier's motivation, and the most important, is group morale. This morale is sustained by factors like confidence in and respect for comrades, the perceived feeling of being a member in a contented group with competent leaders, and a determination not to let each other down by failing in combat. Finally, the third element in a soldier's motivation is unit morale, which is sustained by an *esprit de corps* and regimental pride. As long as these factors are present, Richardson maintained that the small group will remain cohesive and the unit would remain motivated to fight.¹⁴

Perhaps the most persuasive argument in favour of the primary group theory comes from the writings of the soldiers themselves. In his book *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*, Samuel Hynes examined the memoirs of enlisted soldiers who fought in the two World Wars and in Vietnam in order to achieve some

¹³ F. M. Richardson, *Fighting Spirit: A Study of Psychological Factors in War*. (London : Leo Cooper, 1978), p. 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-8, 170-1.

sort of synthesis about the average soldier's experience in war. Hynes wrote that a soldier was attached "not to an army or a nation or a cause, but to a battalion, a company, a platoon. For a man adrift in alien space, his unit becomes the focus of his love and loyalty, like a family, and his feelings for it may be as strong, as complex, as family feelings are." A soldier was not motivated to fight for any other reason than not to let his buddies down.¹⁵ Hynes' conclusions closely mirrored the findings of Lieutenant Colonel John W. Appel and Captain Gilbert W. Beebe, two U.S. Army officers who prepared a report in 1944 outlining methods for combating the high rates of neuropsychiatric casualties among their forces. They found that the average soldier "owed his primary allegiance to his immediate friends, not his country. It was love of his comrades, not hatred of the enemy, that drove the soldier on."¹⁶

Adherents to the primary group theory are adamant that ideology plays little to no role in the motivation of a soldier. Wilfred von Bredow wrote that political ideology "has but an incidental importance in the whole of fighting motivation,"¹⁷ and others have been quick to back him up. Perhaps the most vocal opponent of the use of ideology in motivation has been Morris Janowitz. He has written that the professional (volunteer) soldier always fights because of military honour, combined

¹⁵ Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. (New York : Penguin, 1997) p. 10.

¹⁶ Quoted in Paul Wanke, "American Military Psychiatry and Its Role among Ground Forces in World War II." *The Journal of Military History* 63 (January 1999): 133-4.

¹⁷ Wilfred von Bredow, "The West-German *Bundeswehr* as an Institution for Political Education." *On Military Ideology*. ed by Morris Janowitz and Jacques van Doorn. (Rotterdam : Rotterdam University Press, 1971), p. 114.

with and dependant upon public prestige and popular recognition. He also claims that although high ranking officers and elite forces may be more aware of politics than other soldiers, these officers and elites do not fight because of an explicit political ideology.¹⁸

Janowitz's stance in favour of the primary group theory may seem a bit contradictory because of the importance that he and Shils placed on the "hard core" Nazi in maintaining primary group cohesion. If a fanatical Nazi was the key to maintaining the stability of the small group, one could possibly conclude that it was ideology, not the inherent desire to be in a social group, that motivated a soldier to perform his duties. This logic would seem to invalidate Shils and Janowitz's whole theory. Janowitz counters by examining the root of Nazi "hard core" fanaticism. He stated that "cohesive primary groups do not just occur but are fashioned and developed by complex military institutions." Hence, "it was not Nazi ideology which was at the root of German fanatical resistance, but rather the military and organizational practices which the Nazis permitted, encouraged, and required."¹⁹ The only ideology that these soldiers would have accepted would be "that of front *gemeinschaft* - namely that of 'community solidarity' which placed emphasis on

¹⁸ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*. (New York : Free Press, 1960), pp. 215, 225.

¹⁹ Morris Janowitz, with Roger W. Little, *Sociology and the Military Establishment*. 3rd ed. (London : Sage, 1974), pp. 28, 94.

'toughness, manly comradeliness, and group solidarity,' rather than political views."²⁰

Throughout his writings Janowitz has continued to assert the central importance of primary group solidarity, even in totalitarian armies, as the crucial source of combat motivation.²¹

However, the lack of a role that ideology played in these theories of combat motivation has troubled some scholars. Although many acknowledged the importance of the primary group, there was a feeling that Janowitz and his colleagues had over-emphasized the importance that the primary group played in combat motivation. The first challenge to the prevailing view of the primary group came in the mid-1970s with the writings of Charles C. Moskos Jr. He believed that primary groups only functioned within the realm of the prevailing value system of the army. Military cohesion will change when societal values change, so the latent ideology of the army and the society from which it came must be taken into account when

²⁰ Morris Janowitz, "Civic Consciousness and Military Performance." *The Political Education of Soldiers*. ed. by Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Wesbrook. (Beverly Hills : Sage, 1983), p. 64.

²¹ Other important works that further examined the relationship between combat motivation and primary groups, and whose conclusions closely mirrored the conclusions outlined above, are Samuel A. Stouffer, et. al., *The American Soldier: Combat and Aftermath*. Vol. II. (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1949) (especially Chapter 3, entitled "Combat Motivations Among Ground Troops"); Edward A. Shils, "Primary Groups in the American Army." *Continuities in Social Research: Studies in the Scope and Method of "The American Soldier."* ed. by Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld. (Glencoe, IL : Free Press, 1950) pp. 16-39; and Roger W. Little, "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance." *The New Military: Changing Patterns of Organization*. ed. by Morris Janowitz. (New York : Russell Sage, 1964) pp. 195-224.

explaining the combat motivation and performance of soldiers.²² Since the latent ideology in American society during the Vietnam war was individualism, it was wrong to view the fundamental cause for combat motivation among American soldiers in terms of primary groups. For the American soldier, personal safety concerns overrode the interests of the group, therefore undermining the primary group theory. The combat cycle of a one year tour of duty also had adverse consequences on primary group cohesion. Therefore, individualism was the key, and when ties to a group were made, it was as a derivative of the individual motivations of each soldier.²³ For Moskos, primary group ties are best seen "as a kind of rudimentary social contract arising from immediate life-and-death exigencies," usually entered into because of the aspect of personal self-interest.²⁴ Simply stated, Moskos' position was that the American soldier's willingness to fight came from latent ideological factors of individualism which in turn manifested itself in association with primary groups *only during combat*.

William Henderson also tried to reconcile the positions of ideology and primary groups as sources of combat motivation in his study of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Vietnam. According to Henderson, the Vietcong leadership realized that "primary group behaviour, whether deviant or desirable from

²² Charles C. Moskos Jr., "The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam." *Journal of Social Issues* 31.4 (1975), p. 27.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31, 37.

²⁴ Charles C. Moskos Jr., "The Military." *Annual Review of Sociology* 2 (1976), p. 62.

the organization's point of view, is the result of norms formed by primary group interaction."²⁵ Because of this, the Communist party tried to regulate the small groups in the army in order to control and subordinate all military personnel and activities towards its ends. They did this by creating small three man military cells, called *to tam tam*. By creating and regulating the formation of the *to tam tam*, instead of letting primary groups develop on an autonomous basis, the PLA leadership believed that they would be able to control the actions of the group, and thereby maintain military cohesion.²⁶

The basis for the *to tam tam* was ideology. According to the official mission for the group, the three man cell was "responsible for improving its members so that they have a solid political and ideological background, good tactical and technical skills, and a good working ability. These members are grouped in a small firm 'collective,' so that in combat they can always help one another."²⁷ According to Henderson, Vietnamese culture stressed group dynamics over individualism, so cultural norms helped to maintain the cohesion of the primary group.²⁸ However, the PLA also assigned adherents of the Communist party line to indoctrinate the members of the group with their ideology. Henderson stressed that these efforts by

²⁵ William Darryl Henderson, *Why the Vietcong Fought: A Study of Motivation and Control in a Modern Army in Combat*. (Westport, CN : Greenwood, 1979) pp. 10-1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-40.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 54-5.

the cadre leaders were one of the major reasons that the *to tam tam* were successful. As long as the PLA soldier was exposed to the party organization and ideology, and as long as his cadre leader was effective, and since the primary group shared strong homogenous cultural values, a high level of combat motivation was the result. Cohesion was affected mainly by the failure of the cadre leader to deal effectively with ideological issues.²⁹ Essentially Henderson asserted that the primary group was responsible for the high combat motivation of the average PLA soldier, but the reason that the soldiers were organized in groups was because of ideology and ideological indoctrination.

Further examination of the relationship between primary groups and combat motivation revealed the relative unimportance that the primary group played in pre-combat motivation, especially with elite soldiers. In 1981 William C. Cockerham and Lawrence E. Cohen examined the combat motivation of the elite U.S. Army paratroopers concerning their desire to volunteer in five hypothetical combat situations with the purpose of determining "the extent to which certain individual, organizational, disciplinary, patriotic, and group orientated characteristics" relate to the combat motivation of these soldiers.³⁰ They quantified the responses, and they found that there were many factors that aided in formulating combat motivation for these elite soldiers. The most important was the belief that the soldier's role in

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 117, 119-20.

³⁰ William C. Cockerham and Lawrence E. Cohen. "Volunteering for Foreign Combat Missions: An Attitudinal Study of U.S. Army Paratroopers." *Pacific Sociological Review* 24.3 (1981), p. 329.

combat was to finish the mission. This professionalism was closely followed by the attitude that the individual soldier had towards the army. Cockerham and Cohen found that discipline was a "strong variable influencing the predispositions of paratroopers to volunteer" for combat. The next factor that influenced combat motivation was the soldier's perception of their own combat readiness. They found that soldiers who displayed confidence in their training were much more willing to volunteer. Other factors that influenced combat motivation were race, rank (the higher the rank, the greater the motivation), age (younger soldiers were more eager to volunteer), and patriotic appeal. There was the admission by the authors of the importance of primary groups in the effectiveness of the soldiers, but, like Moskos, Cockerham and Cohen maintained that the primary group bonds were a result of combat, and therefore not a direct cause of combat motivation.³¹

Another study that reached the same conclusions as Moskos, Cockerham, and Cohen was Joseph Frank's study of American Civil War soldiers. Frank found that feelings of patriotism and other sources of latent ideology were powerful sources of motivation for the soldiers during the process of enlistment and the period before their first battles.³² However, once the battles progressed, ideology as a source of motivation dwindled. The most important reason for staying and fighting after the initial battle for the soldier was a continuing and ever increasing sense of duty.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 348-51.

³² Joseph Allen Frank, "Profile of a Citizen Army: Shiloh's Soldiers." *Armed Forces and Society* 18.1 (1991), pp. 97, 99.

Patriotic rhetoric took a back seat to the feelings of honour and duty towards themselves and their unit (usually their regiment).³³ For Frank, ideology was the main motivator, and the primary group bonds resulted from combat, conclusions that Moskos, Cockerham, and Cohen reached. However, Frank differentiated from them in one main point. Where Moskos, Cockerham, Cohen, and even Henderson would argue that ideology, whether latent or blatant, was a major motivator *during* combat, Frank maintained that ideology was forgotten once the battle began.

Frank's position had been articulated earlier by Elliot Chodoff in his important study entitled "Ideology and Primary Groups."³⁴ According to Chodoff, combat effectiveness is highly dependant upon the physical cohesion of the unit. The rise of the primary group theory as a source of combat motivation came as a result of the satisfactory performance of combat units where ideological beliefs seemed weak or non-existent. For Chodoff, though, this did not explain how an army could maintain intact primary groups and still disintegrate under minimal external military stress, like the U.S. Army in Vietnam. The generally adequate combat performance of the U.S. in Vietnam, along with the fact that the disintegration of the military occurred in non-combat situations (where soldiers refused to enter combat), implied that although strong primary group ties in units are central factors in in-combat motivation, they cannot foster or maintain pre-combat motivation. Chodoff

³³ Ibid., pp. 99, 105-6.

³⁴ Elliot P. Chodoff, "Ideology and Primary Groups." *Armed Forces and Society* 9.4 (1983): 569-593.

maintained that ideology played the significant role in pre-combat motivation, while small group cohesion played the significant role in motivation during actual combat situations.³⁵

For Chodoff, "the ideologically motivated soldier would be one who is motivated to fight by a complex belief system that defines the enemy, the goals of the conflict, and (to a certain degree) its nature." Coercion can get soldiers into battle, but if death or severe punishment is the only motivation for combat, the unit will disintegrate almost immediately upon the removal of the coercive force. Chodoff therefore believed that "[i]deology, as a source of motivation, remains a constant in the face of changing events and contingencies. . . . Since the enemy is defined in ideological terms, the ideologically motivated soldier views the conflict in an extreme manner. The conflict tends to be of an absolute nature and there are few if any mitigating factors (such as human decency)." An ideologically motivated soldier will more willingly enter a battle in a greater diversity of circumstances, including when the odds are stacked against them. The combined factors of ideology, patriotism, and commitment to one's social or political system will motivate a soldier to enter battle when coercion is absent, but these factors will exert little to no influence on the performance of the soldier.³⁶ Combat performance is dependant on the strength of the primary group once the battle has begun. If the primary group is weak, no matter how highly motivated the soldiers might be, the group will ultimately be

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 573, 576-7.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 578-82.

unsuccessful.

Within the last two decades, though, many questions have arisen about the feasibility of continuing to use the primary group argument concerning combat motivation. According to proponents of the primary group theory, any threat to the structure of the group should lead to disintegration of the unit. This position is backed up by studies like the one done by Arnold Rose, who clearly showed a definite link between high rates of casualties and desertion by troops.³⁷ However, the primary group theory does not adequately explain how a unit that has suffered crippling casualties still can maintain some element of cohesion and effectiveness. Also, if the primary group theory was correct, there would be difficulty in explaining the obvious differences in morale and combat motivation between the various units of the same armed forces. According to Samuel Watson, primary group loyalty is incredibly important, "but it would be dogmatic and ahistorical to assume that they were (or are) always dominant, or that the 'primary' group has always corresponded solely to a soldier's immediate comrades."³⁸

The current trend in the literature concerning combat motivation has almost exclusively dealt with the importance of ideology as the main motivator. The theoretical basis for this point of view was laid down by Stephen D. Wesbrook in his article entitled "Sociopolitical Training in the Military: A Framework for Analysis."

³⁷ Rose, Arnold M. "The Social Psychology of Desertion from Combat." *American Sociological Review* 16 (1951), pp. 620, 622.

³⁸ Samuel J. Watson, "Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies." *The Journal of Military History* 58 (January 1994), p. 31.

According to Wesbrook, sociopolitical training is a pedagogic phenomenon. Quite often indoctrination dominates training, usually with the goal of influencing or controlling attitudes, opinions, and behaviour. The reasons for indoctrinating the military would be for social control, to use the military as a vehicle for improving national integration, and to improve combat motivation and effectiveness. Military service tends to produce national integration, and it can aid in integrating both the gap between the elite and the masses (called vertical integration) and between different ethnic, cultural, and regional differences (horizontal integration).³⁹

According to Wesbrook, there are two preconditions necessary if sociopolitical training is to be used in an integration role. First of all, the nation must have an articulated ideology that enjoys substantial, if not majority, support. Secondly, the nation must have a level of institutionalization, which is defined as the process by which social and political organizations acquire value and stability. These preconditions are inherently contradictory, so sociopolitical training can only occur when "unusual circumstances" produce the conditions necessary for this type of training to be used in the integration role.⁴⁰

Wesbrook maintains that successful military organizations in the 20th century have been normative organizations. Compliance with military demands has depended on the moral involvement of soldiers with a larger collectivity and the capability of

³⁹ Stephen D. Wesbrook, "Sociopolitical Training in the Military: A Framework for Analysis." *The Political Education of Soldiers*. ed. by Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Wesbrook. (Beverly Hills : Sage, 1983) pp. 16-7, 24-5.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

leaders to apply normative power on this collective. The soldier's bonds with their nation must depend on their sense of national identity, their belief that the sociopolitical system is meeting the basic needs of most members of society, and their acceptance of the national ideology. Consequentially, sociopolitical training will have a central role in combat motivation and effectiveness in a normative structure.⁴¹

Wesbrook's implication in this article is clearly that if an army undergoes sociopolitical training, this indoctrinated army will not collapse, either physically or psychologically, under the pressure of a battle. The only thing that would cause the disintegration of the army would be technical inferiority.⁴² The concept of primary groups will mean nothing to the soldier in this type of system, since ideology, and not group affinity, is the key to survival and cohesion.

A significant group of literature emerged detailing the links between ideology and the combat motivation of the Wehrmacht in the Second World War. It is both ironic and indicative of the difficulty inherent in developing a theory of combat motivation that the theory that the new group of literature is attempting to supplant, that of primary group motivation, emerged from the study of the same Wehrmacht by Shils and Janowitz a few decades earlier. The first major study that examined the implications of ideology as the major cause of combat motivation both before and during combat was Manfred Messerschmidt in his study entitled "The Wehrmacht and the *Volksgemeinschaft*"⁴³ in 1983. Messerschmidt examined the German army

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 36.

⁴² Ibid., p. 49.

from Hitler's rise to power in 1933 until the end of the Second World War and attempted to show how the Nazi ideological concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* served as a motivator for the army. According to Messerschmidt, by 1933 the German military elite were "already fascinated by the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*," a philosophy that was grounded in the "classless" society that was found in the trenches of the First World War.⁴⁴ The views that the army traditionally had from its Prusso-German heritage "coincided perfectly as far as the *Volksgemeinschaft-Wehrgemeinschaft* equation went with Hitler's own views," and since the Nazis viewed the ideal organization of the state was the Nazi party and its *Weltanschauung* serving both the military and political leadership, the National Socialists took upon themselves the tasks of "educating 'German Man' and of building the foundations of the *Volksgemeinschaft*," in institutions like the Hitler Youth and the Wehrmacht.⁴⁵

Messerschmidt points out that this ideological education on the principles of the *Volksgemeinschaft* meant that the soldier's education had to relate to the so-called

⁴³ Manfred Messerschmidt, "The Wehrmacht and the *Volksgemeinschaft*." trans. by Anthony Wells. *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983): 719-744. *Volksgemeinschaft*, means "people's community" or "national community," and it referred to the National Socialist ideology roughly moulded after the "trench socialism" of World War One, "a national community whose social harmony, unity, and political authority rested on the indoctrination of people from all walks of life, thus transcending class conflict." See Stephen G. Fritz, "'We are trying . . . to change the face of the world' - Ideology and Motivation in the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front: The View from Below." *The Journal of Military History* 60 (October 1996), p. 686.

⁴⁴ Messerschmidt, pp. 719, 731.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 721-3.

racial foundations of the *Volk*.⁴⁶ In the *Volks-* and *Wehrgemeinschaft* there was no room for the "precious individual self," since the Nazi definition of community (*gemeinschaft*) did not reflect the pluralist definition of society, but rather it meant the "unity" of the leader and the led. During the twelve year relationship between Hitler and National Socialism and the Wehrmacht, the concepts of race, the "Führer" principle, and *Volksgemeinschaft* dominated throughout. The larger that the Wehrmacht grew and the more it reflected the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the more homogeneously it fitted into Hitler's system of rule.⁴⁷ Consequently, the German soldiers were motivated to fight in order to fulfil this notion of *Volksgemeinschaft*, and the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* gave the Wehrmacht a clear conscience about their actions against the Russians in particular.

The historian who has done the most work in examining the importance of ideology in the combat motivation of soldiers is Omer Bartov. Like Messerschmidt, Bartov's research has focused on the Wehrmacht, but Bartov has narrowed his work by examining the conflict between Germany and Russia on the Eastern Front. He has written that the element of ideology had been overlooked because the issue of motivation is essentially unquantifiable.⁴⁸ There is no doubt in his mind that soldiers were attached to primary groups, but the primary groups were in some respects the "precise opposite of the one presented by the original theory, for it is very much the

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 727.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 728-730.

⁴⁸ Omer Bartov, "Indoctrination and Motivation in the *Wehrmacht*: The Importance of the Unquantifiable." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 9 (1986): 16-34.

product not merely of social ties but also of ideological internalization."⁴⁹ According to Bartov, it is "difficult to speak of a more or less stable 'primary group' in a division which suffered between 200 and 300 per cent casualties within the space of about three years of fighting."⁵⁰ Ideology gradually came to be the main means of motivation, especially for the soldiers on the Eastern Front, because the mounting casualties were destroying the primary groups. The ideological motivators were present in the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* presented to them before the war, but it was the refinement of these views by the first-hand experience of the war that gave them a preeminence. The National Socialist political leaders and the leaders within the German Army knew the crucial role that political indoctrination had in motivating the soldiers, especially in the East. This indoctrination was not meant to make them good Nazis, but rather it was meant for practical purposes, which included convincing the soldiers that they were fighting for a good cause and that they were defending the *Volk* from the "devilish" plans of their enemies. This effort was stepped up when it became clear that the Germans were not going to win the conflict in order that the soldiers would continue to press on against insurmountable odds.⁵¹ Consequently, "Nazi indoctrination in fact had a major and insufficiently

⁴⁹ Omer Bartov, "Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich." *Journal of Modern History* 63 (March 1991): p. 49.

⁵⁰ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*. (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1986) p. 36.

⁵¹ Omer Bartov, "Daily Life and Motivation in War: The *Wehrmacht* in the Soviet Union." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 12 (1989): pp. 206-7, 211.

acknowledged impact on the perception of reality of all ranks in the German army during the war."⁵²

The German Wehrmacht is not the only example of a military force that scholars have determined to rely on ideology for their combat motivation. John Hammond's study dealt with the education of troops by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador. These troops were generally illiterate farmers with little to no formal educational training. The FMLN leaders believed that in order to develop an effective fighting force, they first needed to produce a intellectually competent one as well. Along with intellectual educational training, though, an extreme emphasis was placed on the ideological training of the recruits. Political orientation was seen by the FMLN as a means of reinforcing the motivation of the soldiers to fight. The relative importance that the FMLN leaders placed on political orientation is the fact that this ideological indoctrination took place every day, which was more often than the literary classes met.⁵³

There is a body of literature, albeit small, that attempts to view combat motivation as neither a derivative of either primary group interaction nor of ideological indoctrination. John Ballard and Aliccia McDowell published a study in 1991 that examined how hate could be a possible motivator for soldiers, as reflected

⁵² Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich*. (New York : Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 137. Bartov's work has subsequently been endorsed by scholars such as Fritz and Jürgen Förster. A complete examination of their views can be found in Chapter 4.

⁵³ John L. Hammond, "Popular Education in the Salvadorian Guerrilla Army." *Human Organization* 55.4 (1996), pp. 436, 440-1.

in literature. They discovered that hate indoctrination could have positive effects in the combat motivation of a soldier. Hate is a force multiplier, so if a soldier hates their enemy, they will want to fight and the actual killing of their hated enemy will not be a disreputable proposition.⁵⁴

Another study that refutes the literature on primary groups and ideology was conducted by Victor Madej. He asserted that German motivation and cohesion in combat during the Second World War was a direct result of military skill and efficiency. He asserted that "there is some evidence that military effectiveness resulted from societal values prevalent in the Nazi state but the most obvious and direct cause of the primary group cohesion described by Shils and Janowitz was military success early in the war."⁵⁵ He also believed that "societal factors may inspire success but only the proper use of weaponry can translate motivation into reality."⁵⁶ In essence, Madej asserted that combat motivation among any army was directly linked to their weaponry, and as long as one army holds a technical supremacy over their enemy, they will be more highly motivated to fight.

As mentioned earlier, there have only been two scholars who have attempted

⁵⁴ The contrary view perceived hate indoctrination as having negative effects. According to the literature, hate indoctrination may fuel militarily unnecessary escalations in hostilities, which could lead to disdain for combat. Ballard and McDowell also dispute the claim that hate indoctrination produces effective combat motivation, since there is no solid body of empirical research that supports the assertions. See John A. Ballard and Aliccia J. McDowell, "Hate and Combat Behaviour." *Armed Forces and Society* 17.2 (1991): 229-241.

⁵⁵ W. Victor Madej, "Effectiveness and Cohesion of the German Ground Forces in World War II." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 6 (1978), p. 234.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

to explain combat motivation in a holistic framework. The first was Anthony Kellett, who published *Combat Motivation: The Behaviour of Soldiers in Battle* in 1982. Although his book relies strongly on the theories concerning primary groups (since that was the prevailing trend in the literature at that time), Kellett did not place undue emphasis on it as the prime motivator of troops. He even acknowledged that the emphasis on the primary group thesis has greatly distracted researchers from other factors contributing to combat motivation.⁵⁷ His treatment of ideology as a factor of combat motivation also reflects the trend of literature at the time; Kellett believed that the role of ideology in motivation lost importance to the soldier after the Victorian era, and he refuted the claims that soldiers from totalitarian states (like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia) were ideologically motivated by quoting Shils and Janowitz.⁵⁸ However, Kellett's study is quite important for the scope that it encompassed.

Kellett did not address some of the specific individual psychological theories respecting motivation and behaviour, like instincts and drives, frustration, invigoration, and self-actualization. Instead, he focused on theories that would tend to explain the actions of the collective in reference to the individual. For Kellett, combat motivation could not be boiled down into one or two compact theories. The major factors that Kellett determined as being important to combat motivation were the primary group, unit esprit, manpower allocation and the effect of different

⁵⁷ Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation*, 1982, p. 97.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-74.

rotation policies, socialization and the transmission of values by society and/or the military establishment, effectiveness of training, discipline, effectiveness of leadership, ideology, rewards, preconceptions of combat, varying aspects of combat, combat stress, and combat behaviour. He stated that:

Interpretations that stress such factors as discipline, leadership, esprit, and patriotism are not as anachronistic as they have sometimes been made to appear. Also, the influence of the primary group, while of major importance, has suffered from interpretations that have ignored or underemphasized the interplay of other factors. A holistic approach, combining individual, organizational, and social factors with situational ones, offers a more complete explanation of combat motivation.⁵⁹

Kellett's study is important because it has taken the issue of combat motivation to the point that it is impractical and quite incorrect to view it as the result of a single issue. Although this does not invalidate the earlier work of Janowitz or the later studies of Bartov, it has placed them in a more accurate context. As Kellett asserted, combat motivation tends to be strongly situational.⁶⁰ Combat motivation differs from war to war, from nation to nation, from army to army, division to division, regiment to regiment, platoon to platoon, and from year to year. It is precisely this reason why it is erroneous to develop a single issue theory on combat motivation and expect it to apply in every combat situation. Kellett has shown the pluralism of factors that he believes are evident in every combat situation, and it is each individual situation which will define what the relative importance of each factor will be.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 333.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 319.

The other scholar who has attempted to develop a theory concerning combat motivation is John Keegan. Keegan's theory differs from Kellett in the manner in which they were developed. Where Kellett set out to gather specific evidence from the literature to develop his theory, Keegan based his on his lifetime of reading, writing, and discussing military history. Keegan's theory is not as well-documented as Kellett's, but that is typical of the synthesizing nature of Keegan's writings.

For Keegan, combat motivation encompasses seven parts. The first is that the soldier is induced to go into battle. This inducement can take on the form of material rewards, like booty, plunder, and medals, or it can take on the form of emotional rewards, like emotional support from the soldier's family, friends, and society. The second part is coercion. Every soldier is forced to fight, either through direct physical means or through moral coercion, where the soldier feels a sense of shame from his comrades, family, or nation for not fighting. The third element of his theory is narcosis. Since combat is unnatural, efforts are made to suppress the senses of the soldier to the risks involved. This is usually done through alcohol or drugs.

The fourth element is called the "Big Man." This is the name given to the soldier who is the embodiment of the perceived notion of the ideal soldier. He is the "star" of the battlefield, one who "brings combat alive" through his actions on the field. The fifth element, mimicry, is directly related to the concept of the "Big Man." Other soldiers, seeing the example of the "Big Man," decide that they want to emulate his example. The sixth element is the mechanistic impulses of cruelty,

frenzy, and fantasy; that is, the "evil" feelings that all soldiers tend to feel at one time or another, and each element tends to feed off of the other and gain strength. The last element to Keegan's theory of combat motivation is honour. All soldiers fight for honour, wherever their loyalties lie. Keegan emphasized that this model is not complete, but it is a start in understanding holistically why men are motivated for combat.⁶¹

The issue of where fanatics fit into these studies is crucial to this investigation. Kellett concluded that combat motivation should "be seen as a continuum, with dedicated and aggressive soldiers at one end, potential defectors at the other, and the remainder (perhaps a majority) somewhere between," but this present study seeks to address the combat motivation of soldiers who fall outside of this theoretical continuum.⁶² Although the emphasis of the above studies were mainly directed towards conscripted armies, some scholars did mention the implications that fanatics could bring to their findings. Janowitz, as mentioned earlier, believed that Nazi "hard cores" were fanatical patriots who had become semi-ideologues as a result of their paramilitary experience. The source of their fanaticism was not ideology, but a wholehearted acceptance of the military and organizational practices that stressed toughness, comradeship, and group solidarity.⁶³ Chodoff believed that strong primary group ties and strong ideological beliefs may combine in some units and

⁶¹ Keegan, "Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation," 1997, pp. 5-11.

⁶² Kellett, p. 331.

⁶³ Janowitz, 1974, p. 28; Janowitz, 1983, p. 64.

overlap as motivational factors in respect to combat, which in turn would lead to enhanced combat effectiveness and a greater willingness on the part of the soldiers to engage in battle. According to Chodoff, "primary group associations in these units are fostered by organizational ideologies that generally teach the men to view each other as brothers and to rely closely on one another in and out of combat."⁶⁴ Although not expressively identifying these groups as being fanatical, it is probable that fanatical soldiers (as well as elites) would fall into this category. Finally, Wesbrook stated that sociopolitical indoctrination would be extremely effective on those who possess a highly symbolic national commitment. These people would be characterized as ideologues, true believers, or superpatriots.⁶⁵ Fanatical soldiers would definitely fall into this category, meaning that all of Wesbrook's assertions should hold true to them.

There has been a clear progression in the literature concerning combat motivation. Most scholars either hold that ideology is the prime motivator, that primary groups explain best the will of a soldier to engage in combat, or a combination of the two. However, the most useful studies, and the most accurate ones, are the holistic studies done by Keegan and Kellett. The following chapters will follow the example of Keegan and Kellett by explaining the combat motivation of fanatical soldiers in a holistic fashion. It will become readily apparent, however, that ideology will play a major role in explaining why fanatics fight. This is not to

⁶⁴ Chodoff, p. 587.

⁶⁵ Wesbrook, pp. 44-5.

invalidate the pioneering work of Janowitz and others; rather, as the evidence will show, ideology played a major part in the socialization, the recruitment, and the training of the 12th SS Panzer Division. As Kellett asserts, combat motivation is situational, and in this situation ideology will play a bigger role than divisional pride, weaponry, or even small groups. However, since these factors are important, and this study is holistic, these elements will be placed in their proper perspective for this study. One must begin the story, though, of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend* as a tale of systematic indoctrination for a questionable purpose.

CHAPTER 3

Blind Obedience and Unquestioning Faith: Ideological Indoctrination and the Quest for the Development of a Fanatic

A fine line exists between a fanatical unit and one that is merely an elite organization. Indeed, the fighting styles are somewhat similar; both fanatics and elites are feared and tough fighters who often take what some would call unnecessary risks during combat. Both are proud in their abilities to fight, and both have excellent combat training and leadership that make them quite effective in the field. The difference between the two cannot be found purely in fighting ability, training, and leadership; as it will be later shown, in these aspects of combat the difference between elites and fanatics will be almost impossible to determine. The defining factor that makes one unit elite and the other fanatical can be found in the unit's adherence to a specific ideology. Both the elite soldier and the fanatical soldier would have been exposed to some form of ideology in order to give their combat a sense of higher meaning and thereby enhance their combat motivation, but the levels of ideological indoctrination present in the training of the fanatic reach levels that effectively re-socialize the individual into highly dedicated and devoted fighter, apparently devoid of any common sense. In fact, the difference between the fanatic and the elite can usually be seen on the battlefield. Whereas the elite soldier, when

faced with an untenable situation, would retreat or surrender, the fanatic would rather die than do either.

The claim that political ideology and ideological indoctrination "has but an incidental importance in the whole of fighting motivation"¹ is questionable at best, especially for fanatical soldiers and especially when one considers the example of the 12th SS. When Adolf Hitler and his *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP - National Socialist German Workers Party) came to power in Germany on 30 January 1933, he implemented a series of measures whose purpose was for the effective indoctrination of the population, and especially the youth, in the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. The main purpose for this ideological training was to produce a generation of fanatical soldiers who would follow the directives of Hitler unquestioningly. Indeed, the fanatical actions on the battlefield of these young soldiers would not have been possible if these actions were not a part of the cultural values internalized during the formative years of their childhood. The presence of these actions indicates the degree to which the Nazi ideological indoctrination was successful. The two main elements of the ideology that contributed the most to the fanatical nature of the 12th SS, namely the quest for the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the love of the Führer, will be discussed in the next chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the measures that the National Socialists implemented in order to indoctrinate the youth of Germany, the army, and the 12th SS itself. A fanatical soldier does not exist outside of the realm of ideology, so consequently the

¹ Wilfred von Bredow, "The West-German *Bundeswehr*", 1971, p. 114.

ideological indoctrination of a fanatic has more than "an incidental importance" in their combat motivation.

Almost immediately after assuming power, the National Socialist government directed its attention to what it perceived to be a faulty educational system in the sense that it did not teach the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. Historian H. W. Koch asserted that the German educational system of the nineteenth century failed in that it could not develop and form independently-thinking students.² The legacy of this failure reemerged in the Third Reich, and this made it possible for the Nazis to indoctrinate its youth more effectively. Hitler was more than eager to exploit this tradition of failure. Indeed, the Nazi prescription for the upbringing of Germany's youth was to make it into the form of a "religious education."³ The new function of the schools could be defined as "the education of youth for the service of Volk and state in the National Socialist spirit."⁴ Blackburn stated:

Because the struggle for survival was the source of human progress, education was intended to equip the individual to prevail in this competition. Because struggle preordained the triumph of the strong and justified the elimination of the weak, education must glorify the *sine qua non* of racial supremacy: hardness.⁵

The education system was changed to reflect the new goal of educating the German

² H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-45*. (London : Macdonald and Jane's, 1975) p. 23.

³ Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks*. (New York : State University, 1985) p. 78.

⁴ Koch, p. 168.

⁵ Blackburn, p. 35.

youth for membership in the new racial community and in developing a full commitment to Hitler on the part of the children.⁶

The method by which this was to be done was clearly laid out by the National Socialist government. The teachers were to take a definite anti-intellectual attitude into the classroom. Instead of promoting intellectual growth, teachers were directed to encourage and produce character in youth within the framework of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. The development of character depended on the teaching of the principles of struggle and conflict, and consequently Nazi educators "adopted the political soldier as the personification of the ideal German." Indeed, educational guidelines put forth by Dr. Wilhelm Frank on 9 May 1933 stated that the product of the schools was to be "the political man who is rooted in all thought and action to serving and sacrificing for his people," and who is deeply committed to both the history and the future of his people.⁷ The National Socialist government had to change the school curriculum in order to reach its goals of ideological indoctrination.

One possible stumbling point that the Nazis had to consider when implementing their educational "reforms" was the reactions of teachers to their plans. However, this potential problem was soon eliminated by a purge of the teaching profession. Almost immediately after the National Socialist government came to power, the Nazis systematically went through the ranks of the teachers and removed anyone who they perceived might be a problem in the implementation of their new

⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 94-7.

educational philosophy, like the older generation of teachers and Jews. After these purges, work done for the NSDAP was often taken into consideration when hiring decisions were made. As a result of the purges and this new hiring practice, many of the new replacements were often better National Socialists than they were teachers.⁸ As early as 1936, before the moratorium on membership to the NSDAP was lifted, thirty-two percent of the teachers were Nazi Party members. This rate was twice that of the Civil Service.⁹ Even in places which were predominately Catholic, where much of the opposition to Hitler could be found, the Nazification of the educators was profound. In a sample of 130 teachers from Altötting, Upper Bavaria, taken on 15 February 1939, it was found that 65% of them were Party members and 28% of them were Party functionaries.¹⁰ By the end of the war, ninety-seven percent of all teachers were enrolled in the National Socialist Teacher's Association (*Nationalsozialistische Leherbund*, or NSLB).

These statistics have little meaning unless one considers the extent in which the new teaching professionals were indoctrinated themselves. It was stated that the teacher

is not just an instructor and a transmitter of knowledge. He is more than that. He is a soldier, serving on the cultural-political front of National

⁸ Koch, pp 168-72.

⁹ Hitler had imposed a moratorium on Party membership soon after he came to power in order to identify those who had been loyal to him before he became Chancellor. See Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*. (New York : Penguin Books, 1983) p. 364.

¹⁰ Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945*. (Oxford : Clarendon, 1983) p. 145,

Socialism. . . . The task of the German educator is to form human souls.¹¹

Another example of this type of thought can be found in the words of L. Grünberg, the principal of the Augusta State School in Berlin, who wrote in 1934:

We German educators must rid ourselves altogether of the notion that we are primarily transmitters of knowledge. A coming clash of arms will be the test of whether the German teaching profession has become a useful member of the German people in the Third Reich.¹²

To secure the acceptance of this new philosophy of teaching, the Nazis ensured that by 1938 two-thirds of the entire teaching force had taken part in a special camp where they were instructed on how to teach in the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. The emphasis of these compulsory one-month courses was on enforced youthfulness, the intention being that the teachers would feel quite a bit closer to their students once they returned.¹³

Hand-in-hand with the anti-intellectual attitude that the National Socialist educators encouraged to their pupils was the emphasis that the youth should be instructed to believe whole-heartedly in the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* rather than to examine it critically. Even Hitler himself stated that the "youth [should] not learn anything else other than to think German, [and] to act German."¹⁴ This emphasis on belief over critical thought was stressed throughout the life of the child

¹¹ Hermann Klauss, "On Festivities in the School," quoted in George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich*. trans. by Salvator Attanasio and others. (New York : Grosset and Dunlap, 1966) p. 127.

¹² L. Grünberg, "The Test," quoted in Mosse, p. 280.

¹³ Grunberger, p. 365.

¹⁴ Koch, p. 127.

to adulthood. Even in the army, soldiers were not called upon to understand the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, rather, it was stressed that they had to believe in it.¹⁵ The tradition of believing in something that had been transmitted to them by their leader unquestioningly was to have a profound effect on the transformation of the boys of the 12th SS from elite fighters into fanatics. Indeed, one could make the case that this tradition had made them fanatics even before they volunteered for service in the SS. Because of the inability to think critically, the youth of Germany were susceptible to whatever the Nazified educators decided to teach them. If they were told that they should fight radically and die willingly for Hitler, and nobody was there to encourage them to think critically about that command, they would internalize that belief to the point where they would actually believe that it was the right thing to do. That is exactly what happened to the boys of the 12th SS.

The education in the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* took many coercive forms. For example, there is considerable evidence that there was a constant effort to remove children from religious instruction classes and instead place them into ideological instruction classes. The students were given a choice as to whether or not they wanted to attend this new course, but they were informed that religious instruction would not be noted on their annual progress reports. They were also informed that in order to be admitted into a higher school later, they would be tested in ideology, but not in religion. Other subtle methods for getting children to attend the ideology classes were to make the alternatives impossibly difficult. In one

¹⁵ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, 1986, p. 93.

example, the students of one seventh-grade class who did not attend the ideological instruction class were sent to a spelling lesson, where the test was so hard and the results so poor those who took the test were forced to stay after school for over two hours. Their comrades in the ideology classes did not face this discipline.¹⁶ In this way the National Socialist regime was able to effectively dictate to the youth with academic aspirations the narrow range of courses that they would need (mainly National Socialist ideology courses) in order to control their minds.

With the very young children, this process was intensified, especially in regards to racial teaching. Young children were to be taught that by sticking together and not mixing their blood, the Aryan race would overcome and dominate the other undesirable races. The children were told that effort would overcome the bad, and that the "sick and the bad must die so that the good and the efficient can live again."¹⁷ It is interesting to note that in his history of the 12th SS, Hubert Meyer recorded an instance when one company started to panic, an occurrence that was rare within the division. Their panic came when they realized that the opponents who were driving them back were all black.¹⁸ This "crisis" is a prime indicator of how successful the racial teachings in the classroom were internalized, where it was taught that the "pure" Aryan was superior in every way to all other races, including blacks. Confusion came when a supposed truth was refuted right in front of the youngster's

¹⁶ "To Capture Youth," in Mosse, pp. 250-3.

¹⁷ Alfred Endt, *Rassepolitische Erziehung in der Volksschule*. (Leipzig : Verlag der Dürschen Buchhadlung, 1938) pp. 17-8.

¹⁸ Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*, p. 189.

eyes.

One of the more successful methods that the educators used in maintaining the anti-intellectual basis of education was through censorship. Both the NSLB and Main Office of Literature of the Nazi Cultural Office were involved the censorship process, regularly issuing lists of recommended books that should be read for "further enlightenment."¹⁹ The main task of the Main Office of Literature, according to Rainer Schlösser, was "to provide a creative stimulus to the members of the Reich Youth Leadership Organization, to give advice, whenever necessary, and to lead young people efficiently toward service for the German Volk community."²⁰ Their complex censorship structure was answered by the NSLB, whose policies in this regard were to work towards the education of all members of the National Socialist Teachers Association in the spirit of National Socialism, to support the government and Hitler's will, and to cooperate in regard to the examination and censorship of all German children's books.²¹ Kamenetsky claimed that the rivalry between these organizations led to stronger censorship, since each organization would try to gain Party favour by producing recommended reading lists that "out-Nazified" their competitor.²²

¹⁹ Koch, p. 139; Christa Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany: The Cultural Policy of National Socialism*. (Athens, OH : Ohio University Press, 1984) pp. 241-3.

²⁰ Quoted in Kamenetsky, p. 241.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241-2.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 243.

This censorship competition would have severe consequences on the education of the German child during the Nazi era. In the beginning of the National Socialist reign, the Nazi educators began a "large scale pulping" of Weimar era textbooks, creating a partial vacuum for educators. Replacements for these textbooks took the forms of pamphlets developed by the Nazi educational leaders, which were unsurprisingly biased to the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*.²³ After close coordination between the Nazi Party and the Ministry of Education, new textbooks were produced in 1938 with the same biases. The Reich government issued a directive to textbook writers that the past was to be used as a tool to "convert the doubters and unbelievers," and also to silence the critics of National Socialist domination. As a result of the previous years of indoctrination, it was reported that many of the youth responded to the new textbooks "with great enthusiasm."²⁴

Under the directives given to the writers, textbooks had to conform to five main ideological principles. They were: Blood and Soil, Leadership and Followership, Honour and Loyalty, Service and Sacrifice, and Struggle and Work.²⁵ Because of these guidelines, the subject that lended itself to be most easily re-interpreted was history, which became an indispensable tool in propagating the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. As a result of this, after 1933 Hitler ordered an increase in class time specializing in history, and the reduction of electives and

²³ Grunberger, p. 376.

²⁴ Mosse, p. 264; Blackburn, p. 36.

²⁵ Kamenetsky, p. 187.

religious instruction.²⁶ Along with this new educational philosophy came a profound degeneration in science and math within the schools.²⁷

The discipline of history was changed and reinterpreted so that it could serve the National Socialist mandate of ideological indoctrination.²⁸ Nazis insisted that students should not study history of individuals, but rather the history of "Germans." The textbooks were embedded with both a tone of urgency and a preoccupation with death and sacrifice. According to Blackburn, the main purpose of the study of this type of history was to prepare the student for mass action.²⁹ One of the most prolific writers of history textbooks was Dietrich Klagges, who believed that the meaning of history could be summed up by five principles: 1) life is struggle; 2) the individual is nothing without the Führer, 3) the Volk is the future; 4) compatriots are comrades of fate; and 5) the blood is the most valuable inheritance.³⁰ Every historical fact was twisted and warped in order to conform to the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. Even the beginning of the Second World War was reinterpreted in order to conform to the ideological principles developed by the Ministry of Education. Germany's invasion of Poland was recorded as the response of Hitler to Polish atrocities against Germans, like torture, slaughter (a figure of 60,000 German dead was provided as

²⁶ Blackburn, p. 35.

²⁷ Koch, p. 174.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 146.

²⁹ Blackburn, pp. 34-5.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

proof), and (horror above all horrors) the "fact" that German youth were made to attend Polish schools.³¹

Textbooks were not the only "educational" material that was distributed to in order to indoctrinate the German youth. The Nazis also produced a purportedly academic journal entitled *Wille und Macht: Führerorgan der nationalsozialistischen Jugend* for distribution to all members of the Hitler Youth. Through book reviews and articles like "The New Iran," "Shakespeare 1940," and "The Infantry - King of the Battlefield," *Wille und Macht* gave the Hitler Youth an official publication with the National Socialist interpretation of things like history, religion, war, art, music, literature, and foreign affairs. Coupled with their education in the schools, the German youth were thoroughly indoctrinated in academic matters by the time they reached adulthood.

However, Nazi ideological indoctrination did not limit itself to academic textbooks. Every aspect of children's literature, from fairy tales to adventure books, was censored and regulated. For example, detective stories and crime mysteries were not seen as desirable, since their characters did not possess the heroic qualities of a war hero. Also, "Red Indian" fiction was undesirable since it did not fit into the National Socialist racial doctrine.³² Aspects of National Socialist doctrine that were deemed to be important for children to know and believe in were included in both literature and in grade-school reading primers. Not only were the primers teaching

³¹ Ibid., p. 46.

³² Koch, pp. 140, 159.

children to read, which is traditionally the main purpose of them, but these Nazi primers were familiarizing and indoctrinating the child from the age when they first started reading with the basic message of National Socialism.³³ Other literature, like children's fables, were filled with rousing stories of Germany's martial glory and heroic deeds. Six and seven-year-olds' stories about robins, flowers, and rabbits were interrupted by stories about armed columns of battle-hardened veterans in full combat gear.³⁴ Children's literature was also filled with exhortations for children to do their part for the Fatherland, and to glorify and follow Hitler's commands for them. For example, one author expressed to the child reader that by choosing Hitler, Germans have chosen life over death. This deification of Hitler, essentially portraying him as Christ incarnate, would have built upon accepted and familiar Christian forms of imagery and rhetoric. In return for Hitler's rule, Germans were supposed to be thankful for all that Hitler had done for them, and the best way to do that was to follow his wishes.³⁵

By far the most common and key theme within textbooks and children's literature was the glorification of combat. According to Koch, within the framework of ideological training, war-generated literature was the most important tool in National Socialist literature's arsenal. From the Nazi point of view, the First World War was "an overwhelming assertion by the German people of their right to live, an

³³ Kamenetsky, p. 177.

³⁴ Blackburn, p. 39.

³⁵ Herbert Seehoffer, *Mit dem Führer unterwegs*. (München : M. Müller und Sohn, 1939) p. 223.

activation of all racial resources." By focusing on these themes, the Nazis were able to use war literature to their advantage.³⁶ Since the core of the National Socialist's educational program was war, the focus on education was seen as a preparation for military service. This goal was seen as a "German struggle for liberty."³⁷ Through this, youth were indoctrinated to give their lives willingly for their country.³⁸

The main source for the stories of this type of literature was the German soldier's experiences within the trenches of the First World War. These experiences held a large reservoir of ideas for educators, especially the stories of Hitler's "heroic" deeds in the front line. One example of the literature of this form can be found in an excerpt from a textbook that described the Battle of Ypres in 1914:

Then somebody broke into "Germany, Germany Over All!" And soon the song was transmitted from company to company; Germany's youth stormed singing to their deaths. . . . The war volunteers had shown that they understood death exactly as did the old soldiers. In the machine guns' hail of iron they had all become comrades: workers, students, and journeymen. In battle as in the dawn of death the faith of a new beautiful Germany had arisen in them. This faith gave them the strength to conquer in a superhuman fashion everything that now could still come.³⁹

Another prevailing theme in the war literature was one of urgency. The emphasis was on the volunteer to be ready to serve and not to be late in volunteering for the Fatherland. An example of this can be found in another textbook quoted in

³⁶ Koch, pp. 148-9.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 151; Blackburn, p. 102.

³⁸ Blackburn, p. 127. Other methods used for this end, besides literature, were militarized sports, the effort in returning youth to nature, and through teaching military service.

³⁹ Quoted in Blackburn, p. 42.

Blackburn:

Tens of thousands of scholars, students, workers, seventeen-year-olds and men in offices and professions drove themselves in enthusiastic crowds to the camps in order to report as volunteers. Their only fear: not to be accepted or to be too late.⁴⁰

Once the Germans invaded Russia, there emerged a new source for "romantic" war literature. The book *The Battle of Tannenberg*, intended for fourteen-year-olds, included the following excerpt: "A Russian soldier tried to bar the infiltrator's way, but Otto's bayonet slid gratingly between the Russian's ribs, so that he collapsed groaning. There lays before him, simple and distinguished, his dream's desire, the Iron Cross."⁴¹

An education with war at its core, the anti-intellectual trend among the educators, the emphasis on character over intellect, and the emphasis in belief over thought served to produce a generation of militant followers. There was a feeling among National Socialist theoreticians that a well-educated individual with few endearing physical characteristics was of less value to the community than the minimally educated person who was physically fit and possessed both a solid character and willpower,⁴² and this system of education served to produce such an individual.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 43. Grunberger records that many of the youth who were too young to fight during the lightening victories of the beginning of the war experienced feelings of acute frustration. See Grunberger, p. 346.

⁴¹ Grunberger, p. 366.

⁴² Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS*. (Chapel Hill : The University of North Carolina Press, 1989) p. 176.

However, as is well known, the formal educational system was complemented by the Hitler Youth organization in the task of the ideological indoctrination of the youth. Indeed, the idea Nazi youth upbringing was clearly spelled out in both the textbooks and in the educator's manuals, and it contained little mention of the schools. According to these sources, education was to begin early in childhood, with the parents teaching the child how to live and the schools teaching about Hitler. Upon joining the *Jungvolk*,⁴³ the boy would learn virtues like strength and comradeship. Once he was able, the boy would "enthusiastically join the Hitler Youth," learning more skills and becoming more and more devoted to Hitler. After his presence at the Party Rally at Nuremberg, where Hitler himself would address him, the boy was to progress to do work in the Labour Service in order to learn how to enter the *Volkgemeinschaft* through action. Military service was to be the culmination of the educational process, where the soldier learns the greatest pride found in defending *Volk und Vaterland*.⁴⁴ Within the philosophy of the ideological indoctrination of the youth, it would appear that the Hitler Youth was to take precedence over the formal educational system. In actual practice, it did just that.

Baldur von Schirach, who was conferred the title of *Reichjugendführer* (Youth

⁴³ The structure of the Hitler Youth movement for boys started when the boy was six years old. From the ages of six to ten, the boys were enrolled as a *Pimpf*, followed by the *Jungvolk* program from the ages of ten to fourteen, and then the Hitler Youth from the ages of fourteen to eighteen. Frequently a *Pimpf* was also called a *Jungvolk*. See Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi*. (New York : Oxford University Press, 1941).

⁴⁴ Blackburn, pp. 101-2.

Leader of the German Reich) by Hitler on 1 June 1933, was the person who was ultimately in charge of the implementation of the Hitler Youth program in Nazi Germany. His views on the nature and goals of the Hitler Youth are worth noting.

Von Schirach stated:

The Hitler Youth is a community of ideological education. Whoever marches in the Hitler Youth is not a number among millions but the soldier of an idea. The individual member's value to the whole is determined by the degree with which he is permeated by the idea. The best Hitler Youth, irrespective of rank and office, is he who completely surrenders himself to the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. . . . National Socialism is a *Weltanschauung* whose claims are total and not simply a matter of opinion. The means by which to enforce this claim is through education. German youth shall not as under Liberalism in a so-called objective way be given the choice whether it wants to grow up materialistically or idealistically, racial or international, religious or godless, but it will be consciously formed according to those principles which have been recognized and proved as right: the principles of National Socialist ideology.⁴⁵

Von Schirach had also stated that during their education, youth would begin "to understand that his own blind obedience gives the will of the group the possibility of success." The education transmitted from the Hitler Youth organization was just as important, if not more important, than the education from the schools.⁴⁶

The Hitler Youth did not focus solely on lectures, books, and the like as the basis of the ideological indoctrination of the young. Rempel claimed that the "HJ leadership . . . made physical culture the basis for effective indoctrination of the young." The National Socialist concepts of race, the Volk, defence, and leadership "served as guidelines for the structuring of physical education in the schools, the HJ,

⁴⁵ Quoted in Koch, pp. 104, 165.

⁴⁶ Baldur von Schirach, "The Hitler Youth," in Mosse, pp. 295-8.

the Labour Front, and the SS. These programs invariably included the following goals: education in community, serving the goal of racial eugenics, and forging individual will and character."⁴⁷ Through physical education, the Hitler Youth was abiding by the philosophy that war should be the core requirement of education. A physically fit generation of youth would serve to produce a generation of superb soldiers in the field. The Hitler Youth also offered the youth a pioneering role in the future of Germany. Since they were, by the time that they emerged from the Hitler Youth and the school system, the prototype of the ideal Nazi, the youth were charged with instilling the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* to their comrades, and they were told that they would be the foundation for the "New Order" in Europe.⁴⁸ Essentially, the goal of the Hitler Youth was to produce the "ideal child," a "lively youngster who comes from good parents with hereditary virtues, who is physically sound, full of courage, and brings with him spiritual exuberance and alertness."⁴⁹

There is no doubt that the Hitler Youth held a profound appeal for many young people in Germany. Even before membership became compulsory in 1936, a youth leader of a rival organization observed that the "NSDAP has succeeded in attracting to a large measure the best blood of the young generation and infused it with a sacred flame of faith and enthusiasm."⁵⁰ The attraction to the organization can

⁴⁷ Rempel, pp. 174-6.

⁴⁸ David Welch, "Propaganda and Indoctrination in the Third Reich: Success or Failure?" *European History Quarterly* 17(1987): 412. See also Grunberger, p. 340.

⁴⁹ "The Lively Youngster," in Mosse, p. 280.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Koch, p. 92.

be found in the pageantry that surrounded every event that the Hitler Youth took part in. Koch maintained that the early Hitler Youth rallies after the ascension to power by Hitler had profound psychological effects on the participants, mainly since they realized that they were part of a larger collective.⁵¹ As a result, they returned to their hometowns with a renewed enthusiasm for the organization, an enthusiasm that influenced the youth that they came in contact with. The tradition of the earlier German youth movements, where the leaders of the youth were quite young themselves (under the slogan "Youth Leads Youth"), was continued in the Hitler Youth.⁵² According to Grunberger, "by process of analogy adolescent attachment as such to the Hitler Youth was motivated by compensation for dependence feelings in an adult-dominated world. The whole panoply of uniforms, drill and officiousness was bound to heighten young people's self-esteem" and to make them feel a part of a community whose membership was limited to like-minded (and aged) individuals.⁵³

The message of the Hitler Youth, coupled with the limitless pageantry, seemed to strike a responsive chord among the youth. Inge Scholl, who, with her

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 93.

⁵² In order to produce leaders that were trained in the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* in a sufficient quantity, leadership schools (called *Reichführer* schools) were established throughout Germany. Their purpose was to provide systematic and methodical training for future Hitler Youth leaders. See Koch, p. 103.

⁵³ Grunberger, p. 352. The whole "Youth Leads Youth" concept led to many jokes in German society. One such joke was recorded by Grunberger: A policeman encountered a small boy sobbing on the street. The child was crying because he had lost his way. The policeman asked what he was doing so far away from home, and the boy answered "I've just been to a leadership conference."

brother Hans and her sister Sophie founded the White Rose, one of the most famous German youth resistance organizations, described her early feelings on the Hitler Youth as follows:

We had loved [Germany], but were hardly able to say why. . . . But now it was written large, in blazing letters in the sky. . . . Hitler wanted to bring greatness, happiness, and well-being to this Fatherland; he wanted to see that everyone had work and bread; he would not rest or relax until every single German was an independent, free, and happy man in his Fatherland. We found this good, and in whatever might come to pass we determined to help to the best of our ability. But there was yet one more thing that attracted us with a mysterious force and pulled us along - namely, the compact columns of marching youth with waving flags, eyes looking straight ahead, and the beat of drums and singing. Was it not overwhelming, this fellowship? Thus it was no wonder that all of us . . . joined the Hitler Youth.⁵⁴

Bartov described the attraction to the Hitler Youth as follows:

The Hitler Youth insisted on rigid regimentation, "blind" obedience, and unquestioning faith in the supreme value of action, while teaching profound contempt and distrust for any form of contemplation and discussion; it worshipped the united strength of the group and the "iron" will of the individual, and it despised any manifestation of physical or psychological weakness. In many ways the Hitler Youth resembled a youth gang, longing to smash all the symbols and representatives of the existing social order, be they parental and school authority, the church and bourgeois values, or just as much the socialist and communist loyalties of the working class; it was as violent as any gang and just as much centred around a tyrannical leader. But by becoming a vast national organization, and through its intimate association with the cult of the Führer of the Reich, it simultaneously satisfied the youthful desire for conformity and became the most important forerunner or school for what was rapidly becoming Hitler's army.⁵⁵

It seems clear that the Hitler Youth organization was so carefully crafted that any youth that found themselves with the organization could do little to resist its message.

⁵⁴ Inge Scholl, "To Be Part of a Movement!", in Mosse, p. 271.

⁵⁵ Omer Bartov, "The Conduct of War: Soldiers and the Barbarisation of Warfare." *Journal of Modern History* 64, suppl. (December 1992): S41.

By appealing to and exploiting the normal fears of adolescence, traditional cultural beliefs and values, the appeal of mass pageantry and symbols, and the promise of an important role for them in the future, von Schirach and the rest of the Nazi youth leadership were able to harness the power and the enthusiasm of the German youth through controlling collective behaviour and the use of group psychology to accomplish their own ends.

The main goal of Von Schirach and the National Socialist government was to incorporate every German youth into the Hitler Youth, thereby completing what the Nazis stated as the three arenas of learning, comprising of education in the home, the schools, and in the Hitler Youth.⁵⁶ However, with the time that the school took in the lives of the youth, combined with the increasing time commitment of the Hitler Youth, Von Schirach was ultimately successful in eliminating the influence of the home in the education and upbringing of the child. With the ideological bombardment that the children were getting in these organizations, there was little chance that anything that their parents would tell them could influence their thought. The Nazis implemented many methods to ensure their success in drawing the German youth into these two systems.

Although the Hitler Youth "was loudly proclaimed to be voluntary, it was officially sponsored, and pressure soon degenerated into coercion backed by police,

⁵⁶ See Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*. (Leipzig : Koehler und Umelang, 1934) p. 130.

government, and the party."⁵⁷ Parents usually kept their mouth shut about the Hitler Youth because they knew that their children had no chance of success within Nazi Germany without first becoming a member. The results on their children were even worse if the parents actively opposed the regime.⁵⁸ Traditional social structures, like the church and the family, were seen to be threats to Nazi ideological indoctrination, so their influence on the youth's life was systematically eliminated. Rival youth organizations were also seen to be a problem, so they were effectively eliminated as well.⁵⁹ Even the school took a back seat to Hitler Youth commitments. School authorities were instructed to grant pupils leave so that they could attend Hitler Youth events and courses.⁶⁰ The social stigmas that were attached to those youth who did not participate on these events were severe. Non-Hitler Youth members were perceived as outcasts in their schools, and were the subjects of schoolyard intimidation by members of the organization.⁶¹ However, attendance in the Hitler Youth became compulsory with the "Law Concerning the Hitler Youth" (1 December 1936), and according to the law, "the entire physical, spiritual, and ethical education of the German youth was, next to the influences of school and home, the concern of

⁵⁷ Rempel, p. 48.

⁵⁸ Paul Oestreich, "The Parents Abdicate," in Mosse, pp. 274-5.

⁵⁹ See Koch, p. 97.

⁶⁰ Grunberger, p. 370. Kershaw records that many teachers complained that the time spent away from the classroom doing Hitler Youth activities were negatively affecting the children's education. See Kershaw, p. 146.

⁶¹ Ilse McKee, "Scepticism and Participation," in Mosse, p. 276.

the Hitler Youth."⁶² With this law, the Hitler Youth organization reached almost every child in the country. Failure to register a ten-year-old child for the Hitler Youth could result of a fine of 150 RM or imprisonment for parents, while anyone who was found willfully keeping their child away from the Hitler Youth or from performing their Hitler Youth duties could find themselves with a maximum fine of 10,000 RM and up to five years of imprisonment.⁶³ Few were willing to risk these punishments, so by the beginning of the year 1939, 7,287,470 of the eligible 8,870,000 youth between the ages of ten and eighteen were members of the Hitler Youth.⁶⁴

For the boys who were to make up the fanatical fighters of the 12th SS, the first year that they would have been eligible to become a *Pimpf* would have been 1932.⁶⁵ As such, it is doubtful whether the majority of the boys of the division joined on their sixth birthday, since Hitler did not come to power until the next year, and the popularity of the Hitler Youth movement did not grow substantially until 1936. However, it is significant to note what the official description of a *Pimpf* was. To the National Socialists, the official definition of the difference between a *Pimpf* and a child was that "[t]he term child describes the non-uniformed creature who has never participated in a group meeting or a route march." A *Pimpf's* initiation test consisted

⁶² Koch, p. 113.

⁶³ Rempel, p. 68.

⁶⁴ Figures found in Tim Kirk, *The Longman Companion to Nazi Germany*. (New York : Longman Publishing, 1995) pp. 109-10.

⁶⁵ It must be remembered that the boys who were to make up the 12th SS were required to be born in the first half of 1926. See Craig Luther, *Blood and Honor*, 1987, p. 25.

of the reiteration of a compressed synopsis of Nazi dogma and all of the verses of the "Horst Wessel Song,"⁶⁶ an exercise in map reading, participation in pseudo-war games, and participation in the door-to-door collection of things like waste paper and scrap metal. Also, the *Pimpf* had to run sixty metres in twelve seconds, complete a long jump of 2.75 metres, perform the shot-put to satisfaction, and participate in a cross-country march that lasted a day and a half. Successful completion of these requirements led to the presentation of the child's first dagger. Before their period in the *Jungvolk* was completed, the boy would have learned semaphore reading, bicycle repairs, the laying of telephone wires, and small arms drill, with weapons like dummy hand grenades, air guns, and small-bore rifles.⁶⁷

In 1936, the year when the boys of the class of 1926 became ten-years-old, a significant event occurred within the Hitler Youth. Besides being the year when attendance in the Hitler Youth became compulsory, 1936 was also the "Year of the German *Jungvolk*." Its aim was to encourage those born in 1926 to "volunteer" to join the *Jungvolk* by 20 April as a birthday present for Hitler's 47th birthday. What is significant about this fact is that the boys who were strongly encouraged to join the *Jungvolk* in the beginning of 1936 as a personal favour for their Führer were the exact same boys who were encouraged seven years later to join only the second

⁶⁶ Horst Wessel was an SA fighter who was killed in a clash with Communists. His legend as a martyr for the National Socialist cause arose to mythical proportions, and the "Horst Wessel" song was an alternative anthem for the National Socialist regime.

⁶⁷ Grunberger, p. 353.

division in the entire German armed forces named after Adolf Hitler, again as a personal favour to their Führer.

The recruitment of these children in 1936 was intense, especially during the last four weeks before Hitler's birthday. Recruitment campaigns, marches, evenings of choir singing, and parents information meetings were organized, and primary and secondary school teachers were persuaded to exert pressure upon their pupils to join up. On 20 April, the new members of the *Jungvolk* recited an oath the symbolized their entrance into this new order:

I promise
In the Hitler Youth
To do my duty
At all times
In love and faithfulness
To help the Führer
So help me God.⁶⁸

In all probability this would have been the first major event in which the majority of the boys who were later to make up the 12th SS were exposed to the ideological indoctrination of the Hitler Youth.

The RJF made serious and persistent attempts to achieve Hitler's totalitarian vision, "especially its department of ideological training which was at the centre of the effort to mould the minds of German youth. . . . The enthusiasm innate in most young people to put their life to a meaningful and useful purpose was fully exploited." Along with the aforementioned methods of indoctrination, indirect ideological influences could be found in the "coordinated" mass media, like the press,

⁶⁸ Koch, p. 112.

films, and theatre, which mixed entertainment with indoctrination. The Hitler Youth even had their own radio show from which they could spread their propaganda to a national audience.⁶⁹ Propaganda pictures, with the Hitler Youth as their subject, also made the rounds during the war, almost as an encouragement to the youth. One picture, entitled *Arbeitsmann* (Worker), showed a member of the Hitler Youth with a shovel over one shoulder and a rifle over the next. In another picture with the same name, the shovel was missing. Other pictures showed Hitler Youth refuelling planes, building roads and bridges for the soldiers, and working on the Atlantic Wall.⁷⁰ Hitler Youth were also given books to study that contained everything from lessons in genetics to lessons on how to aim a gun.⁷¹

As noted before, the core of the National Socialist educational system was war. All education was geared toward producing a political soldier. In *Wille und Macht*, the pages were constantly filled with admonitions to fight for Hitler. In one article, Martin Danaß quoted von Schirach as saying: "And now another, Comrades: Two million Germans fell in the slaughter fields during the Great War for you. . . . They experienced and felt the better hour of their life. Therefore let us be the carriers of the tradition of the front." Schirach followed this by explaining that

⁶⁹Koch believes that total indoctrination was not attained, but if the Third Reich had lasted much longer, the results would have been much different. See Koch, pp. 107, 127-9, 132.

⁷⁰*Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte: Zentrale politische und Kulturelle Zeitschrift der NSDAP*. heft 155/6 (1943): 120-1.

⁷¹ See, for example, *Pimpf im Dienst*. (no author, no date); Fritz Brennecke, (ed). *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth*. trans. by Harwood L. Childs. New York : Harper, 1938.

National Socialism came as a result of the experience of the front, and the Hitler Youth should be proud of this tradition. In the rest of the article, the Hitler Youth were urged to fight with all of their might, especially since it was expressed to them that it was better to die fighting than anything else. They were also admonished to "[b]e true to the Führer. Even though it might not seem right or it is done differently than it should be done, you should do it anyway."⁷² Even as early as the Sudetenland crisis in 1938 the Hitler Youth were warned that they would have to take up arms if Hitler wanted them to in order to preserve their freedom.⁷³

As a result of the concerted efforts by the *Reichjugendführung* and the NSLB, no child, no matter what their age, remained untouched by the ideological indoctrination that was transmitted. Ideological training even affected the very young. Koch recorded a story where a four-year-old girl asked her father who was bravest. He admitted that he did not know, and asked her if she knew. She replied: "You and Adolf Hitler." Koch believed that if Nazi intervention would have lasted for even a generation, especially in the sector of youth book production, serious psychological damage would have resulted. As it was, for the fanatics who made up the 12th SS, boys who were indoctrinated for most of their life, and who were chosen to become members of the division because of their elite status within the Hitler Youth, psychological damage probably did occur.

⁷² Martin Danaß, "Von der Bewährung in der Tapferkeit: Wort und Beispiele." *Wille und Macht* 8.1 (1 Jan 1940): 3, 13.

⁷³ G. R., "Zeitenwende." *Wille un Macht* 6.20 (15 Oct 1938): 5.

As a result of the ideology of war that was stressed to the children, the relationship between the Hitler Youth and the SS became quite strong. Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, was interested in more than recruiting arrangements with the Hitler Youth and the positive image-building of the SS. Himmler also wanted to make sure that the racial *Weltanschauung* of the SS, which was even more radical than what was presented in both the German educational system and within the Hitler Youth, was conveyed to the Hitler Youth so that they would be even more radically indoctrinated by the time that they joined the SS. The SS arranged things like "special months of cooperation," and lasting "friendly connections" were to be established between the SS and the Hitler Youth through a series of joint activities, including "educational evenings," musical jam sessions, common courses, outings, camps, and through the exchange of films. The Hitler Youth-SS alliance was further cemented through "the establishment of a pseudo-religious common practice known as the solstice festival." The SS and the Hitler Youth took turns conducting these ceremonies in various wooded glens or on mountain tops with different detachments of both formations participating "in order to create a kind of sacerdotal tradition" and to foster links between the two groups.⁷⁴

When the Second World War began, the youth finally had a chance to complete their education. Koch noted that:

The war did not find the German youth, the Youth of Adolf Hitler,

⁷⁴ Rempel, pp. 29, 40. Rempel also claimed that the "SS preferred recruits from the country, officially because of its blood and soil ideology, but realistically because young rustics were more susceptible to indoctrination." (p. 92).

unprepared. The entire set of traditions inherited from the German Youth Movement, the youth literature of the period, the sombre yet exhilarating ceremonial had steeped a generation in the spirit of sacrifice, a willingness immediately exploited by a regime which was only too aware of how much selfless enthusiasm existed among the youth of Germany.⁷⁵

The impact that the Hitler Youth would have on the war effort was significant. As Rempel noted, as a result of the prior ideological indoctrination, "the importance of the HJ as the cradle of an aggressive army became apparent to military leaders and to the creators of the combat wing of the SS."⁷⁶ As a result of this, the army, in conjunction with the SS, began an effort to exploit the youthfulness and ambition of their future recruits by placing them in a pre-military training camp.

These military leaders expressed their desires to the Nazi leadership to implement universal paramilitary training for Hitler Youth boys between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. On 13 March 1942, Hitler issued a decree that set the wheels in motion, and from this decree evolved the WEL, which "proved to be a successful innovation in terms of meeting what the Nazis felt to be necessary psychological conditioning for military combat. In a way, they were ideologically charged basic training camps, less pragmatic, technical, and brutal than such camps for older draftees usually are, but more effective in fostering the attitudes that make military service more than a tolerable endurance test."⁷⁷ Camp directors were mostly wounded army officers and Waffen-SS veterans, and trainers were army and Waffen-

⁷⁵ Koch, p. 232.

⁷⁶ Rempel, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 184.

SS NCOs with either reserve status or temporary domestic assignments. The organizational structure of the both Hitler Youth and the Labour Service made it virtually impossible for any youth to avoid WEL training.⁷⁸ The first WEL training cycle began on 10 May 1942, and by the end of 1943 nearly every boy of seventeen had undergone paramilitary training. The SS took over full control of many of the camps from the army, and thereby had ample opportunity to recruit from these camps into the Waffen-SS.⁷⁹

It must be remembered that first and foremost, the WELs were military in nature. This will be discussed in Chapter Five, but the importance in examining and understanding the scope of the ideological aspects of these camps is key to understanding the later actions of the boys of the 12th SS. Ideology, as it was presented in the WELs, was styled to strengthen basic Nazi precepts. A uniform lecture that was prepared in Berlin was given to the boys each week, and events like

⁷⁸ The Labour Service, another component of the education of the Hitler Youth, was meant to give the youth practical hands-on experience in implementing the concepts of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The rules for the hours that the youth was to work were clearly laid out. In the beginning, children under the age of sixteen could not work more than 48 hours a week, while those over the age of sixteen could not work more than 56. Additionally, they were allowed 1/2 an afternoon off per week, and children under the age of sixteen could not work nights. The youth were to have holidays every year - children under the age of sixteen received 15 work days, while children between the ages of sixteen and eighteen received 12 work days off. However, of these days off, a minimum of ten had to be spent either on a Hitler Youth trip or on attendance at a Hitler Youth camp. With the implementation of the WELs, the holidays had to be spent attending the camp. See Errich Strecke, and Leopold Ost. *Jugend hinter Pflug und Werkbank*. (München : Carl Röhrig, 1942) pp. 307-8.

⁷⁹ Rempel, p. 185-8.

lectures, elaborate patriotic ceremonies, a nightly "political hour" (where trainees were asked questions about the current political situations and their relation to National Socialist ideology), and discussions all were designed to have the maximum psychological impact. The weekly mottos were "We Fight," "We Sacrifice," and "We Triumph," and the various lectures were all geared around the week's motto. Although formal indoctrination only took up fourteen hours out of a total training schedule of 166 hours, ideology "permeated the entire curriculum whether it was implemented in the barracks, on the shooting range, exercise area, or the field."⁸⁰

The core of the recruits that would make up the 12th SS graduated from their WELs at the end of May 1943. They were treated to a ceremony where they were inducted into the Waffen-SS and where Artur Axmann and Himmler were the honoured speakers. Axmann told the teenagers:

Above all, you my comrades and young volunteers, who want to join the units of the Waffen SS, are a wonderful demonstration of the attitude and spirit of youth. . . . [The] honour of German youth depends on you; that is why you must embody the virtues inherent in the best of Germany's youth. So, we expect you to be idealistic, selfless, courageous, and loyal!

Himmler followed, and this excerpt captures the tone of his comments:

Since the years of struggle, throughout the years of growth before the war and during the war years themselves, a tie of particular intimacy and inner fellowship bound the Hitler Youth and the SS together. Not only the time of struggle, the combat of fists, but much more, the battle and spirits and hearts for our eternal Germany has brought us together and will forever unite us.⁸¹

For years the teenagers who stood before Axmann and Himmler had read about the

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 194-5.

⁸¹ Both quoted in Luther, p. 34.

romantic and heroic images that war had brought to the German people. Now, as these two Nazi leaders had insisted, they would become part of that tradition. The thought that they were about to become heroes to another generation of young Germans would have a positive influence on their combat motivation once they reached the battlefield.

The impact that the years that indoctrination had in regards to the combat attitudes of the Hitler Youth are worth noting. The youth who had passed through the WELs "had been so thoroughly indoctrinated that they honestly believed in the necessity of pre-military training and willingly accepted the challenges that it presented."⁸² As Bartov has noted, the preliminary preparation of the German youth in the tenants of National Socialism, where concepts like group loyalty and obedience to superiors were stressed, where physical skill to precedence over intellectual ability, and ideological tenants, which included a quasi-religious faith in Hitler, sped up the integration into the army when the Hitler Youth were old enough for conscription.⁸³ Consequently, the average combat soldier, like the members of the 12th SS, "in his profound sense of a complete lack of choice, drilled into him though years of ideological indoctrination and social-organizational pressures, in his inability to conceive of any other alternative to the values propagated by the regime, and in his dependence on the polarized images of a deified Führer and a demonized enemy as

⁸² Ibid., p. 198.

⁸³ Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 1992, p. 117.

his motivating engine, was [close to] the National Socialist model of the fanatic."⁸⁴

Once the tide of the war in the east turned, the army also began to turn to ideology as a form of combat motivation. As Jürgen Förster has observed, "Operation Barbarossa was unlike any other campaign in that it revealed an indissoluble link between ideological and political objectives and the social-Darwinist principles of the Third Reich."⁸⁵ The consequences of this evolution of thought had a profound impact on the 12th SS, both in the mindset of its officers who were at that time serving in Russia, and the structure that the army and the SS set up for ideological indoctrination. Once the Wehrmacht began to face setbacks in Russia, the ideological indoctrination became more radicalized.⁸⁶ The Wehrmacht knew that there was a powerful need for belief among the soldiers in something, since they were living in constant danger, and catered to it with an endless stream of leaflets, brochures, speeches, radio talks, newspaper articles, and other forms of propaganda, all embedded with the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*.⁸⁷ The men on the front

⁸⁴ Bartov, "The Conduct of War," 1992, p. S42.

⁸⁵ Jürgen Förster, "Hitler Turns East - German War Policy in 1940 and 1941." *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939-1941*. ed. by Bernd Wegner. (Providence : Berghahn, 1997) p. 133.

⁸⁶ Jürgen Förster, "Motivation and Indoctrination in the Wehrmacht, 1933-45." *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939-1945*. ed. by Paul Addison and Angus Calder. (London : Pimlico, 1997) p. 271.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 268; Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 1992, p. 120. The propaganda did literally make it all the way to the front. Hubert Meyer included in his book a picture of a young soldier reading propaganda material, with the photo caption "By means of the Field Post, a newspaper even gets to a foxhole." See H. Meyer, p. B-29.

received the propaganda willingly, and in some cases even enthusiastically. There was also an almost complete lack of opposition against either ideological indoctrination or the implementation of the policies that they stipulated.⁸⁸ Through the combined efforts of the armed forces and the Nazi regime, the soldiers were increasingly moulded into the "National Socialist ideal of the political warrior." This process would have gone on without the knowledge of the young Germans, since they entered the army straight from "a system of schooling and paramilitary youth training that had made this new type of soldiering quite natural to them."⁸⁹

Once the new recruits to the 12th SS reached their training area in Beverloo, Belgium, in 1943, they had experienced Nazi ideological indoctrination for the majority of their lives. Through the process outlined above, though, the army now did not ease up on the ideological indoctrination. Virtually all of the officers of the new division came from the 1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, the division of almost mythical proportions that consisted of committed Nazis who, before the war, were employed as Hitler's personal bodyguards. The combination of the ideological bombardment from the army and the leadership of a highly ideologically motivated elite SS troops that had been subject to constant ideological indoctrination for the previous few years would prove to strengthen all of the martial qualities that they had internalized in their years in the Hitler Youth and in the school system. Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer, who started out as the commander of the

⁸⁸ Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, 1986, pp. 95, 99.

⁸⁹ Bartov, *Soldiers, Nazis, and the Third Reich*, 1991, p. 54.

25th Panzer-Grenadier Regiment and would later become the Divisional Commander, described his part in the ideological training of his troops:

[A]s a commander of the youthful 25th Regiment, I realized the necessity of the most rigorous training and discipline. At the same time, I exerted myself at all times to instill in these young men the principles of loyalty to their parents, home and country together with those principles of selfless regimental spirit under the guidance of which men can be made to subordinate their personal interests to those of the regiment of which they are members, and the ultimate goal thus achieved of developing a unit each of whose members is governed by the principle "*I am nothing; we are everything.*"⁹⁰

Meyer believed that the term "political soldier" meant that one fought "for a certain cause, namely the Fatherland." He classified his troops as a division of political soldiers, separate from the Wehrmacht, and he insisted "in talking to the soldiers on the necessity of a soldier knowing what he is fighting for and not going into battle blindly. He must know the object of his efforts."⁹¹

Although Meyer and his fellow officers had some influence in propagating the myth of the political soldier to his troops, their main impact on the troops would come in more indirect ways. The officer that would serve to have the most profound and direct impact on the ideological indoctrination of the 12th SS was the Abt. VI of the Divisional General Staff, the *Nationalsozialistischer Führungsoffizier* (NSFO - Nazi Guidance Officer). The NSFO evolved from the crisis of motivation that

⁹⁰ Emphasis added. Meyer also admitted that every time that he spoke to his troops he endeavoured to convey to them his idea of what the ideal soldier should be. See National Archives of Canada, RG 2, 18 Central Registry Files, Vol. 209, W-41 (v.1), Petition by Kurt Meyer, 8 December 1950.

⁹¹ NAC, RG24, VOL 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 8, Testimony of Kurt Meyer, p. 20.

occurred in the Eastern Front. It was the responsibility of the NSFO and his staff, under the mandate of "troop care" (*Truppenbetreuung*), to distribute all of the ideological materials to the troops of the division. On 16 December 1943 Brigadeführer Fritz Witt, commander of the 12th SS,⁹² issued an order concerning the relationship that the NSFO was to have in the division, and the role that each officer was to play in the ideological indoctrination of the troops. Witt wrote:

On orders of 24.2.43 from the Reichsführer SS [Himmler] concerning the ideological orientation of troops, I order:

1. The leaders of the units are responsible for the ideological education of the officers, NCO's, and soldiers in their units.
2. The co-workers of the Abt. VI will advise and support the commander about the implementation of the ideological education, will inform the unit officers and supply the necessary prepared educational materials, will give suggestions for the exhaustion of all possibilities of ideological education, . . . will organize and oversee the care of troops (*Truppenbetreuung*) in conjunction with the Abt. VI of the division.⁹³

Each unit was to have two classes each week specifically for ideological training. At the end of each week, the unit officer had to fill out reports concerning the conduct of the ideological training. Each unit officer was also provided with a list of daily political questions that they were to use in instructing their troops. The officers under the Abt. VI were to aid the unit officer by providing them with the proper instructional material. Witt also appealed to the officers to take in regular involvement in ideological indoctrination. They were ordered to attend monthly

⁹² Meyer took over command of the division when Witt died on 14 June 1944.

⁹³ See Luther, p. 71.

meetings with Witt for instruction in indoctrination, and each unit commander was ordered to conduct formal ideological training for two hours each week and to conduct discussions for one hour each week. Each Sunday they were also to conduct an informal "community" time where ideological questions were to be discussed. Finally, Witt urged each officer to talk about day-to-day ideological matters that arise at every occasion possible.⁹⁴ The purpose behind this indoctrination was to make every man within the division "a convinced carrier" of the National Socialist ideology, and to transform the Hitler Youth into an SS man "who lives according to the fundamentals of the SS as a fanatic warrior."⁹⁵

It was constantly stressed to the officers that, like the structure of the WELs, ideology must permeate in all aspects of day-to-day life. The progress of the ideological indoctrination was constantly monitored by the NSFO. For example, within three days of an ideological event being staged (like a film, a lecture or a theatre production) for a particular unit, the unit leader had to submit a "morale report" to the Abt. VI outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the event. Aside from the usual questions (which unit attended, what kind of event was it), the officer had to indicate how the troops received the event (either positively or negatively) and if there were suggestions for further events.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Microcopy T-354, Roll 155, #3799083-4, Dienstanweisung für die Mitarbeiter der Abteilung IV, 16.12.43.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ NARA, T-354/153/3797068, Betr.: Truppenbetreuung; Einreichung eines Stimmungsberichtes nach erfolgen Aufführungen von KdF-Bühnen,

These ideological events could take many forms. For example, on 20 April 1944, the NSFO distributed to the troops a proclamation from Hermann Göring concerning Hitler's birthday that the unit commander had to read. In this proclamation, Göring stated: "In unchanging truth today we thank our dearly loved Führer on his birthday, and more than ever we want to demonstrate in this vital time that we faithful soldiers always want to live by the orders of our Führer." He also called on the troops to never rest in their protection of the future of Germany, and proclaimed to them that there was "no sacrifice too big for the honour and the freedom of the path that the Führer has for Germany." Although it is rather doubtful that Göring has the full weight of his convictions behind him when he penned this salutation, the important aspect of this proclamation would have been the way that it would have been received. To the boys of the 12th SS, it would be seen as another confirmation from a high-ranking Nazi leader that their struggle would not be in vain. By calling their efforts in the field and in the coming battles as the soldier's gift to Hitler, Göring would have succeeded in presenting the upcoming days and months in a way that would make it a personal insult to Hitler if the members of the 12th SS were not successful.⁹⁷

The NSFO was also involved in planning ceremonies that could be used for ideological indoctrination. On 23 January 1944, the Abt. VI circulated a memorandum outlining how the upcoming anniversary celebration of the Nazi seizure

Filmveranstaltungen und Vortragsredern, 24.1.1944.

⁹⁷ NARA, T-354/153/3797028, 20.4.1944.

of power on 30 January 1933 was to be celebrated. The first item on the agenda was a song entitled "Freedom only through our life," followed by a poem entitled *Dem Führer*. This poem contained such stirring lines like "You have called your Volk . . . to fight for the parts of the earth," and "Führer, you gave us the signal to fight. We . . . storm laughing to victory." The final stanza of this poem reads: "You are in us, and you are the victory. You also are the Reich that we build." After another common song ("Salute the Flag, Salute the Sign"), the unit commander was to read Goebbels' recollections of the seizure of power, including the observation that literally hundreds of thousands of men, each carrying a brightly-lit torch, marched by the new Chancellor and shouted "with joy their gratitude." Another song, entitled "A Young Volk Rises Up," was to be sung, and finally the unit commanders were to finish the evening with appropriate comments. It seems that the Abt. VI preferred the service to be undertaken around campfires, reminiscent of the soldier's earlier days in the Hitler Youth, but the strategic and practical problems associated with the request probably negated the wish.⁹⁸

As mentioned above, the NSFO was involved in the distribution of reading materials to the troops.⁹⁹ However, the NSFO was also involved in more unorthodox

⁹⁸ NARA, T-354/153/3797033, Feiervorschlag für den 30.Januar., 23.1.1944.

⁹⁹ See NARA, T-354/155/3799086, Betr.: Anschaffung von Bücherkisten, 24.3.1944. In this document, the NSFO stated that he would hand out "boxes of books" in order to "intellectually stimulate and enrich" the minds of the troops. These books were to be read during their free time. Other reading materials included *Das Schwarze Korps*, the official newspaper of the SS. For an excellent examination of the content of *Das Schwarze Korps*, see William L. Combs' *The Voice of the SS: A History of the SS Journal 'Das Schwarze Korps'*. (New York : Peter Lang,

methods of ideological indoctrination. For example, in March of 1944 the NSFO indicated that he was going to take over the implementation of sporting programs,¹⁰⁰ presumably in an effort to teach the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* to the troops while they played their sports. Another example had the NSFO soliciting SS veterans of the Eastern Front for their war stories. He, along with other NSFO's in other divisions, was attempting to compile a book of stories about the "heroic" deeds of the SS men in order to motivate the troops.¹⁰¹

In his study on the combat motivation of the Vietcong, William Henderson concluded that the PLA soldier had a high combat motivation because of party organization and ideology, the leaders of the soldiers were effective in transmitting the political ideology, and because of the presence of a primary group of soldiers with strong homogenous values.¹⁰² In the societal structure of Nazi Germany, the boys of the 12th SS had all three as well. Westbrook claimed that sociopolitical indoctrination would only be effective on those who possessed a highly symbolic national commitment. The Hitler Youth possessed such a commitment. He also claimed that sociopolitical training would only occur if the nation had an articulated ideology that enjoyed majority support, and if the nation would have a level of

1986).

¹⁰⁰ NARA, T-354/155/3799087, Betr.: Sportabzeichenwesen; Neuorganisation der bisherigen Vorgänge beim Inspekteur für Leibesübungen, 24.3.1944.

¹⁰¹ NARA, T-354/155/3799088, Betr.: Beiträge zu den SS-Leitheften, 25.3.1944.

¹⁰² William Darryl Henderson, *Why the Vietcong Fought*, 1979, pp. 119-20.

institutionalization to implement this ideology.¹⁰³ Nazi Germany had this as well. The elements of inducement and coercion, both vital to Keegan's theory of combat motivation, are also evident in this case.¹⁰⁴ The ideological indoctrination of the German youth, with its core on militarism, sacrifice, and war, is the key reason for the fanatical combat motivation of the 12th SS. However, it is not enough to end the examination of the ideological indoctrination of the German youth with the assertion that "ideology was key" without an examination of the content of the ideology that was stressed. If the only content of the ideological indoctrination of the German youth was militarism, the end result would not have been a generation of fanatics, but rather a generation of elite soldiers. There has to be a further reason why the German youth turned into the fanatical soldiers that they did. In order to understand this process, it is necessary to turn our attention to the content of the ideology, and how that transformed the boys of the 12th SS into the monsters that they became.

¹⁰³ Stephen D. Wesbrook, "Sociopolitical Training," 1983, pp 25-6, 44-5.

¹⁰⁴ John Keegan, "Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation," 1997, pp. 6-8.

CHAPTER 4

For the Führer and the *Volksgemeinschaft*: The Importance of the Unquantifiable

Hubert Meyer, the Abt. Ia for the 12th SS, noted the following story in his history of the division:

One more example may show the attitude of the young soldiers of the "Hitlerjugend" Division as they staked their lives and died. The medical officer of the Pionierbataillon, Hauptsturmführer Dr. Friedrich Zistler . . . reports on a moving experience:

I was lying, badly wounded, in a collection room of a field hospital and momentarily came out of my morphine-induced slumber. Next to me I heard a comrade, moaning from pain, speaking very clearly: "Mother, mother, but I mean Germany." . . . [T]hese had been the last words from the mouth of this boy.¹

What had occurred within the mind of that young soldier? Why were his last words directed towards his new "mother"? Why were the last thoughts of this boy towards his society, and not his real mother?

This tragic story illustrates an important point in trying to understand the combat motivation of a fanatical soldier. Before a fanatic can be motivated to fight, there must be present some sort of ideological concept to fight for. Once systematically indoctrinated with this concept, the fanatic will either fight for its inception or defend it to the death. The importance of the ideological indoctrination

¹ Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*, 1994, p. 89.

on this matter is key; if the soldier is not sufficiently indoctrinated concerning the validity and the superiority of the concept, the combat motivation of the fighter will be virtually non-existent. For the fanatics of the 12th SS, the concept with which they were indoctrinated and charged with defending was the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The National Socialist interpretation of the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* centred on creating a classless society based on race. Instead of the current social structure, with all of its class divisions and problems, Hitler and the Nazis believed that they could create a society where everyone was treated equally and whose membership was based on race. To Hitler, the creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was key to the survival of the Third Reich. It was this ideological concept, combined with a quasi-religious belief and faith in Hitler, which was the basis for the combat motivation for the fanatics of the 12th SS.

In his study entitled "The Psychological and Cultural Roots of Group Violence," Ervin Staub examined why people would could be motivated to fight for their country and their society. He found that when a society shared an elevated self-concept in relation to other societies, the belief in a nation's right to exert influence, and even the use of force, in promoting the "right" values and causes will develop. The individual's experience in having power will also feed into the collective self-concept. An ideology which provides the image of a better life will also identify the enemies standing in the way of fulfilment. In the case of National Socialism, essentially anything that was non-Aryan stood in the way of the realization of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. According to Staub, these types of ideologies genuinely motivate

people, and it can lead to the complete destruction of the enemies in order to fulfil the "higher" ideals. Indeed, through an intense devaluation of the enemy, a staple of National Socialist propaganda, intense reactions towards that enemy would develop. Even more intense reactions would occur once the society's elite status was threatened. When this occurs, Staub noted that a psychological process would commence that would lead to violent irrational actions, like genocide or mass killings.² Fanatical fighting would also be a logical reaction to this process. For the soldiers of the 12th SS, the invasion by the Allies meant a direct threat to the implementation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that Hitler had promised them. Any action taken by the troops in reaction to this threat would be perceived as beneficial to the cause of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The dedication to the *Volksgemeinschaft* by the soldiers of the 12th SS is important to understand. Hitler viewed citizenship in the *Volksgemeinschaft* as an honour complete with religious overtones.³ The importance of being included within this new community of Germans was expressed in the same language that the listener would have heard in their Sunday morning services.⁴ Hitler knew that a devotion to the *Volksgemeinschaft* in a religious manner by the German population would mean that they would structure their lives in order to follow it. By adhering to the

² Ervin Staub, "The Psychological and Cultural Roots of Group Violence: The Gulf War." *The Journal of Psychohistory* 19.1 (1991): 116-18.

³ Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 1985, pp. 86-7.

⁴ See Michael Sullivan, "Hitler as Gottmensch: Religious Imagery in the Public Speeches and Proclamations of Adolf Hitler, 1932-1934." Unpublished BA Thesis, Atlantic Baptist University, 1997.

concepts of the *Volksgemeinschaft* religiously, the strong attachment to the National Socialist way of life would develop, an attachment that would lead to intense psychological reactions when it would be threatened.

To this end, National Socialist propaganda stressed "a national community whose social harmony, unity, and political authority rested on the indoctrination of people from all walks of life, thus transcending class conflict."⁵ Nazi propaganda was geared "to radically re-structure German society so that the prevailing class, religious, and sectional loyalties would be replaced by a new heightened national awakening." In order to achieve the total public commitment to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the National Socialist government sought to eliminate the person's private sphere by breaking down social and religious barriers. The main tools that the Nazis used in attempting to set up this state of *Volksgemeinschaft* were terror (by the SS) and indoctrination (of the Hitler Youth). Indeed, National Socialist ideology emphasized to all (but especially the youth) the need to subordinate oneself within the ranks of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁶

There is considerable historical debate as to whether the National Socialist government was successful in implementing the *Volksgemeinschaft* on a grand scale. In all probability, the Nazis were unsuccessful in converting the average German to their cause. In a study of one German district, John Connelly determined that

⁵ Stephen G. Fritz, "We are trying . . . ," 1996, p. 686.

⁶ See David Welch, "Propaganda and Indoctrination," 1987, p. 410; H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 1975, pp. 97, 119; Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 1989, p. 8.

Germans did not believe fully in the rhetoric of *Volksgemeinschaft*, but they knew how to use its concepts to their own advantage. In examining the popular appeal to *Volksgemeinschaft* by citizens of the Eisenach district in letters written to the NSDAP district office (*Kreisleitung*), Connelly found that most used the rhetoric of *Volksgemeinschaft* in an attempt to have a dispute ruled in their favour. Indeed, even people who did not believe in Nazi ideology seemed to participate in the language of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, since they knew that it would be advantageous to their own personal situation.⁷ It is probable that the Nazis knew that they would be unable to convert most of the German population into a religious belief in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, since most people would have been exposed to alternate world views that would have influenced their outlook of life. The two areas of German society where the message of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was received and internalized in a religious manner were the military and the youth. Indeed, when the *Volksgemeinschaft* began to crumble, it was the youth within the military who tried fanatically to prevent it from collapsing.

According to Welch, the segment of the German population that was particularly receptive to the *Volksgemeinschaft* myth was the youth. He stated that the "assault on the individual . . . was directed primarily at young people with the intention of enveloping each individual at every stage of development within a single organization by subjecting him to a planned course of indoctrination." The message

⁷ John Connelly, "The Uses of *Volksgemeinschaft*: Letters to the NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach, 1939-1940." *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (December 1996): 899-930.

of the *Volksgemeinschaft* served as an outlet for the ambitions of a younger generation which was frustrated with a discredited establishment.⁸ The educational system played an important role in the development of this viewpoint. Hitler believed that "the state's primary educational task for the welfare of the German race was to instil a racial consciousness into every boy and girl." This would ensure that the child would become a valuable member of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁹ The aim of education was also to stress the collective (*Volksgemeinschaft*) over the individual, through "the individual's unqualified embrace of the general will as embodied in the person of the Führer."¹⁰ The education of the children in this concept did not take the form solely of classroom lectures; the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* was transmitted to the children in events like the annual Flag Ceremonies at the school. The school year would begin with the ceremonial raising of the flag, and the year would end with the lowering of it. The students had to recite poetry such as "The flag is our faith; In God and Volk and Land; Whoever wants to rob us of it; Must take our life and hand," and they were subject to words from Hitler that stressed the symbolic importance of the flag on the lives of the youth. Throughout the carefully orchestrated ceremony, students were admonished to work together to maintain the National Socialist ideal of culture.¹¹

⁸ Welch, pp. 411-2.

⁹ Koch, p. 162.

¹⁰ Blackburn, p. 116.

¹¹ Hermann Klaus, "On Festivities in the School," in George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 1966, pp. 129-31.

Kamenetsky also noted that the Nazi's goal in re-interpreting literature was to create a sense of loyalty and complete dedication with the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and to encourage children to "march proudly into the future and never know defeat."¹² It may be useful to note a number of examples of poetry that were indicative of the National Socialist's goal of obtaining a religious adherence to the *Volksgemeinschaft* on the part of the youth. In one textbook, children would read:

Let me go, Mother, let me go!
 All of that crying is of no more use to us;
 For we go to defend the Fatherland.
 Let me go, Mother, let me go!
 In a last embrace I will kiss your lips;
 Germany must live, even if we must die!¹³

In another, a similar theme emerged:

The highest good in people is his Volk
 The highest good in the Volk is their truth
 The Volk's soul lives in their talk
 The Volk, the truth, and true speech
 Find us today, find us every day.¹⁴

The Nazis even produced a "Confession of Faith" for the youth, similar to the creeds that would have been recited within the church:

I believe in the German mother who gave me birth.
 I believe in the German peasant who breaks the sod for his people.
 I believe in the German worker who performs work for his people.
 I believe in the dead who gave their lives for their people.
 For my god is my people.

¹² Christa Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature*, 1984, p. 310.

¹³ Quoted in Blackburn, p. 43.

¹⁴ "Die Wahrheit Siegt!" in *Wille und Macht: Führerorgan der nationalsozialistischen Jugend*. 6.19 (1 Oct 1938): 25.

I believe in Germany!¹⁵

Examples such as these show the extent to which the National Socialist government was willing to go in indoctrinating the youth in the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

There seems to be every indication that the Nazis were successful in their attempts. The Hitler Youth was structured so that it would remain classless, thereby giving the children a taste of what was to come when the *Volksgemeinschaft* could be applied throughout the whole of German society. Von Schirach had said that the "symbol of the classless community of our youth is the flag of the Hitler Youth," and it was the belief that one was in service to an ideal community that promoted both social commitment and integration that gave Nazism sense of legitimacy among the youth.¹⁶ Indeed, Inge Scholl stated that before she became disillusioned with Nazism, she believed that she was a member of "a great, well-ordered organization which embraced and esteemed everybody from the ten-year-old boy to the adult man."¹⁷

The integration of the army into the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was another goal of the National Socialist government. The concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* directly appealed to the soldier within the Wehrmacht, since it was roughly moulded after the "trench socialism" of World War One. The militaristic influences on the "national community whose social harmony, unity, and political authority rested on the indoctrination of people from all walks of life, thus transcending class conflict"

¹⁵ Quoted in Blackburn, pp. 76-7.

¹⁶ Fritz, p. 704; Koch, pp. 119-24; Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 1992, p. 111.

¹⁷ Inge Scholl, "To Be Part of a Movement!," in Mosse, pp. 271-4.

made the *Volksgemeinschaft* an easy sell to the soldiers.¹⁸ In his study outlining the relationship between the Wehrmacht and the *Volksgemeinschaft*, Manfred Messerschmidt recorded that even as early as 1933, the German military leaders were "already fascinated by the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and petty bourgeois anxieties about social status hardly entered into it." The army clung to the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* because it would eliminate anti-military factions from German society, therefore elevating them into a position of higher power. As Nazi influence increased within German society, some military educators argued that the soldier's education had to relate to the so-called racial foundations of the Volk. Messerschmidt asserted that during the twelve year relationship between Hitler and National Socialism and the Wehrmacht, the concepts of race, the "Führer" principle, and *Volksgemeinschaft* dominated throughout. The larger the Wehrmacht grew, "the more it reflected the *Volksgemeinschaft*, [and it fitted] more homogeneously . . . into Hitler's system of rule."¹⁹ According to Förster, "neither Hitler nor the generals were interested in a sophisticated educational programme. What was desired was an instinct for the *Volksgemeinschaft*'s needs and an unshakable belief in the Führer."²⁰

In his study on the Wehrmacht, Steven G. Fritz tried to prove that the main motivator for the German forces during the last few years of the war was the defence

¹⁸ See Fritz, p. 686.

¹⁹ Manfred Messerschmidt, "The Wehrmacht and the *Volksgemeinschaft*," 1983, pp. 719-744.

²⁰ Jürgen Förster, "Motivation and Indoctrination in the Wehrmacht," 1997, p. 269.

of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. By examining the letters and diaries written by many front-line soldiers and NCOs, Fritz determined that the typical soldier did not fight devoid of a sense of purpose, but was sustained by a broad range of values, most importantly anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and *Lebensraum*. Many soldiers also depicted themselves as conducting "an ideological crusade" in defence of both European civilization and their concept of German community. The combination of ideology, idealism, and first-hand experience helped in convincing the soldier that they were fighting for their very existence. Fritz believed that the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* was the key to the attraction that many soldiers felt towards the Nazi regime. He maintained that even though the ideal of *Volksgemeinschaft* has been overlooked, denied, or downplayed as an agent of social integration, it contributed greatly to Nazi success in creating a sense that a new society was in the offing. This belief in a national community represented the vital principle around which a new German society was to be organized was especially strong among the youth. For Fritz, *Volksgemeinschaft* was in fact a very positive goal for the German soldier to strive for, and it was the quest for a new society that motivated the soldier to fight against the forces who strove to destroy its inception. The allure of Nazism, especially through the Labour Service and the Hitler Youth, could be found in the creation of the belief that one was in service to an ideal community that promoted both social commitment and integration. The ideal of *Volksgemeinschaft* essentially grew out of the people,

and it contributed to the motivation and the resiliency of the German soldier.²¹ In support of Fritz's assertions, Bartov quoted a soldier as writing: "We are fighting . . . in the belief that the Noble and the Best must prove itself anew in the battle with the ghostly manifestations of Materialism. I see the whole nation in the process of being recast, in a storm of suffering and blood, which will enable us to reach new heights."²²

It is clear that the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* would have been communicated to soldier of the 12th SS in many ways, including within the structure of the educational and youth structures, as well as the structure of the military. If the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was important in motivating the average soldier, whose indoctrination to the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* would have become systematic only upon entry into the military, how much more of a motivator would it have been for the boys of the 12th SS, who had been exposed to it for the majority of their life? Kurt Meyer noted that the composition of the members of the 12th SS

²¹ Fritz, pp. 683-710. It is worth noting the Fritz disagreed with Bartov to the extent to which the extreme teachings of Nazism had on the motivation of the common soldier. He stated: "If the resilient and resolute *Landser* thus went beyond Jüngerian functionalism and embodied to a great extent the Nazi notion of the hard, dynamic soldier in the service of an ideal, what was it for which they fought? Certainly the incessant stream of propaganda served to produce in the minds of many soldiers a legitimacy for the Nazi regime which encouraged willing obedience. And the flow of racist and anti-Semitic ideological indoctrination undeniably reinforced a general sense of racial superiority on the part of many *Landser*. But this negative integration, so thoroughly documented by Bartov, by itself could not induce the amazing resilience under conditions of extreme disintegration demonstrated by the average German soldier." See Fritz, p. 699.

²² Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 1992, pp. 116-7.

was "in itself all social strata of German people."²³ Unlike the other German soldiers, who were fighting for an abstract cause that they may or may not have experienced first-hand in their lifetime, the soldiers of the 12th SS, upon leaving the structure of the Hitler Youth, which was formulated upon the lines of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, entered a military formation where one of the key concepts was a structure based on a *Volksgemeinschaft*.²⁴

The belief in a just cause is essential for the motivation of any soldier, but even more so for the fanatic. Since German soldiers on the most part fought steadfastly in support of Nazism and the *Volksgemeinschaft*, there must have been something about the Nazi *Weltanschauung* that struck a responsive chord with them. For the boys of the 12th SS, Nazism and the *Volksgemeinschaft* was the only thing that they would have ever known. In this light, their reaction in attempting to prevent its collapse is somewhat understandable, although their methods were definitely inexcusable. Their motivation in defence of the *Volksgemeinschaft* came as a result of systematic ideological indoctrination, but only because their religious adherence to it dictated a fanatical response when it appeared to be threatened. Without the existence of a tangible ideological concept to fight for, the motivation for the fanatic to engage in conflict would be virtually non-existent. When this

²³ Directorate of History and Heritage, 159.95.022 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol II, Testimony of Kurt Meyer, p. 553.

²⁴ The *Volksgemeinschaft* concept was not only applied to the area of class among the troops, but also to the relationship between officers and soldiers. This vital relationship will be discussed in full in Chapter 6.

concept is seemingly personified by a charismatic leader, the motivation for its defence intensifies dramatically, and the means for its defence will become even more radical.

For the youth and the soldiers of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler was the personification of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. To them, Hitler brought his country and his people from the brink of disaster to its rightful position as a power in Europe. Initially, the faith in Hitler was not limited to just the military and the youth. In his book entitled *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, Ian Kershaw outlined how Hitler had convinced the majority of the German population that he was their political saviour. The population's belief in the infallibility of Hitler, though, crumbled with the German disaster at Stalingrad and the subsequent defeats in the Eastern Front, as well as the destruction that occurred with the Allied bombing raids over German territory. However, according to Kershaw, the groups that did not relinquish their belief in the "Hitler Myth" were loyal party activists, the youth, and the soldiers. The youth, disillusioned with the actions of the Nazi Party, separated Hitler from being the head of the National Socialists, and instead placed him in a quasi-religious way as the head of the German Volk.²⁵ Even Shils and Janowitz found that although they were prisoners and that they realized that the chances of winning the war were non-existent, German soldiers retained an unshakable faith in Hitler and his actions. They also found that as the age of the

²⁵ Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. (Oxford : Clarendon, 1987). See pp. 207-9.

soldier decreased, the amount of faith exhibited toward Hitler increased.²⁶

The faith that the youth and the soldiers had in Hitler was essentially quasi-religious, a faith that had been stressed through the carefully crafted efforts of the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda. All throughout the early history of the Nazi Party, Hitler had attempted to stress that the work that he was doing was divinely inspired. Once he became Chancellor, the use of religious imagery increased, even to the point where he was portrayed as equal to God.²⁷ Hitler was portrayed as the messiah of the German people, intrusted with the mission which included the implementation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. For example, Hitler stated: "God has created this people and it has grown according to his will. And according to our will . . . it shall remain and never pass away." Hans Schemm, Bavarian Minister of Education, wrote: "In fulfilling the will of the people, the Führer fulfils the will of God, for the voice of the Volk is the voice of God."²⁸ Walter C. Langer wrote:

Public meetings and particularly the Nuremberg rally took on a religious atmosphere. All the stagings were designed to create a supernatural and religious atmosphere, and Hitler's entry was more befitting a god than a man. In Berlin one of the large art shops on Unter den Linden exhibited a large portrait of Hitler in the centre of its display window. Hitler's portrait was entirely surrounded, as though by a halo, with various copies of a painting of Christ. Notes appeared in the press to the effect that, "As he spoke, one

²⁶ See Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration . . .," 1948, pp. 304-5.

²⁷ See Sullivan, 1997. Hans Kerrl, who was an original member of Hitler's cabinet, and was appointed Reich Minister for Church Affairs in 1935, even went as far as proclaiming Hitler as the personification of the Holy Ghost. See Louis L. Snyder, *Hitler and Nazism*, (New York : Franklin Watts, 1961) p. 79.

²⁸ Blackburn, pp. 11-2.

heard God's mantle rustle through the room!"²⁹

In 1937, the mayor of Hamburg stated that "We need no priests or parsons. We communicate direct with God through Adolf Hitler. He has many Christ-like qualities." An extreme case is told by Dorothy Thompson, who stated:

At Garmish I met an American from Chicago. He had been at Oberammergau, at the Passion Play. "These people are all crazy," he said. "This is not a revolution, it's a revival. They think Hitler is God. Believe it or not, a German woman sat next to me at the Passion Play and when they hoisted Jesus on the Cross, she said, 'There he is. That is our Führer, our Hitler.' And when they paid out the thirty pieces of silver to Judas, she said: 'That is Röhm, who betrayed the leader.'"³⁰

As a result of this constant bombardment, Hitler was widely regarded as an intermediary between the German people and the divine. According to Grunberger, in Germany, "especially since Bismark, leadership had been popularly conceived as existing in some extra-terrestrial dimension of its own." Leaders were seen as idols endowed with superhuman qualities.³¹ However, the extent to which Hitler played upon these emotions was unlike anything ever seen in Germany. The influence that Hitler had on the beliefs of the youth and the soldiers were to have a definite impact on the combat motivation of the 12th SS.

The extent to which the youth were subjected to the "Hitler Myth" was, like

²⁹ Walter C. Langer, *The Mind of Adolf Hitler: The Secret Wartime Report*. (New York : Basic Books, 1972) p. 62.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

³¹ Richard Grunberger believed that most Germans were susceptible to pseudo-spiritual concepts like fate and providence, and to the notion that Hitler was the medium-like instrument of immanent forces. See Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, 1983, pp. 115-21.

all other forms of propaganda, unlike the efforts to any other segment of the population. In the grade-school reading primers, Hitler was portrayed as a messianic figure, the "kind and benevolent leader of the German people who 'knows what is best for all' and who acts out of the generosity of his heart."³² Even lunchtime prayers were changed for the purposes of ideological indoctrination. For example the following prayer was required to be recited before lunch at the NSV (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* - National Socialist People's Welfare Organization) children's lunch program in Cologne:

Führer, my Führer, bequeathed to me by the Lord,
Protect and preserve me as long as I live!
Thou hast rescued Germany from deepest distress,
I thank thee today for my daily bread.
Abideth thou long with me, forsaketh me not,
Führer, my Führer, my faith and my light!
Heil, mein Führer! ³³

According to Koch, "the one constant ideological element of the Hitler Youth was the blind belief in Adolf Hitler, which in Schirach's pronouncements often bordered on blasphemy, when Hitler was presented as the God of the Germans." In fact, von Schirach proclaimed to the Hitler Youth things like "He who serves Adolf Hitler, the Führer, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany, serves God," and "Your name, my Führer, is the happiness of youth, your name, my Führer, is for us

³² Kamenetsky, p. 177.

³³ Johann Neuhäusler, "The Führer Bequeathed to Me by the Lord," in Mosse, p. 241.

everlasting life."³⁴ Books entitled *Adolf Hitler an seine Jugend* (Adolf Hitler and His Youth) were advertised in *Wille und Macht*,³⁵ and even one whole issue was devoted to "Adolf Hitler's Poetical Words and Works," where the editors took quotes from various sources, like Hitler's speeches and *Mein Kampf*, and arranged them in poetical form. Of course, the excerpts chosen all had a particular emphasis on Hitler's view of youth and how they should live. He believed that they should follow his example of life, stating: "I believe in Germany and I will fight for it today, tomorrow, and in the future when the battle comes to us." The youth were to live their life according to "values and laws of the Volk," and strongly implied that the concepts of living and fighting were intertwined.³⁶ Once the youth were old enough to bear arms and fight, their faith in Hitler provided much of the motivation for their resistance even when all seemed lost.

Once the boys of the 12th SS joined their unit in Beverloo for training, they came into contact with a cadre of SS officers who had internalized a deep religious faith in Hitler. Although some of the loyalty that was given to Hitler was due to the fact that they could achieve a high standing within the SS even though they had a limited education,³⁷ the religious devotion to Hitler was by far a more important

³⁴ Koch, p. 129.

³⁵ *Wille und Macht*, 6.12 (15 June 1938).

³⁶ See "Das dichterische Wort im Werf Adolf Hitlers," *Wille und Macht*, 6.8 (15 April 1938). Hitler also expressed his thanks to mothers who delivered children to the Volk, and he proclaimed his belief that these youth will lead the German Volk into the future.

³⁷ See Tony Foster, *Meeting of Generals*. (Toronto : Methuen, 1986) p. 128.

motivating factor, a devotion exploited by the Nazis through their constant bombardment of the soldiers with propaganda. According to Bartov,

The Wehrmacht therefore did not have to start from scratch, but could rather build on an already existing and pervasive world-view, when it directed its own massive indoctrinational efforts at the fresh recruits. And, while some generals hoped to maintain at least a few elements of the traditional military code in the early stages of the war, by the time of the Russian campaign they had either been purged, or had compromised themselves in criminal actions, or had come to accept Hitler's view of the war and to believe in his mission. No wonder that, with the first crisis on the Eastern Front, it was the army itself which insisted on further intensifying the ideological indoctrination of the troops in view of the growing material and manpower shortages.³⁸

The propaganda that had been transmitted to the soldiers on the front, like the propaganda back at home, made a conscious effort to portray Hitler as a divine being. However, another important aspect of this propaganda were the assertions that Hitler could control the fate of the nation, but only with the help of the military. He was presented as the creator of a new German nation, as well as a guardian of Germany's ancient traditions, and as long as he lived and the German population remained loyal to him, no harm could come to the Reich. The soldiers were told that they were "God's instruments charged with protecting German culture and blood," fighting communism, which was "Satan's servant, unleashed from hell to destroy civilization. . . . Faith in the Führer allowed one to believe in the essential moral value of the most heinous crime . . . and to ignore all signs pointing at the approaching military catastrophe. 'Belief' in Hitler, in an increasingly religious,

³⁸ Omer Bartov, "A View From Below: Survival, Cohesion, and Brutality on the Eastern Front." *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939-1941*. ed. by Bernd Wegner. (Providence : Berghahn, 1997) pp. 334-5.

metaphysical sense of the term, was a central element in Nazi ideology."³⁹ As a result of the constant effort (and success) on the part of the Nazis to indoctrinate their soldiers, Bartov asserted:

The average German soldier retained throughout most of the war a strong belief in the Führer as a great political and military leader. Moreover, Hitler was viewed . . . as God's true representative in the world and as the only human being - or at least the only German - capable of moulding history and fate. Hitler's own tendency to refer to his close association with destiny and providence greatly fuelled this belief throughout Germany, but most particularly among the army's rank and file, whose constant confrontation with danger and death made it of supreme importance for them to believe that their sacrifices were serving some higher, if not indeed divine, cause.⁴⁰

The boys of the 12th SS experienced other important factors that contributed to their belief and faith in Hitler. As has been discussed earlier, the volunteers of the 12th SS, once they had become part of the *Jungvolk*, were presented to Hitler as a gift on his birthday. Also, it was constantly communicated to the troops how Hitler viewed this new division as a "symbol of the willingness of German youth to sacrifice itself to the achievement of final victory."⁴¹ These elements enough would have provided the soldiers with an internalized sense of importance in relation to their relationship with Hitler. Externally, the boys were only the second division in the entire German armed services to have the name of Hitler in their divisional name, the first being the 1st SS LAH. Because of this honour, the troops of the 12th SS were entitled to wear an sleeve-band with either the term "Adolf Hitler" or the term

³⁹ Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 1992, pp. 118-25. See also Bartov, "Indoctrination and Motivation in the Wehrmacht," 1986, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Bartov, "A View From Below," 1997, p. 336.

⁴¹ Michael Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, 1997, p. 24.

"Hitlerjugend" embroidered on it, itself another source of pride, but also a reminder of their devotion. This close association with Hitler, especially in the quasi-religious sense that the boys would have viewed their relationship with him, would have contributed substantially to the combat motivation of the 12th SS.

Without a doubt, the devotion that the boys of the 12th SS felt towards Hitler and the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* contributed substantially to their fanatical combat motivation. Without the intense sense of religious duty felt towards their society and to their Führer, the result of years and years of systematic indoctrination by the National Socialist regime, the boys would not have acted in the ways that they did on the battlefields of Normandy. Their devotion to their ideology was the factor which differentiated their actions from being merely elite soldiers to being the fanatical soldiers that they were. However, although the impact that the ideological indoctrination had on the combat motivation of the 12th SS should not overshadow the other important elements that contributed to their motivation. The concrete motivators that the 12th SS experienced further differentiated their actions from being merely elite to being fanatical, and in order to arrive at a complete theory of combat motivation for fanatical soldiers, an examination of these motivators, in light of the ideological motivators already outlined, is essential.

CHAPTER 5

On Weaponry and Training: The Importance of the Quantifiable

It is possible for a person to spend their whole life devoted to learning a skill. For example, a person could read every book on car repair, watch movies explaining the basics step by step, and imagine what it would be like to finally work on a car. But until the person is given a set of tools and has experienced hands-on instruction, they will never develop into a very competent mechanic, no matter how much the desire is there. Without proper tools and leadership, the desire to be a mechanic will quickly turn to frustration and disappointment. Eventually, the desire to become a mechanic would be lost, and all of the time and effort in training the person would have been wasted. The same is true with a fanatical soldier. If soldiers do not receive concrete motivators; that is, if there are no weapons to use or nobody to show them how to use them effectively, the years of ideological indoctrination conducted on him by his leaders is for naught. Although the most important factor in the combat motivation of a fanatic is their internalization of a radicalized version of the world view of their society, it cannot exist without concrete motivators and ultimately the opportunity to display their fanatical devotion in the service of their cause. This was a fact that was readily apparent to Hitler and the Nazi military leaders at the time.

It is clear that the National Socialist hierarchy invested much time and effort on the indoctrination of their youth, and it is clear that the 12th SS was to be the example for the nation to what the youth could accomplish. However, unless the new division could produce successful results on the battlefield, the negative reaction against the slaughter of the teenage boys would have dealt the Nazis a staggering blow to their grip on power. No matter how much they were bombarded by the propaganda themes of devotion and sacrifice, nobody was willing to see the best of German youth perish in a vain attempt by Hitler to push his country into a state of total war. Realizing this, the Nazis at first recruited for the 12th SS under a cloud of secrecy, fearing that public awareness of the plan for this new division would arouse fears of a second Langemarck, the horrible slaughter of teenaged German recruits in the First World War where boundless enthusiasm could not overcome the deficiencies in their hasty training.¹ The best way to prevent a reoccurrence of this tragedy would be through systematic and thorough training of the recruits, which in turn increased the combat motivation of the teenagers. As is the case with all soldiers, proper training will give the soldier the belief that they have a chance in surviving any engagement. The more training that a soldier or a unit gets, and the better their weaponry, the greater their sense of eliteness, and therefore the motivation of the unit will increase as well. To someone who is already highly motivated to fight fanatically, even before formal training begins, the occurrence of excellent training in the making of war would serve as the perfect compliment to the

¹ Craig Luther, *Blood and Honor*, 1985, p. 31.

ideological principles already internalized by the soldier.

The first step in creating the sense of eliteness within the ranks of the 12th SS was the constant effort by the Nazis to provide the youth with a sense of the superiority of the German race over everyone else. This would have been a part of the racial education that was present in the school system and within the Hitler Youth, but the inherent purpose of it would be to give the youth the feeling that nobody would have the ability to prevent the Aryan youth from doing what the Führer had demanded of them, especially on the battlefield. In a wartime issue of *Wille und Macht*, one story illustrates this point clearly. In an article entitled "Ein Tag im Osten" (A Day in the East), there is a conversation between a German soldier and an old Russian peasant, where the Russian bemoans the Russian youth, saying that all that they want to do is fish, and wishes that the Russian youth were more like the German youth. The article gives the impression to the youth reading it that even the Russians believed that the years of education and sacrifice that the German youth had undergone would provide a real and tangible benefit to the Germans on the battlefield.²

The conveyance of this sense of superiority was followed by the emphasis of the sacredness of service in the military. As Blackburn explained:

The ultimate purification for males was compulsory military service. And the saturation of German life in its entirety by the soldierly ethos was an inclusive goal of education: inculcating the military virtues from the time of early childhood to the threshold of maturity. Compulsory military service then

² Sepp Keller, "Ein Tag im Osten," *Wille und Macht: Führerorgan der nationalsozialistischen Jugend* 8.9 (1 May 1940): p. 3.

insured that any remaining vestiges of intellectualism or personalism would be removed once and for all before the beginning of professional life. The total militarization of German life satisfied an urgent goal: acceptance of war by the individual as an integral part of a life of Darwinian struggle. . . . The community par excellence was the army, the agency through which Nazi ideals could be most thoroughly indoctrinated, including the ideals of struggle, duty, sacrifice, and acceptance of death. The Nazi education aimed to prevent the decline of the martial spirit.³

The compulsory military service was eagerly awaited by the majority of the youth, especially those who had internalized all, even the most radical, of the National Socialist propaganda. To these youths, entrance into the army was acceptable. But in a society where the martial spirit dominated, the elite branch of military services was the SS. According to Rempel, "the most dedicated members of the HJ preferred the equally young and dynamic SS over the party's aging and lethargic political cadre,"⁴ or over the much less Nazified army.

The development of the SS, and the Waffen-SS in particular, is best seen as "a manifestation of National Socialism *in power*."⁵ With the re-founding of the NSDAP in 1925 after Hitler was released from jail following the abortive "Beer Hall Putsch" of 1923, a tiny group of eight men formed an organization which provided bodyguard services to Hitler. The *Schutzstaffel*, which later became better known as the SS, was under the direct control of Hitler, which in turn led to friction between them and the Party's private armed goons, the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, or Storm

³ Gilmer Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich*, 1985, pp. 117, 137.

⁴ Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 1989, p. 3.

⁵ Bernd Wegner, *The Waffen-SS: Organization, Ideology and Function*. trans. by Ronald Webster. (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1990) p. 62.

Troopers). With the appointment of Heinrich Himmler to the post of *Reichsführer-SS* on 6 January 1929, and with the purge of the SA in 1934, the SS gained in power, prestige, and numbers, as it became the NSDAP's own "Party police." Within the radical SS ideological framework, the SS staked its claim to protecting the growing Reich internally, which later translated into the mindset that it was the best organization to promote and protect the Reich externally once Hitler had consolidated his power and began his aggressive foreign policy.⁶ Entrance into this ideologically driven formation of the NSDAP was voluntary, unlike entrance into the army. By the time of the Allied landings in Normandy, there were essentially two branches of the SS. The first, the *Waffen-SS*, was the armed military wing of the SS, while the second, the *Allgemeine (General) SS*, was the "spiritual fountainhead" of the SS, whose main assignments during the war were concentration camp guard duties.⁷

At the beginning of the war the term *Waffen-SS* was unknown. Originally known as the *SS-Verfügungstruppen*, the armed SS grew slowly until a Hitler decree on 17 August 1938. This placed the *SS-Verfügungstruppen* not as a part of the Wehrmacht or the police, but as a standing armed force at Hitler's disposal, a force that would come under the command of the Wehrmacht only in the event of a war. Acceptance into this formation was based on rigid physical and racial standards, and

⁶ Ibid., pp. 62-4.

⁷ George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945*. (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1966) pp. xxv-xxvii.

service in the *SS-Verfügungstruppen* counted towards the national military obligation. In addition to regular military training, SS troops were also subject to intense ideological indoctrination. Combat trained SS troops were first used in the occupations of the Rhineland, the Sudetenland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, and as a result of their formidable showing in a combat situation during the invasion of Poland the *Waffen-SS* were allocated enough men and resources by the *Wehrmacht* to increase their strength to three divisions, named the *LAH*, *Das Reich*, and *Totenkopf*. By the end of the war, there were 38 *Waffen-SS* divisions within the order of battle of the German armed forces.⁸

Blackburn noted that "the creation of the cult of the Nazi SS elite was a result of Hitler's effort to "minister" to the psychic ills of his more fanatical followers. Unable to face the postwar world without direction, Heinrich Himmler and his wayward brawlers, searching desperately for some truth, followed a leader who would make everything come out alright."⁹ This dependence on Hitler for their identity meant that the most radical aspects of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* were internalized by the men of the SS. Realizing the potential that this group would have in the acquisition, consolidation, and maintenance of power, the National Socialist leadership strove to harness their energy and mindless devotion. The SS education consisted of moulding the mentality of the man. The basic attitude strived for was

⁸ See *ibid*, pp. xxx-xxxi; also Edmund L. Blandford, *Hitler's Second Army: The Waffen SS*. (Osceola, WI : Motorbooks, 1994).

⁹ Blackburn, p. 10.

that the SS man should be a fighter for fighting's sake, called "heroic realism." The soldier had to obey unquestioningly, had to be hard and impervious to all human emotions, be contemptuous of "inferior beings," show comradeship and camaraderie, and believe that the word "impossible" did not exist. However, the spirit of efficiency was the real governing principle in the SS. The "hardness" trait of the SS man was key, and it was viewed on two levels. On the ideological level, the concept of hardness evolved from National Socialist concepts of inhumanity, mercilessness, and savagery. On the military level, the fighting nature of the SS demanded that SS men should have no hesitation in shedding either his own blood or the blood of foreigners.¹⁰ As a result of their education, the SS soldier would have internalized the fact that their life was "the German kingdom," available for use in any way to protect the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*.¹¹ The SS man would have also known that he was indeed a part of an elite organization at the apex of German society,¹² a feeling that would have translated itself onto the motivation on the battlefield.

Since the Hitler Youth, through the years of resocialization and ideological indoctrination, embodied the qualities that the SS wanted, the SS were quite eager to recruit the Hitler Youth into their ranks and transmit their own radicalized values to their new recruits. Although at first the German army officials would not permit

¹⁰ Hans Buchheim, "Command and Compliance." trans. by Richard Barry. In Helmut Krausnick et. al., *Anatomy of the SS State*. (London : Collins, 1968) pp. 320-2, 329, 334.

¹¹ Alfred Kotz, *Führen und Folgen*. (Potsdam : Ludwig Voggenreiter, 1934) p. 41.

¹² Michael Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, 1997, p. 6.

active recruitment of the Hitler Youth by the SS, by 1934 they would allow volunteers in reserve units to go with the SS only if there were no pressing army needs that required their presence. This essentially gave Himmler all the justification that he needed to form a strong bond with the Hitler Youth in order to siphon off HJ members to his ranks. He instructed his SS leaders to initiate and preserve good relations with Hitler Youth leaders, and systematic Hitler Youth recruitment was discussed as early as 1935. A feeling emerged that the SS would be the preferred destination for the best of the Hitler Youth graduates, a sort of transfer from one elite Party formation to the other. The stringent conditions imposed on joining the SS created "an aura of preferment" that made it easy to attract and foster loyalty and dedication by those who were lucky enough to be accepted.¹³ When the SS began recruitment for the 12th SS, the standards were so high that it was certain that only the elite members of the Hitler Youth who were eligible would be accepted.

The elite status that the 12th SS was to have in the structure of the German military was constantly stressed to the soldiers of the division. In his speech to the future members of the division at the graduation ceremony from the WELs in 1943, Artur Axmann stated:

You are the elite of German youth. . . . In your unit, my comrades, the soldierly tradition of the Hitler Youth will find its ultimate expression. That is the reason why all German youths direct their attention to this unit, to you; that is why the honour of German youth depends on you.

His speech was followed by one from Himmler, who echoed this sentiment:

¹³ Rempel, pp. 23-4, 46.

In these weeks, when the sacrifice of Stalingrad was on everyone's mind, when the Russians mounted massive attacks, your Youth Leader made the decision to offer to the Führer the best young boys of the new class for a new Waffen SS division. The Führer agreed happily. . . . After a few months in SS barracks you will enter a great formation. . . . You will then train some more, lose many drops of sweat in order to save drops of blood and finally will march alongside its sister division, the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler. You will carry the name that the Führer gave you: SS Panzer Grenadier Division "Hitler-Jugend."¹⁴

These explicit statements were meant to appeal to the boys' idealism and further emphasize their sense of eliteness. In the process, they would have also increased the desire for the boys to get out into the battlefield and live up to their elite status.

Kellett has concluded that being attached to a well-known group, or a group with a good reputation, would make the soldier believe that they were better fighters, and therefore increase their combat motivation.¹⁵ Although the 12th SS had yet to prove itself in battle, and therefore was unable to create a reputation for itself, their structure was modeled after, and their sister division became, the 1st SS LAH. The 1st SS was the most famous of the SS units, having been originally created in 1933 as a Headquarters Guard in order to act as the bodyguards for Hitler. They symbolized what the ideal National Socialist was to be, and during the beginning of the war they proved themselves to be effective, ferocious, and brutal soldiers. Nicknamed "The Führer's Fire Brigade," the 1st SS LAH had many admirers within the German army. Field Marshall August von Mackensen once wrote to Himmler:

¹⁴ Of course, this name was later changed when the division was reformed to become a Panzer division. These two speeches were quoted in Luther, p. 34.

¹⁵ Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation*, 1982, p. 54.

I can assure you that the Leibstandarte is held in high regard, not only by the officers but also by its fellow comrades in the Heer [Army]. Every unit wants to have the Leibstandarte as its adjacent unit, both in the attack and in defence. The unit's internal discipline, its refreshing eagerness, its cheerful enthusiasm, its unshakable calmness in crisis no matter how great, and its toughness are examples to us all. Its members' feeling for their fellow soldiers, I would like to truly emphasize, is exemplary and unsurpassed. . . . This truly is an elite unit.¹⁶

It was the soldiers of this elite unit who would have the most impact on the training and the outlook on war for the members of the 12th SS.

The symbolic elements surrounding the naming and the symbols of the division were also significant in increasing the combat motivation of the members of the 12th SS. Along with the 1st SS, the 12th SS was a part of the I SS Panzer Corps, a name that had already been assigned earlier in the campaign in Russia but was given to this new formation in Normandy to signify an even greater sense of eliteness.¹⁷ Both the LAH and the 12th SS were the only units in the Wehrmacht to have Hitler's name in their divisional name, an honour that they subsequently worn on their arms. Added to the symbolic similarities possessed by these two divisions was the divisional emblem. The crest of the 12th SS was virtually identical to that of the 1st SS, the only difference being the crest of the 12th SS had a rune intersecting the skeleton key at the centre of the crest. According to Hubert Meyer,

¹⁶ Quoted in Reynolds, p. 12. For a more detailed history of the LAH, see Rudolf Lehmann's four volume history of the division entitled *The Leibstandarte*, (Winnipeg : J. J. Fedorowicz, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1993).

¹⁷ This new formation was to take precedence over the old I SS Panzer Corps, commanded by SS-Obergruppenführer Paul Hausser, which was subsequently demoted to become the II SS Panzer Corps. See Reynolds, pp. 13-4.

through the Division's emblem and armbands, the unit was able to achieve a greater cohesiveness, both within the division and within the I SS Panzer Corps. Through these emblems, they were able "to show themselves equal to their comrades of the Leibstandarte,"¹⁸ thereby creating another powerful motivator.

The uniform worn by the soldiers of the 12th SS also possessed a motivating quality. Each member of the division had at least a partial uniform that was camouflaged, and others had full camouflage, a relative luxury which made it almost impossible to spot a 12th SS soldier in the field, but would also make them quite distinctive in a crowd.¹⁹ Both the officers and the recruits wore the same outfit, and this combined with the relative youthfulness of the officer corp meant that it was virtually impossible to tell the enlisted men from the officers.²⁰ Apart from giving the soldiers an advantage over their German comrades who did not possess the camouflaged uniforms, the boys in the 12th SS would have felt a sense of pride that they were alike in appearance with their heroes, thereby increasing their combat motivation.²¹

The combat motivation of the division was further enhanced by an elevated

¹⁸ Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*, 1994, p. 11.

¹⁹ See Luther, pp. 130-1, fn. 13.

²⁰ Directorate of History and Heritage, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol 1, p. 99.

²¹ The soldiers of the 12th SS were masters in the art of camouflage, being taught by their instructors who had learned the craft in Russia. This knowledge was to prove deadly for the Allied forces who came in contact with 12th SS snipers who were virtually impossible to discover. See Luther, p. 64.

sense of unit esprit. Although unit esprit often comes about as a result of unit history and tradition,²² the members of the 12th SS, as a result of their common experiences in the Hitler Youth and in the WELs and the influence of their SS officers, were able to quickly come together and develop a unit bond that was defined by the fanaticism that each soldier felt towards Hitler and Nazi Germany. Kurt Meyer testified that "for their fighting motto the soldiers were given the idealistic point of view of soldierhood, in brief; 'I am nothing, we are everything.' The entire troops were looked upon as one unit."²³ The soldiers recognized that the morale in their unit was high, and they truly believed themselves to be excellent soldiers, even to the point of believing that they were superior to their own German counterparts.²⁴

A unique aspect of the division that would give its soldiers an even greater combat motivation was the methods of training employed. The first element of this training was the emphasis on physical fitness. Even before entering the 12th SS, the teenage recruits had already undergone extensive physical training. Professional youth leaders and educators in the Third Reich placed physical fitness above

²² See Kellett, pp. 46-51.

²³ DHH, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol II, Testimony of Kurt Meyer, p. 553. See also NAC, RG 2, 18 Central Registry Files, Vol 209, W-41 (v.1), Petition by Kurt Meyer, 8 December 1950, p. 6.

²⁴ See DHH, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol III, Exhibits, Exhibit T-4, Record of the evidence of Alfred Helzel, p. 20; NAC, RG 24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 7, Testimony of Gren. Bernhard Herholz, p. 5.

intellectual training in their educational curriculum.²⁵ Physical education was seen as a fundamental and inseparable part of National Socialist education, as long as it was done under the direction of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*.²⁶ As a result, physical education classes began to take over the school's schedule. The normal timetable allocation for gym classes went from two to three in 1936, and from three to five in 1938.²⁷ Eventually, the Hitler Youth took over the planning of sports and sporting events, and the sports eventually took a militaristic tone. One of the favourite sports was rifle marksmanship, and by 1938 the Hitler Youth had over 1 250 000 participants in marksmanship.²⁸ Even within the division, a sporting program was set up, under the guidance of the NSFO.²⁹ The result of all of this emphasis on sport was a group of teenagers who were physically fit and able to handle the strain of military life, thereby producing a more content and motivated soldier.

The quality and diversity of the WEL training also served to further motivate the average boy who passed through its gates. As Rempel pointed out:

The curriculum of the WELs incorporated an exaggerated Darwinian ideology infused with the youthful élan of the HJ, physical exercises highlighting its

²⁵ Rempel, p. 173.

²⁶ "Physical Education and National Socialism," in George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 1966, p. 281.

²⁷ Incidentally, the second rise came at the expense of religious education. See Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, 1983, p. 365.

²⁸ Rempel, pp. 178-81. See also H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 1975, p. 114.

²⁹ National Archives and Record Administration, T-354/155/3799087, Betr.: Sportabzeichenwesen; Neuorganisation der bisherigen Vorgänge beim Inspekteur für Leibeserziehungen, 24.3.1944.

combative ethos, and the basic techniques of war making. . . . [The] emphasis on orderliness helped to instill a sense of discipline, unquestioning obedience, and clear subordination. "Troop-like drills" were avoided, not only because they were inappropriate for young boys, but also because they were less practical than exercises designed to instill martial attitudes. . . . [E]ndurance and toughness were the primary goals.³⁰

The military aspects of the WEL training were quite elaborate. Nearly half of the instruction time allotted was spent on terrain exercises, like night training, patrolling, and terrain games. Use and care of small calibre weapons took up one quarter of the training time, and because of the successful nature of this training in the WEL, the army could shorten its weapons training component in their basic training. Finally, physical exercise, first aid training, and general housekeeping, coupled with the ideological training, rounded out the schedule of the trainee. Through their involvement in the WEL, coupled with the education received at the hands of the Nazified educational system and within the structure of the Hitler Youth, many of the youth proved to be high-quality recruits,³¹ thereby adding to their already inflated sense of eliteness.

Another factor that set the 12th SS apart from their comrades was the scope, and the sometimes unorthodox nature, of their training once they were assembled in Beverloo. As Kurt Meyer stated, "training was made to approximate war conditions. All exercises were conducted with live ammunition and with fighting weapons, not training weapons. The losses which thereby resulted had to be taken in order to

³⁰ Rempel, p. 194.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 195, 203.

avoid losses during action."³² The use of live fire during training was certainly risky and unorthodox, but this type of training made the soldiers focus on their job and, in turn, highly motivated the survivors of the training.³³ In order to achieve the goals of toughening the recruits mentally, building confidence, and enhancing knowledge of weapons and equipment, the officers sometimes resorted to curious measures. For instance, in order to familiarize the Panzer crews and officers with the machines that they were to take into battle, SS-Obersturmbannführer Max Wünsche, the CO of the 12th SS Panzer Regiment, took the soldiers to the MAN tank production factory in Nuremberg and had them work between eight and fourteen days in the assembly area.³⁴ In one exercise, the CO of one infantry battalion required his soldiers, fully equipped with weapons and supplies, to leap into a sand pit 30 feet deep, for the purpose of training the recruits to never hesitate to do what was necessary in a combat situation. In another demonstration, one instructor, in an attempt to show that grenade splinters only travelled laterally and upwards, detonated the weapon atop his head on his helmet. Other exercises had the youth, in an attempt to familiarize themselves with their weapons, disassembling and rebuilding their weapons with their eyes bound or while in the dark.³⁵

³² DHH, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol II, Testimony of Kurt Meyer, p. 553. See also NAC, RG 24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 8, Kurt Meyer, pp. 16-7.

³³ James Lucas, *Battle Group*, 1993, p. 143. See also Luther, p. 64.

³⁴ H. Meyer, p. 7.

³⁵ Luther, p. 65.

The health of the soldiers was also stressed, with the knowledge that healthy, well-fed soldiers would perform better in battle. In order to promote physical development in the still-growing boys, and mindful of the fact that active teenaged boys need an enormous amount of calories per day, the soldiers of the 12th SS received special rations, the outcome of an agreement between the German High Command and SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl, the Chief of the SS *Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* (Economic and Administrative Main Office). The weekly ration for each soldier consisted of 3.5 litres of fresh milk, 1,750 grams of bread, 200 grams of meat, 140 grams of lard, 120 grams of sugar, and 245 grams of other nutrients, which, according to Pohl, was more substantial than the rations allotted to workers in heavy industry.³⁶ Instead of the cigarette ration that most soldiers received, the soldiers of the 12th SS had to be content with a ration of hard candy until they turned eighteen.³⁷ Any relationship with a woman was strictly prohibited until the boy turned eighteen, so the soldiers were forbidden to patronize the local brothels. The consumption of alcohol was also strictly forbidden.³⁸ In the few documents that remain concerning discipline in the 12th SS, the evidence points to strict discipline against those who broke these rules.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 62-3. See also NARA, T354/153/3797135-8, Sanitätsdienstliche Anordnunger Nr.1, 10.5.1944

³⁷ Kurt Meyer, *Grenadiers*, 1994, p. 116.

³⁸ Luther, p. 62. See also NARA, T-354/153/3797121, Btl. Befehl 40/44, 1.5.1944.

³⁹ See, for example, T-354/153/3796964-6, Straftenor, 27.4.1944.

The 12th SS also held certain advantages over other German units when it came to equipment. Although it is true that the 12th SS struggled in obtaining some supplies, like gasoline, in other ways it received more than what was normally allocated to divisions. In his book *Panzers in Normandy: Then and Now*, Eric Lefèvre examined both the Panzer units in Normandy and the German military documents in order to ascertain the theoretical desired level of strength for both a Panzer regiment and a Panzer division. The differences between the theoretical top-line strength and the actual strength of the 12th SS is indicative of the emphasis placed upon the equipping of the 12th SS.⁴⁰

According to Lefèvre's research, a Panzer Division by 1944 would have one Panzer regiment, two Panzer Grenadier regiments (one motorized, one a combination motorized and armoured), a reconnaissance battalion, an anti-tank battalion, an artillery regiment, an anti-aircraft battalion, an engineer battalion, and various other sub-units (like signals, medical, etc), for a total strength of 14,787 officers and men. For the 12th SS, this breakdown remained constant, except that the 12th SS contained a mortar battalion (*Werferabteilung*) and had a total strength of 19,090 men, over 4,000 more soldiers than what would be expected. Consistent with this fact, the total number of weapons possessed by the 12th SS greatly exceeded that of a regular division. A typical Panzer regiment consisted of two battalions, one

⁴⁰ All of the information regarding the Order of Battle for the 12th SS comes from H. Meyer, especially pp. 358-9, and Luther, pp. 248-53. The information for Panzer Regiment "44" comes from Eric Lefèvre, *Panzers in Normandy: Then and Now*. (London : Plaistow, 1983), especially pp. 6-17. The information listed for the 1st SS is found in Reynolds, Appendix I-III.

battalion consisting of four companies of 17 Panzer V "Panther" tanks and the other battalion consisting of four companies of 22 Panzer IV tanks. The total number of tanks for the regiment, including the tanks assigned to the staff platoon, numbered 160. The 12th SS Panzer Regiment had the four companies of Panther tanks, but it had *five* companies of Panzer IV tanks, giving it a total of 182 tanks, twenty-two more than what would be expected. Each of the infantry regiments in the 12th SS, the 25th and the 26th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiments, contained over 1000 more soldiers than normally found in an infantry regiment in a normal Panzer division. The 12 SS Anti-tank Battalion consisted of two companies equipped with 14 Panzerjäger IV's and a company with 12 75mm Pak 40's, for a total of 40 anti-tank weapons. However, the theoretical self-propelled anti-tank strength for a Panzer division in Normandy in 1944 was only twenty-one Panzerjägers, not twenty eight, meaning the 12th SS was receiving more than its fair share of equipment. The number of towed anti-tank guns was the same as the other divisions, but these were replaced later on during the Normandy campaign by the self-propelled Panzerjägers. The number of artillery pieces remained constant, but the 12th SS, as mentioned before, had an additional mortar battalion containing 24 Nebelwerfers and one 280mm/320mm battery. Additionally, the engineer battalion assigned to the 12th SS was motorized and armoured, a luxury that was uncommon in comparable units.

The message that the over-allocation of resources to the 12th SS would have sent to the members of the division would have definitely influenced their morale and their motivation. The division received more men, more heavy weapons, better

rations, and, according to Kurt Meyer, better training than any other division in Normandy.⁴¹ The soldiers also had maintained a faith in their weapons,⁴² consequently giving them additional confidence going into battle. Given the previous teachings that they were racially superior and given the martial aspect of German society and education, there is little doubt that most of the teenagers in the 12th SS would have a feeling of invincibility. No wonder, then, the soldiers had "laughter in their eyes" and a "faith in their strength and the will to fight" before their first battle.⁴³ The feelings of superiority, the esprit de corps, the superior training, and the overabundance of equipment that the 12th SS possessed all combined to enhance the combat motivation of the soldiers to a level unreached by other units in the war. For the fanatical soldier, these tangible motivators are necessary in order to implement the teachings that the ideological indoctrination had forced them to internalize. Many of these motivators cannot exist, though, without the presence of a strong leadership. In order to fully develop a theory of combat motivation for fanatical soldiers, the influence of leadership must be extracted and explained.

⁴¹ See K. Meyer, p. 116.

⁴² Reynolds, p. 51.

⁴³ K. Meyer, p. 117.

CHAPTER 6

Big Men, *Draufgängers*, and Thugs: The Impact of Leadership

The teenagers who made up the bulk of the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitler Youth" would not have been as motivated to fight, and perhaps not as fanatical, without the influence of their experienced and reckless officers. The bond that these battle-hardened veterans had with their young charges was indeed unique to their unit, as discerned by the following observation of a soldier from the 12th Panzer Regiment:

In the vicinity of the Divisional command post we met Hauptsturmführer [Wilhelm] Beck. . . . Beck was one of those officers who combined the personality of an officer and human in a rare, magical manner, exemplary in all his actions. . . . *If Beck has asked for it, we would have let ourselves be cut to pieces immediately for him.*¹

There are few soldiers who would admit that such a relationship existed where the soldier would die without question on the order of their superior. The combination of years of ideological indoctrination geared towards a reckless and fanatical style of warfare with officers who fully embodied these characteristics in their own beliefs and actions would prove a fatal combination for many teenagers of the division.

The link between competent officers and motivated soldiers is reflected

¹ Emphasis added. Quoted in Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*, 1994, p. 60.

throughout the historical and social scientific literature. In the sociological examination of this particular relationship, Dean Havron and Joseph McGrath determined that leader intelligence, knowledge and implementation of job skills, and a sense of the feelings of their men by the officer are key to the performance and motivation of a unit. The higher these factors are present in a leader, the more likely the unit will be highly motivated and effective.² Anthony Kellett determined that a soldier will obey and follow a leader if they meet their expectations, which many generally do. The more they meet these expectations, the more motivated the soldiers are in following them into battle. He also found that the most effective form of leadership is through example. Following a leader is easier for the soldier than fulfilling orders while their officers watch them from a distance. Finally, Kellett concluded that an important way for soldiers to increase their combat motivation was through modelling oneself after a successful leader. Kellett also asserted that the effectiveness of the Wehrmacht was a result of the presence of these qualities within the leadership of the German Army during the Second World War.³ These exact qualities were quite evident, and purposely strived for, by the officers of the 12th SS. If the officer of a unit embodied the characteristics of an excellent soldier, their example would definitely reflect upon the combat motivation of their unit. John

² See M. Dean Havron and Joseph E. McGrath. "The Contribution of the Leader to the Effectiveness of Small Military Groups." *Leadership and Interpersonal Behaviour*. ed. by Luigi Petrollo and Bernard M. Bass. (New York : Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1961). pp. 169, 171.

³ Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation*, 1982, pp. 152-5, 162, 307.

Keegan identified the presence of the "Big Man" as one of the vital elements in the combat motivation of a soldier. The presence in a unit of a soldier who appears to be the embodiment of the perceived ideal soldier, the one who "brings combat alive" through his actions on the field, will positively affect the motivation of a soldier. Another key element of Keegan's theory of combat motivation was that of mimicry, which can be defined as the efforts of a soldier in an attempt to emulate the actions of the "Big Man." For the soldiers of the 12th SS, the "Big Man" of their unit was their officer, and there was a consistent effort on the part of the average soldier to emulate their leaders within every aspect of training and combat.⁴

The officers of the 12th SS, while unique in their own right, were just a small part of a highly motivated, highly idealistic, and very young, group of German SS officers. It was the youth of the officers, along with their upbringing in the National Socialist system, which led them to be quite susceptible to Nazi ideology, and these are the key elements in understanding the relationship between the officers of the 12th SS and their charges. Although they would not have been bombarded with National Socialist ideology to the same extent as younger members of German society, evidence suggests that the SS officers were just as committed to Hitler and his *Weltanschauung*. Being ideologically disposed to Nazism did not mean that an officer would be promoted faster than others less fond of National Socialism, so it can be concluded that adherence to National Socialism on the part of the junior

⁴ John Keegan, "Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation," 1997, pp. 8-10.

officers was personal, not professional.⁵ Hitler and the junior officers both foresaw their quest as the realization of vague, idealistic goals, and there is little doubt that the junior officer corps were highly committed to the National Socialist regime.⁶ Hans Koch also stressed the importance of the Hitler Youth training on the effectiveness of the junior officers during the war,⁷ who, by the later stages of the war, were fighting with a greater sense of urgency, determination, and recklessness than their older comrades. Age was also a factor in the make-up and outlook of the SS. The SS was a relatively youthful organization, especially for an elite formation that performed important functions in Hitler's Reich. The average age of the SS on 1 January 1934 was twenty-six years and eight months, and on 1 September 1937 it was twenty-nine years and eight months. Additionally, 90.2 percent of the Waffen-SS officer corps of 1944 between the ranks of *Sturmbannführer* and *Standartenführer* were forty-one years old or less. Since the SS were quite interested in recruiting the Hitler Youth into their formations once they turned eighteen, it is not very surprising to learn the Hitler Youth age cohort born between 1914 and 1928 contained the most active participants in the SS.⁸ The officer corps of the 12th SS was by far the youngest in the entire German military structure. For example, when Kurt Meyer became the regimental commander of the 25th Panzer-Grenadier Regiment, he was

⁵ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, 1986, pp. 63, 65.

⁶ Bartov, *Hitler's Army*, 1992, pp. 117, 144.

⁷ H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 1975, pp. 238-9.

⁸ Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children*, 1989, pp. 12-3.

the oldest member of the entire regiment at the age of thirty-two. When he became divisional commander with the death of Fritz Witt, he was only thirty-three-years-old, making him the youngest divisional commander in the entire Wehrmacht.⁹

The fighting quality of the officers who were attached to the 12th SS was intentionally high. As Kurt Meyer explained at his trial, "the officers were especially selected on the basis of their character. Those found not suitable were, within the first week, removed."¹⁰ The officers who remained to lead the division, in the words of James Lucas, were young, but:

their combat experience gave them authority beyond their years. They had learned that to fight aggressively brought victory on the battlefield and the grafting of their experience onto the enthusiasm of the rank and file produced a body of men who were dedicated to the concept of victory in battle.¹¹

Koch agreed with Lucas' assessment, saying that the superior leadership of the 12th SS' officer corp led to a "strongly developed *esprit de corps* and an aggressive enthusiasm [within the 12th SS] which was not found wanting" during their battles in Normandy.¹² Indeed, these officers have been described by some as equivalent to Caesar's finest legions or Napoleon's Imperial Guard. However, and more accurately, they have also been described by others as equivalent to Ghengis Kahn's

⁹ See Tony Foster, *Meeting of Generals*, 1986, pp. 282.

¹⁰ Directorate of History and Heritage, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol. II, p. 552.

¹¹ James Lucas, *Battle Group!*, 1993, p. 143.

¹² See Koch, pp. 238-45.

hordes and Attila's invading Huns.¹³

The bitter fighting in the Russian campaign that the soldiers in the LAH experienced would have definitely influenced the way that the officers of the 12th SS led their men. Hans Joachim Schröder agreed with Bartov's assessment of the barbarization of warfare in this campaign by stating that the term "toughness" was "insufficient to describe the fighting in Russia. It was not just 'tough', but brutal in the extreme; it was . . . a relapse into complete barbarity. . . . [It was] cruel to the extent that individual human lives became worthless."¹⁴ Because of this fact, the officers of the 12th SS developed what Reynolds called their own unique "philosophy of soldiering," a philosophy that glorified fighting for fighting's sake. He quoted a letter written by an officer of the LAH who wrote:

It was those defensive battles in Russia which I shall always remember for the sheer beauty of the fighting, rather than the victorious advances. Many of us died horribly, some even as cowards, but for those who lived, even for a short period out there, it was well worth the dreadful suffering and danger. After a time we reached a point where we . . . lived entirely for the next clash, the next engagement with the enemy. There was a tremendous sense of "being", an exhilarating feeling that every nerve in the body was alive to fight.¹⁵

This highly developed brutal ethos of fighting would be transferred to the formative minds of the teenagers that they would lead to battle, whose years of ideological

¹³ Michael Reynolds, *Steel Inferno*, 1997, p. 353.

¹⁴ Hans Joachim Schröder, "German Soldiers' Experiences During the Initial Phase of the Russian Campaign." *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939-1941*. ed. by Bernd Wegner. (Providence : Berghahn, 1997) pp. 316-8.

¹⁵ See Reynolds, p. 15.

indoctrination was immediately validated by the words and the actions of their officers. For these boys, being led by the heroes and former members of "Hitler's Fire Brigade" would be akin to a midget hockey player playing on a line with Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux. Being led by one's hero into battle would have had an incalculable effect on the combat motivation of these young boys.

The officers who became the major commanders of the 12th SS were truly an elite force within the German military system. Fritz Witt, who was the first divisional commander of the division, had received his Knight's Cross in the French campaign in 1940, and he received his Oak Leaves for the Knight's Cross in Russia on 1 March 1943. Three months later, at the age of 35, Witt was assigned the leadership of the 12th SS. Described as a humane but hard-driving commander, Witt was held in high esteem by his officers and by his enlisted men alike. Typical of the bulk of the officers in the 12th SS, he disdained commanding away from the action, preferring instead to command from the front lines. According to Hubert Meyer, Witt had relied upon his combat experience to determine the training and educational principles for the division, and he supervised these principles being put into place. He was "a rock in the sea, the totally accepted leader, trusted by all and admired by his young soldiers. . . . The well-being of all members of his Division, in particular of the young soldiers to whom he was a shining example and a considerate father, was his concern." His death as a result of naval gunfire on 14 June 1944 was "an

unforgettably tragic day for all members of the division."¹⁶

The man who took over control of the division upon Witt's death, Kurt Meyer, had the reputation among his troops as being a *Draufgänger*; that is, an extremely ruthless and reckless fighter. These same people who called Meyer a *Draufgänger* also called him a "good", "correct", and "brave" soldier.¹⁷ His reputation for toughness was unsurpassed in the whole of the LAH.¹⁸ Even Meyer himself admitted that he had an unorthodox fighting method, one with which his superiors sometimes disapproved of. He recounted a story in his memoirs when he was leading a reconnaissance squadron through the mountains in Greece when his group got held up by a fierce machine gun defence. The road that they were on was also mined, and the Greeks were blowing it up. None of the squad would advance, so Meyer yelled at them, showed them a grenade, pulled the pin, and rolled it behind the last grenadier. In his words, he declared that he had "never experienced such a united leap forward."¹⁹ His philosophy of fighting was similar to that of Witt: the commander of the division needed to lead his men personally into battle. To Meyer,

¹⁶ H. Meyer, pp. 74-5. See also Reynolds, pp. 21-2; Kurt Meyer, *Grenadiers*, 1994, pp. 131-2; Craig W. H. Luther, *Blood and Honor*, 1987, pp. 38-40.

¹⁷ DHH, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol. III, Exhibit T-4, Record of the Evidence of Alfred Helzel, p. 22; National Archives of Canada, Record Group 24, Volume 12839, 67/Kurt Meyer Case/1, #59. There is evidence that this label was first attached to Meyer as a result of an alleged incident during the Russian campaign, where Meyer was said to have destroyed a village named Jefremowka and put all of the inhabitants to death.

¹⁸ Luther, p. 48.

¹⁹ K. Meyer, pp. 33, 69.

the commander belonged in the leading combat group, so that he could make decisions from his moving tank, and so that he could be the driving force of his division.²⁰ For his battlefield exploits, Meyer was awarded the both the Oak Leaves and the Swords to go along with his Knights Cross.²¹ However, he also experienced a bit of luck as well; by his own account, he had eight drivers killed at his side throughout the entire war.²²

What endeared Meyer to his troops, though, was not just his highly effective style of fighting. Meyer was also a committed Nazi who took every opportunity to reinforce the same values on his troops. For the indoctrinated youth of the 12th SS, Meyer was the personification of their training. The Canadians who interrogated him after his capture described him in this way:

Standing approx 5ft 10in in height, broad shouldered, thick-set, his whole appearance dominated by his cold grey-blue eyes, which fixed one with what almost amounts to a stare whenever he is talking, Kurt Meyer is the personification of National Socialism. His mind, paralyzed long with propaganda, is quite unable to even consider any other point of view. His whole outlook is dominated by the peril of Russia and the Communist threat to Germany, which reasons he gives for his wholehearted adherence to Hitler and to his teachings. . . . He ended these statements [against Russia] with the remark that we should find many in the [POW] Camp who would drag the Führer's name in the dust, but he and those SS men with him would never associate with these ideas, and would always maintain their faith in what he

²⁰ DHH, 81/104, Extracts, Kurt Meyer, Chaplains Report of Interview, 3 Sept 50, p. 1.

²¹ Meyer was awarded the Knight's Cross on 18 May 1941 as the CO of the 1st SS-Pz. Recon. Bn. of the LAH in Greece, the Oak Leaves as the same in Russia on 23 May 1943, and the Oak Leaves and Swords in Normandy as the CO of the 12th SS on 27 August 1944.

²² K. Meyer, p. 78.

had taught them.²³

Meyer's fanaticism for Hitler was the driving force on his life. SS-Obergruppenführer Josef (Sepp) Dietrich, who commanded the LAH and later the 1st SS Panzer Corps, described Meyer as "the soul of fanatical resistance. . . . The successes achieved by his battle group - especially in the fight against bolshevism - are uniquely and solely due to his fanatical battle spirit and circumspect leadership."²⁴ Even after the war, Meyer remained totally committed to National Socialism. Capt. Wadi Lehmann, who was Meyer's personal interpreter during his trial, stated that Meyer's life "really meant very little to him. His only regret was that he hadn't died in battle. He still idolized Hitler and became vehement in his support of the Führer when I suggested that all he'd done was lead Germany into destruction."²⁵ Meyer, as the personification of all things Nazi, and the personification of the political soldier, was the officer who was the greatest motivator for the troops of the 12th SS, especially when he accompanied them into battle.²⁶

The list of former LAH officers and heroes whose philosophy of fighting was transferred to their troops and whose radical actions were emulated by their troops

²³ NAC, RG 24, Vol 12840, 67/Kurt Meyer/(5), Evidence File, Special Interrogation Report, p. 1.

²⁴ Quoted in Foster, pp. 251-2, 365.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 469.

²⁶ For example, an oft-repeated story has Meyer promising the boys of his regiment's reconnaissance company during their training in Beverloo in the summer of 1943 that he would accompany them on their "baptism of fire," a promise that he willingly kept in their first engagement on 8 June 1944. See Luther, p. 163; K. Meyer, pp. 125-6.

was virtually endless. For example, Obersturmbannführer Max Wünsche, the CO of the 12th SS Panzer Regiment, has been described as the "personification of an SS officer" as well as an outstanding, and charismatic, leader.²⁷ One of the Canadians who interrogated Wünsche commented that he was "definitely a museum piece. He is a 150% Nordic warrior . . . and a fanatic of the most extreme order, with a well-disciplined and calculating brain."²⁸ Another interrogator commented that Wunsche, "the SS pin-up type, need not be discussed. . . . A passionate Nazi, and a passionate soldier, rather slow in the uptake, with a vigorous loyalty complex, he like the Bourbons has forgotten nothing and learned nothing."²⁹ Brigadeführer Wilhelm Mohnke, the CO of the 26th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, was an original member of the LAH, joining it in 1933. Although he had lost a foot in Yugoslavia in 1941, Mohnke's soldierly quality led him to this commission. He was a man of violent emotions and brutality, and not well liked by most people who he came in contact with, but he was admired for his courage and devotion to the National Socialist cause.³⁰ His dedication was rewarded with the command of the Chancellery's (and

²⁷ Eric Lefèvre, *Panzers in Normandy*, 1983, p. 150; Reynolds, p. 22; Luther, pp. 74-5.

²⁸ NAC, RG24, Vol 12842, 67/12 SS PZ DIV (HJ)/1, General File Re Investigation of Atrocities Committed by 12 SS Panzer Div(HJ), #139.

²⁹ NAC, RG 24, Vol 12837, #432. This document was a report written on 8 Jan 1946, regarding POWs who could be released.

³⁰ Luther, p. 74; Reynolds, p. 22.

Hitler's) defence during the last days of the war.³¹ The final major combat command in the 12th SS, that of the division's Reconnaissance Battalion, was given to Sturmbannführer Gerhard Bremer. Bremer had been in the same battalion with Meyer and Wünsche in France in 1940, and he fought in every LAH campaign in Russia. Like Meyer, Bremer was given the title of *Draufgänger*, and he was also only 23-years-old when he earned the Knight's Cross in 1941, staking his claim as one of the youngest soldiers ever to win the coveted medal.³² In fact, of the senior commanders in the 12th SS, only Mohnke did not possess the Knight's Cross before the Normandy invasion, although he did earn it during the campaign. Wünsche and Bremer also had earned the Oak Leaves to go with their Knight's Cross.³³

Because of the unusual circumstances that the 12th SS had in regards to its formation and make-up, the officers of the division felt that it would be desirable to form close relationships between themselves and their men. Meyer testified at his trial that:

The discipline of my young soldiers was good and was based on the foundation of the family, it was fundamentally different from the discipline of a young troop. Because of their youth the leadership had to find a new way in the education of these men. Between officers and men, apart from the

³¹ For a more complete account of Mohnke's involvement in this post, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*. (New York : The MacMillan Company, 1947).

³² Luther, pp. 104-5, Reynolds, p. 23.

³³ It is quite interesting to see how these stellar officers were viewed by their peers. After the war, Wehrmacht General Heinrich Eberbach described Witt, Meyer, and Wünsche as Waffen-SS idealist, while he called Mohnke and Bremer "bullies and brawlers." See Reynolds, p. 22.

ordinary officer relationship, there was a brotherly relationship established.³⁴

He later wrote in his memoirs that:

There was no dominant superior relationship recognizing only orders and unconditional obedience. The relationship between officers, NCO's and other ranks was that between older experienced and younger comrades. The officers' authority existed in the fact that they were champions and close friends of the young soldiers. They strove for the close relationship of the parental home in so far as was possible in the circumstances of war.³⁵

The lack of a substantial age difference between the officers and the men tended to form the relationships between the men quite easily. At times, though, the officers became quite paternalistic. Meyer is recorded as boxing one recruit's ears as a punishment for running away one night during training, and then telling the boy that he was punishing the boy in that way in place of his father.³⁶ The father-son relationship that developed between the soldiers and their officers can also be seen by the nickname of "Papa" that was given to Sturmbannführer Bernhard Krause.³⁷

The years of ideological training within the Hitler Youth and the schools embedded in the boys a sense of militarism and the importance of unconditional obedience to one's superiors. Upon entering the 12th SS, the teenaged soldiers would have obeyed anyone who was their officer. However, their officers turned out to be their heroes, former members of the famous 1st SS LAH whose brutal exploits were both well-known and admired. Because of these important factors, the soldiers

³⁴ DHH, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol. II, p. 552.

³⁵ K. Meyer, p. 115.

³⁶ Quoted in Luther, pp. 73-4.

³⁷ See H. Meyer, pp. 10, 109, 139, 189.

of the 12th SS would have been highly motivated to do whatever their officers commanded them to do. According to testimony given after the war, these orders included demands to take no prisoners, not to shirk one's battlefield responsibilities on pain of death, to fight to the last man, to use radical measures in fighting their enemies, and to avoid capture by saving their last bullet for themselves.³⁸ These were orders that were obeyed unquestionably.

It is without a doubt that the officers had a certain hold over the lives of the soldiers - how else can one explain the apparent willingness that the boys had in following out their suicidal orders? This bond existed even after the war was over. Lieutenant-Colonel B. J. S. Macdonald recorded the following when he was prosecuting Kurt Meyer for war crimes after the war:

When I asked ["A.H.", a member of the 12th Company of the 25th Regiment, and a witness against Meyer] about [the alleged crimes], he became evasive, ill at ease, and slumped down in his chair. He dodged questions, could not remember, and eventually denied any knowledge [that Meyer told his troops to shoot prisoners]. . . . I looked around the court room in dismay, and for the first time realized what had gone wrong. Meyer, who was sitting diagonally across the room from the witness, had fixed him with a glare, the equal of which I had never seen, and which fairly shot sparks across the room. The unfortunate witness, like the proverbial bird caught in the hypnotic stare of the serpent, was panic stricken. His powerful physique meant nothing and his previous assurance evaporated like dew drops in the fierce heat of the sun. It was an amazing demonstration of the tremendous disciplinary hold that this SS officer still had on a former soldier, and of the fear inspired by his

³⁸ See NAC, RG24, Vol 12839, 67/Kurt Meyer Case/1, Abstract of Evidence, p. 5; NAC, RG24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 6, Testimony of Gren. George Mertens, p. 8; NAC, RG24, Vol 10427, *Supplementary Report*, Exhibit 7, p. 5; DHH, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings*, Vol. I, pp. 71, 83, 297; Vol II, p. 556.

presence.³⁹

If the SS officer still held this much power and authority over a soldier long after the war had ended, it is plausible to assume that this amount of authority existed on the battlefield. The officers, highly motivated in the own right, would have transferred their radicalized expectations onto their young soldiers, thereby increasing and radicalizing an already present and fanatical motivation for conflict.

The influence that these officers, the peers and the examples of the teenage volunteers, had on the combat motivation of the soldiers of the 12th SS is difficult to quantify. It is possible that the soldiers of the 12th SS would have fought in much the same manner if their officers were only regular Wehrmacht officers and not elite (and fanatical) officers of the LAH, since their ideological indoctrination was so complete and decisive. However, without the example of a fanatic to lead them, it would have been much easier for the soldiers to fold at the first sign of adversity. The fact that some soldiers did, despite their training and leadership, gives further weight to this argument. With the presence of the fanatical officer, the combat motivation of the fanatical soldier will increase; their presence would safeguard a regression in the ideological indoctrination of the soldiers. By assigning highly decorated members of the LAH to lead the 12th SS, it is clear that the National Socialist leadership was aware of that point, and allocating these officers to lead the teenagers would ensure that Hitler, Himmler, and Berger would have their division

³⁹ B. J. S. Macdonald, *The Trial of Kurt Meyer*. (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1954) pp. 95-6.

of dedicated, and highly motivated, fanatics.

CONCLUSION

Fanatical Combat Motivation and the Legacy of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*

The struggle to try and understand the actions and the motivations of Emil Dürre and the rest of his teenaged comrades of the 12th SS is endless, and it is safe to say that there may never be a totally accurate explanation. They fought with such reckless abandon, and with such little regard for their own safety, that they have become the exception to Keegan's rule that combat is irrational within the psyche of the soldier.¹ It seems that for the 12th SS, the madness of battle was a cool, calculated, and reasoned act of self-sacrifice to a cause.

Many veterans do not hold grudges against their counterparts, attributing their actions against each other as their duty and obligation. There are numerous stories about Axis and Allied soldiers meeting and becoming friends years after the war. No such stories exist about reconciliation between the Canadians and the former members of the 12th SS who fought against them with such brutality in Normandy during the summer of 1944. The 12th SS did not become the "most hated" division that the Canadians fought as the sole result of their atrocities in Normandy, although the cold-blooded murder and mutilation of prisoners by the 12th SS did not help

¹ See John Keegan, "Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation," 1997, p. 3.

foster good relations. The atrocities carefully outlined by Howard Margolian reflect the true nature of the 12th SS towards their opponents, both on and off of the battlefield. The 12th SS officer who repeatedly smashed his rifle butt about the head of a wounded Canadian soldier until he crushed his skull, or the grenadier who knocked his stunned prisoner to the ground and then bayoneted him repeatedly, or the soldier who shot one-by-one seven Canadian POWs after their interrogation on the orders of Kurt Meyer, are indicative of the fanatical nature of the 12th SS. So, too, are the actions of the one grenadier who uttered the words "Now you die" before he opened fire on a group of forty soldiers, or the tank drivers who drove their Panzers over the bodies of murdered prisoners so that they would not be able to be identified.² Not surprisingly, Canadians soon wanted to shoot 12th SS POWs too,³ and it is not improbable that a few young grenadiers met their end in this manner.

Another significant factor, however, for Allied hatred of the 12th SS was the fact that its soldiers would not surrender. Even when they were surrounded, outnumbered, and death seemed inevitable, groups of boys like those holed up in the church cemetery outside of Falaise, fought to the death. Indeed, as the orders found in Appendix 3 indicate, the 12th SS were instructed to commit suicide rather than surrender. Eliminating the soldiers of the 12th SS meant killing them, and killing them proved very tough indeed. Favourite tactics employed by the young grenadiers were to hide behind broken walls in small groups until the Allied armour passed

² Howard Margolian, *Conduct Unbecoming*, 1998, pp. 58-9, 60, 72-3, 90-3.

³ Directorate of History and Heritage, BIOG / Mackenzie, Lorne A.

them by and then stand up to fire pointblank at the Allied infantry moving up behind the armour, or to tie themselves halfway up a tree trunk in order to snipe more effectively. Small groups of 12th SS grenadiers, or even individuals, severely hampered the progress of Allied forces, and the Allies were forced to seek out and destroy these roving bands of fanatical teenagers in order to keep their casualty rates down.⁴ Inevitably, whenever an Allied unit lined up against the 12th SS, high casualty rates were the result on both sides. In their initial encounter in Normandy against the North Nova Scotia Highlanders on the outskirts of Caen on 7 June 1944, the three battalions of the 25th Regiment alone suffered close to 300 casualties, and the tank companies of II Battalion, 12th Panzer Regiment, lost 22 dead, 21 wounded, and a dozen Panzer IV's. However, their fighting style also meant that they would inflict heavy casualties on their opponents. The North Nova Scotia Highlanders lost 242 men, including 84 dead, and the 27th Armoured Regiment suffered 60 casualties, with 26 fatalities, and lost 21 tanks.⁵ Casualty figures such as these became commonplace in battle with the Hitler Youth.

These totally committed Nazis had so fully internalized the National Socialist propaganda that life meant very little to them unless it was sacrificed according to the will of Adolf Hitler. Since their officers told them that they would be shot if they were taken prisoner, the impetus not to surrender but to die in battle increased in

⁴ See James Lucas, *Battle Group*, 1993, pp. 143-155. Lucas reported that 12th SS snipers would only target those who they could identify as officers.

⁵ See Craig Luther, *Blood and Honor*, 1987, p. 145; C. P. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 1960, p. 132.

the warped minds of the teenaged recruits. There are numerous instances, some outlined earlier, when members of the 12th SS engaged in fierce hand-to-hand combat with shovels and spades when they had run out of ammunition. Instead of surrendering, they charged their enemy with a tool. Instead of leaving room for escape when a situation became untenable, they tied themselves to a large immovable object, or they popped out of the rubble like a jack-in-the-box, tactics which would have some desirable short-term results but more often than not led to their death. The actions of one young fanatic, eyewitnessed by Oberscharführer Ernst Behrens and recorded by Hubert Meyer, is a prime example of this type of fanatical mindset and action:

SS-Pionier Pelzmann was the forward observer in the shelter that day. His observation post was located on a low rise under a tree. It was covered with an armour plate from a Panzer IV that he had found himself. . . . I could see that Pelzmann was still fighting. Many dead English soldiers were lying in a semicircle in front of his position. Suddenly, the cover was lifted and Pelzmann came out of his shelter. He grabbed his rifle with its telescopic sight by the barrel and slammed it with full force against the tree so that the butt broke off. He was left with only the barrel in his hands and threw it away. Then I heard him shout loudly: "Well, I'm out of ammunition! I've gotten enough of you - now you can shoot me!" . . . A tall, red-haired Englishman walked toward Pelzmann, grabbed him by the jacket collar with his left hand and shot him in the temple with his pistol. . . . I saw almost 30 dead English soldiers in front of his observation post.⁶

Colonel C. P. Stacey probably best summed-up in 1946 the legacy of the "arrogant" and the "brutish young thugs" of the 12th SS in the following quote:

[The 12th SS was a] particularly formidable division in the military sense, but it certainly represented the Third Reich at its barbarous worst. Canadians

⁶ Hubert Meyer, *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*, 1994, p. 103.

hoped to bring as many as possible of the criminals to justice. But the vast majority of the young soldiers of this formation are no longer amenable to the jurisdiction of any earthly tribunal; they found well-merited graves in the fields of Normandy that summer.⁷

It is true that the members of the 12th SS, aided by their suicidal tactics, were quite adept at dying. Confirmed lists of losses collected by Hubert Meyer conservatively estimated the casualty numbers as 1,951 dead, 4,425 wounded, and 2,250 missing, for a total of 8,626 casualties from an original strength of 19,090, but many of the documents concerning the casualty rates of the 12th SS are missing.⁸ Although it is improbable that various Allied claims that only 500 members of the 12th SS survived Normandy are true, the actual number of casualties probably lies between the two estimates. Even if the conservative estimate of Hubert Meyer is accurate, the casualty rate still hovers around 50%, a rate predictable considering the combat motivation and the fanaticism of the division.

After their involvement in the Normandy campaign, the decimated 12th SS division, without their Divisional CO (Kurt Meyer was missing by this time), the core of their infantry and armoured regiments, and the majority of their equipment and weapons, withdrew from the front for rest and refitting. The division eventually took part in the Ardennes offensive and fought in Hungary at the conclusion of the war, but it was a shadow of its former self. Because of the severity of casualties and

⁷ C. P. Stacey, *Canada's Battle in Normandy: The Canadian Army's Share in the Operations, 6 June - 1 September 1944*. (Ottawa : King's Printer, 1946) p. 74.

⁸ Significantly, the 12th SS received no significant numbers of reinforcements until it withdrew from Falaise. See H. Meyer, p. 222.

the lack of adequate replacements, the 12th SS had to relax its strict entry guidelines which watered-down its fanatical nature. Therefore, for those few months of fighting in Normandy, when the flower of Germany's youth marched proudly and eagerly into battle led by combat-hardened veterans of some of the most fiercest and brutal fighting ever, the 12th SS had no equal for its fanaticism and combat motivation.

The specific influences on the combat motivation of the soldiers of the 12th SS are not universally applicable, but the general themes are. The elements of combat motivation are strongly situational. Not all fanatical soldiers would have had the same degree of influences as the recruits of the 12th SS, but the influences are universal. In order to motivate a fanatical soldier to engage in combat, ideological indoctrination must be present in some form, there must be a religious adherence to a seemingly plausible world view, there needs to be the example of the messianic leader, living or dead, who personifies the world view, there must be an inflated sense of eliteness on the part of the fanatic, there must be superior weaponry and training, and there must be the combat influence of like-minded individuals, whether through the example of a leader or a peer.

Fanatical soldiers are defined by the level of ideological motivators present. They adhere to some sort of ideological system, but usually they radicalize it to conform to their militaristic views. In order to be motivated to fight, the fanatic needs to believe that they are in some way either speeding their ideology's implementation or defending it from outside interference. In order to obtain the

devotion to the world view that the fanatic would possess, ideological indoctrination usually occurs to ensure total adherence to the system. The greater the level of ideological indoctrination, and the higher the absence of any alternative world view, the higher the commitment to the world view on the part of the fanatic, and consequently the higher the combat motivation.

Any successful ideological indoctrination will include the deification of the leader or the founder of the world view. Complete and total commitment to this leader, usually expressed in religious terms, will mean that the fanatic will take extreme measures to fulfil the desires of their leader. This leader, whether they be living or dead, fictional or factual, is usually perceived as the personification of the world view being defended, so the defense of the world view will in turn lead the soldier to believe that they are fulfilling the will of their messianic leader. The greater the attachment to the leader, the greater the combat motivation on the part of the fanatic, and the more radical the actions on the battlefield.

However, a high ideological commitment and effective ideological indoctrination is useless unless the fanatic has received a high degree of practical training and equipment in order to achieve their goals. The combat motivation of the fanatic will increase proportionally to the amount of training and the quality of the weapons received. Without these concrete motivators, the fanatic will experience a sudden defeat on the battlefield. This will call into question the legitimacy of the rhetoric of the ideological indoctrination preceding the battle, and consequently the combat motivation of the soldier will decrease. Faith in their

training and faith in their weapons enhances the fanatic's combat motivation. An elevated sense of eliteness, a concept reinforced by the allocation to the fanatic of superior training and weaponry, also positively impacts their combat motivation.

The other concrete motivator necessary to create and maintain a high level of combat motivation for the fanatical soldier is the presence of like-minded individuals. A fanatical soldier surrounded by other fanatical soldiers will feed off of each other to the point where all semblance of logical thought regarding warfare will disappear. Combat motivation will increase for the fanatic even more if they are led into conflict by another fanatical soldier.

This study by no means claims to be the definitive word on the subject of combat motivation for fanatical soldiers. But it shows that it is impossible to defeat a fanatic merely by gaining tactical superiority on the battlefield. Defeating fanatics ultimately means an attack on their world view, a task that is virtually meaningless if the indoctrination is effective. The fanatic's high and almost unwavering level of combat motivation means that once a fanatic reaches the battlefield, defeating him means either killing him or taking him prisoner.

The example that the 12th SS gives us concerning the combat motivation of a fanatical soldier is chilling, but not unique. History provides us with various examples of fanatical soldiers, an obvious one being the code of *Bushidō*, the ancient code of the samurai warrior class that was kept alive by the officers of the Imperial Japanese Army. Indeed, the dictates and the expectations of *Bushidō* in battle are quite similar to the militaristic *Weltanschauung* which was conveyed to the 12th SS.

The essence of *Bushidō*, also known as "the way of the warrior," was that a soldier should "aim to die rather than to face capture," and that elements like "harshness, endurance, the carrying out ruthlessly of impossible orders, [and] vengeance" were its subjects.⁹ The code of *Bushidō* bred such peculiar fanatical phenomena like the kamikaze pilot and the *banzai* charge, actions which are considered deviant to the average soldier but commonplace to the fanatic. Although the content of the socialization of the German soldier who fought in the 12th SS was radically different than the Japanese soldier who loaded their planes with explosives and only enough fuel to make it to their destination, the end result on the battlefield was virtually identical. The main elements of the combat motivation of a fanatic remain constant, whether they be engaged in high- or low-intensity conflict. It is the relative influence of each element of the Concrete and the Ideological Motivators which will differentiate the formulation of the fanatic's combat motivation from society to society, or from era to era.

The story of the 12th SS is indeed a tragic and cautionary tale. Caught in a web of lies in a society that was built on them, these teenagers never had a real chance to question what they were doing. Stories about soldiers jumping on tanks with explosives strapped to their backs makes one shake their head at the futility of the gesture, but the tragic part is that these fanatical teenagers believed that what they were doing was *correct*. Even after the war, many believed that they did

⁹ See "*Bushidō*," in I. C. B. Dear (ed), *The Oxford Companion to World War II*. (New York : Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 179.

nothing wrong. Perhaps that is the tragic legacy of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*, the best example of the dangerousness of fanaticism available.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archival Sources

National Archives of Canada (Ottawa)

Department of National Defence Records [RG 24]

- including war diaries of various Canadian units involved in the Normandy campaign;
Supplementary Report of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Court of Inquiry re Shooting of Allied Prisoners of War by 12 SS Panzer Division (Hitler-Jugend) in Normandy, France, 7-21 June, 1944.

Privy Council Office Records [RG 2]

Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence (Ottawa)

- miscellaneous files with reference to Kurt Meyer and the 12th SS Panzer Division

Record of Proceedings (revised) of the Trial by Canadian Military Court of S.S. Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer held at Aurich, Germany, 10-28 December, 1945.

Royal Military College of Canada (Kingston) - Crerar Collection

Endt, Alfred. *Rassepolitische Erziehung in der Volksschule*. Leipzig : Verlag der Dürrschen Buchhadlung, 1938.

Haüerer, Johanna. *"Mutter, erzähl von Adolf Hitler!"* München : J. F. Lehmanns, 1939.

Kotz, Alfred. *Führen und Folgen*. Potsdam : Ludwig Voggenreiter, 1934.

Mehlis, Georg. *Führer und Volksgemeinschaft*. Berlin : Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1941.

Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte: Zentrale politische und Kulturelle Zeitschrift der NSDAP.

Pimf im Dienst. no author, no date.

Schirach, Baldur von. *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*. Leipzig : Koehler und Umelang, 1934.

Seehoffer, Herbert. *Mit dem Führer unterwegs*. München : M. Müller und Sohn, 1939.

Strecke, Errich, and Leopold Ost. *Jugend hinter Pflug und Werkbank*. München : Carl Röhrig, 1942.

Wille und Macht: Führerorgan der nationalsozialistischen Jugend. vols 6, 8.

Ziegler, Matthes. *Soldatenglaube Soldatenehre: Ein Deutsches Brevier für Hitler-Soldaten*. Berlin : Nordland-Verlag, 1941.

National Archives and Records Administration (Washington)

Records of the Reichsführer SS [Microcopy T-175]

Miscellaneous Records 12th SS Panzer Division [Microcopy T-354]

Other Sources

Ballard, John A. and Aliccia J. McDowell. "Hate and Combat Behaviour." *Armed Forces and Society* 17.2 (1991): 229-241.

Bartov, Omer. "A View From Below: Survival, Cohesion, and Brutality on the Eastern Front." *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939-1941*. ed. by Bernd Wegner. Providence : Berghahn, 1997. 325-359.

----- "Daily Life and Motivation in War: The *Wehrmacht* in the Soviet Union." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 12 (1989): 200-14.

-----. *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1992.

----- "Indoctrination and Motivation in the *Wehrmacht*: The Importance of the Unquantifiable." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 9 (1986): 16-34.

----- "Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich." *Journal of Modern History* 63 (March 1991): 44-60.

----- "The Conduct of War: Soldiers and the Barbarisation of Warfare." *Journal of Modern History* 64, suppl. (December 1992): S32-S45.

- . *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare.* New York : St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- Blackburn, Gilmer W. *Education in the Third Reich: Race and History in Nazi Textbooks.* New York : State University, 1985.
- Blandford, Edmund L. *Hitler's Second Army: The Waffen SS.* Osceola, WI : Motorbooks, 1994.
- Bredow, Wilfred von. "The West-German *Bundeswehr* as an Institution for Political Education." *On Military Ideology.* ed by Morris Janowitz and Jacques van Doorn. Rotterdam : Rotterdam University Press, 1971. 97-118.
- Brennecke, Fritz (ed). *The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth.* trans. by Harwood L. Childs. New York : Harper, 1938.
- Buchheim, Hans. "Command and Compliance." trans. by Richard Barry. in Helmut Krausnick et. al., *Anatomy of the SS State.* London : Collins, 1968. 303-96.
- Bullock, Alan. *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny.* New York : Konecky and Konecky, 1962.
- Chodoff, Elliot P. "Ideology and Primary Groups." *Armed Forces and Society* 9.4 (1983): 569-593.
- Cockerham, William C., and Lawrence E. Cohen. "Volunteering for Foreign Combat Missions: An Attitudinal Study of U.S. Army Paratroopers." *Pacific Sociological Review* 24.3 (1981): 329-54.
- Combs, William L. *The Voice of the SS: A History of the SS Journal 'Das Schwarze Korps'.* New York : Peter Lang, 1986.
- Connelly, John. "The Uses of *Volksgemeinschaft*: Letters to the NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach, 1939-1940." *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (December 1996): 899-930.
- Dear, I. C. B. (ed). *The Oxford Companion to World War II.* New York : Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Fest, Joachim. *Hitler.* trans. by Richard and Clara Winston. New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.
- Förster, Jürgen. "Hitler Turns East - German War Policy in 1940 and 1941." *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939-1941.* ed. by Bernd Wegner. Providence : Berghahn, 1997. 115-133.

- "Motivation and Indoctrination in the Wehrmacht, 1933-45." *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939-1945*. ed. by Paul Addison and Angus Calder. London : Pimlico, 1997. 263-73.
- Foster, Tony. *Meeting of Generals*. Toronto : Methuen, 1986.
- Frank, Joseph Allen. "Profile of a Citizen Army: Shiloh's Soldiers." *Armed Forces and Society* 18.1 (1991): 97-110.
- Fritz, Stephen G. "'We are trying . . . to change the face of the world' - Ideology and Motivation in the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front: The View from Below." *The Journal of Military History* 60 (October 1996): 683-710.
- Gilbert, Martin. *Second World War*. Toronto : Stoddart, 1989.
- Grunberger, Richard. *A Social History of the Third Reich*. New York : Penguin Books, 1983.
- Goodacre, Daniel M., III. "Group Characteristics of Good and Poor Performing Combat Units." *Sociometry* 16.2 (1953): 168-179.
- Hammond, John L. "Popular Education in the Salvadorian Guerrilla Army." *Human Organization* 55.4 (1996): 436-45.
- Havron, M. Dean, and Joseph E. McGrath. "The Contribution of the Leader to the Effectiveness of Small Military Groups." *Leadership and Interpersonal Behaviour*. ed. by Luigi Petrollo and Bernard M. Bass. New York : Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1961. 167-178.
- Henderson, William Darryl. *Why the Vietcong Fought: A Study of Motivation and Control in a Modern Army in Combat*. Westport, CN : Greenwood, 1979.
- Hynes, Samuel. *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. New York : Penguin, 1997.
- Jäckel, Eberhard. *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power*. trans. by Herbert Arnold. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Janowitz, Morris. "Civic Consciousness and Military Performance." *The Political Education of Soldiers*. ed. by Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Westbrook. Beverly Hills : Sage, 1983. 55-80.
- *The Professional Soldier*. New York : Free Press, 1960.

- , with Roger W. Little. *Sociology and the Military Establishment*. 3rd ed. London : Sage, 1974.
- Kamenetsky, Christa. *Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany: The Cultural Policy of National Socialism*. Athens, OH : Ohio University Press, 1984.
- Keegan, John. *The Face of Battle*. New York : The Viking Press, 1976.
- . *Six Armies in Normandy: From D-Day to the Liberation of Paris, June 6th - August 25th, 1944*. New York : Viking, 1982.
- . "Towards a Theory of Combat Motivation." *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939-1945*. ed. by Paul Addison and Angus Calder. London : Pimlico, 1997. (3-11).
- Kellett, Anthony. *Combat Motivation: The Behaviour of Soldiers in Battle*. Boston : Kluwer Nijhoff, 1982.
- Kershaw, Ian. *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945*. Oxford : Clarendon, 1983.
- . *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford : Clarendon, 1987.
- Kettenacker, Lothar. "Social and Psychological Aspects of the *Führer's* Rule." trans. by Brian Follett. *Aspects of the Third Reich*. ed by H. W. Koch. London : Macmillan, 1987. 96-132.
- Kirk, Tim. *The Longman Companion to Nazi Germany*. New York : Longman Publishing, 1995.
- Koch, H. W. *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922-45*. London : Macdonald and Jane's, 1975.
- Langer, Walter C. *The Mind of Adolf Hitler: The Secret Wartime Report*. New York : Basic Books, 1972.
- Lefèvre, Eric. *Panzers in Normandy: Then and Now*. London : Plaistow, 1983.
- Little, Roger W. "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance." *The New Military: Changing Patterns of Organization*. ed. by Morris Janowitz. New York : Russell Sage, 1964. 195-224.

- Lovell, John. "Military Service, Nationalism, and the Global Community." *The Military, Militarism, and the Polity: Essays in Honor of Morris Janowitz*. ed. by Michel Lovis and Ellen Stern McCrate. New York : The Free Press, 1984. 63-76.
- Lucas, James. *Battle Group! German Kampfgruppe Action of World War Two*. London : Arms and Armour Press, 1993.
- Luther, Craig W. H. *Blood and Honor: The History of the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitler Youth," 1943-1945*. San Jose : R. James Bender, 1987.
- Macdonald, B. J. S. *The Trial of Kurt Meyer*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1954.
- Madej, W. Victor. "Effectiveness and Cohesion of the German Ground Forces in World War II." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 6 (1978): 233-248.
- Margolian, Howard. *Conduct Unbecoming: The Story of the Murder of Canadian Prisoners of War in Normandy*. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Marshall, S. L. A. *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War*. 1968 ed. New York : William Morrow, 1947.
- Maule, Henry. *Caen: The Brutal Battle and Break-out from Normandy*. London : David & Charles, 1976.
- Messerschmidt, Manfred. "The Wehrmacht and the *Volksgemeinschaft*." trans. by Anthony Wells. *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983): 719-744.
- Meyer, Hubert. *The History of the 12. SS-Panzerdivision Hitlerjugend*. trans. by H. Harri Henschler. Winnipeg : J. J. Fedorowicz, 1994.
- Meyer, Kurt. *Grenadiers*. trans. by Michael Mendé. Winnipeg : J. J. Fedorowicz, 1994.
- Montgomery, Bernard. *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K. G.* London : Collins, 1958.
- Moskos, Charles C., Jr. "The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam." *Journal of Social Issues* 31.4 (1975): 25-37.
- "The Military." *Annual Review of Sociology* 2 (1976): 55-77.

- Mosse, George L. *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich*. trans. by Salvator Attanasio and others. New York : Grosset and Dunlap, 1966.
- Olmsted, Michael S., and A. Paul Hare. *The Small Group*. 2nd ed. New York : Random House, 1978.
- Richardson, F. M. *Fighting Spirit: A Study of Psychological Factors in War*. London : Leo Cooper, 1978.
- Reynolds, Michael. *Steel Inferno: 1st SS Panzer Corps in Normandy*. New York : Dell, 1997.
- Rempel, Gerhard. *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS*. Chapel Hill : The University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- Rose, Arnold M. "The Social Psychology of Desertion from Combat." *American Sociological Review* 16 (1951): 615-29.
- Schröder, Hans Joachim. "German Soldiers' Experiences During the Initial Phase of the Russian Campaign." *From Peace to War: Germany, Soviet Russia and the World, 1939-1941*. ed. by Bernd Wegner. Providence : Berghahn, 1997. 309-324.
- Shils, Edward A. "Primary Groups in the American Army." *Continuities in Social Research: Studies in the Scope and Method of "The American Soldier"*. ed. by Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld. Glencoe, IL : Free Press, 1950. 16-39.
- , and Morris Janowitz. "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (Summer 1948): 280-315.
- Snyder, Louis L. *Hitler and Nazism*. New York : Franklin Watts, 1961.
- Stacey, C. P. *Canada's Battle in Normandy: The Canadian Army's Share in the Operations, 6 June - 1 September 1944*. Ottawa : King's Printer, 1946.
- . *The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944-1945*. Ottawa : Queens Printer, 1960.
- Stachura, Peter D. *The German Youth Movement, 1900-1945: An Interpretative and Documentary History*. New York : St. Martin's Press, 1981.

- Staub, Ervin. "The Psychological and Cultural Roots of Group Violence: The Gulf War." *The Journal of Psychohistory* 19.1 (1991): 115-21.
- Stein, George H. *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945*. Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1966.
- Stouffer, Samuel A. et. al. *The American Soldier: Combat and Aftermath*. Vol. II. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1949.
- Sullivan, Michael. "Hitler as Gottmensch: Religious Imagery in the Public Speeches and Proclamations of Adolf Hitler, 1932-1934." Unpublished BA Thesis, Atlantic Baptist University, 1997.
- Theile, Karl H. *Beyond "Monsters" and "Clowns" - The Combat SS: De-Mythologizing Five Decades of German Elite Formations*. Lanham, Maryland : University Press of America, 1997.
- Trevor-Roper, H. R. *The Last Days of Hitler*. New York : The MacMillan Company, 1947.
- Wanke, Paul. "American Military Psychiatry and Its Role among Ground Forces in World War II." *The Journal of Military History* 63 (January 1999): 127-46.
- Watson, Samuel J. "Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies." *The Journal of Military History* 58 (January 1994): 29-55.
- Wegner, Bernd. *The Waffen-SS: Organization, Ideology and Function*. trans. by Ronald Webster. Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Welch, David. "Propaganda and Indoctrination in the Third Reich: Success or Failure?" *European History Quarterly* 17(1987): 403-22.
- Wesbrook, Stephen D. "Sociopolitical Training in the Military: A Framework for Analysis." *The Political Education of Soldiers*. ed. by Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Wesbrook. Beverly Hills : Sage, 1983. 15-54.
- Wilmont, Chester. *The Struggle for Europe*. revised ed. London : Collins, 1965.
- Ziemer, Gregor. *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1941.

APPENDIX 1

Comparative Ranks The Waffen-SS, the German Wehrmacht, and the Canadian Army, 1944-45

WAFFEN-SS	WEHRMACHT	CANADIAN ARMY
SS Mann	Grenadier, Schütze	*****
SS Sturmmann	Obergrenadier	Private
SS Rottenführer	(Ober)/(Stabs)Gefreiter	Lance Corporal
SS Unterscharführer	Unteroffizier	Corporal
SS Scharführer	Unterfeldwebel	Sergeant
SS Oberscharführer	Feldwebel	Staff Sergeant
SS Hauptscharführer	Oberfeldwebel	Warrant Officer II
SS Sturmscharführer	Stabsfeldwebel	Warrant Officer I
SS Untersturmführer	Leutnant	Second Lieutenant
SS Obersturmführer	Oberleutnant	First Lieutenant
SS Hauptsturmführer	Hauptman	Captain
SS Sturmbannführer	Major	Major
SS Obersturmbannführer	Oberstleutnant	Lieutenant Colonel
SS Standartenführer	Oberst	Colonel
SS Oberführer	*****	*****
SS Brigadeführer	Generalmajor	Brigadier
SS Gruppenführer	Generalleutnant	Major General
SS Obergruppenführer	General der Infanterie	Lieutenant General
SS Oberstgruppenführer	Generaloberst	General
Reichsführer-SS	Generalfeldmarschall	Field Marshall

Appendix 2

Order of Battle, 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend* 6 June 1944

I. Division Staff

Divisional Commander - Brigadeführer **Fritz Witt**

i. Ia - Sturmbannführer **Hubert Meyer**

ii. Ib - Sturmbannführer **Fritz Buchsein**

iii. Division adjutant - Hauptsturmführer **Heinrich Springer**

II. 12th SS Panzer Regiment

Regimental Commander - Obersturmbannführer **Max Wünsche**

i. 1st Detachment - Sturmbannführer **Arnold Jürgensen**

ii. 2nd Detachment - Sturmbannführer **Heinz Prinz**

III. 12th Tank Destroyer Detachment

Detachment Commander - Sturmbannführer **Jakob Hanreich**

IV. 25th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (motorized)

Regimental Commander - Standartenführer **Kurt Meyer**

i. 1st Battalion (motorized) - Sturmbannführer **Hans Waldmüller**

ii. 2nd Battalion (motorized) - Sturmbannführer **Hans Scappini**

iii. 3rd Battalion (motorized) - Obersturmbannführer **Karl-Heinz Milius**

V. 26th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment (motorized/armoured)

Regimental Commander - Obersturmbannführer **Wilhelm Mohnke**

i. 1st Battalion (motorized) - Sturmbannführer **Bernhard Krause**

ii. 2nd Battalion (motorized) - Sturmbannführer **Bernhard Siebken**

iii. 3rd Battalion (armoured) - Sturmbannführer **Erich Olboeter**

VI. 12th SS Panzer Reconnaissance Unit

Unit Commander - Sturmbannführer **Gerd Bremer**

VII. 12th SS Artillery Regiment

Regimental Commander - Obersturmbannführer **Fritz Schröder**

i. 1st Detachment - Sturmbannführer **Eric Urbanitz**

ii. 2nd Detachment - Sturmbannführer **Schöps**

iii. 3rd Detachment - Sturmbannführer **Karl Bartling**

VIII. 12th SS Mortar Detachment

Detachment Commander - **Sturmbannführer Willy Müller**

IX. 12th SS Anti-aircraft Detachment

Detachment Commander - **Sturmbannführer Rudolf Fend**

X. 12th SS Panzer Engineer Battalion (motorized, armoured)

Battalion Commander - **Sturmbannführer Seigfried Müller**

XI. 12th SS Panzer Signal Detachment

Detachment Commander - **Sturmbannführer Erich Pandel**

XII. 12th Panzer Supply Detachment

Detachment Commander - **Sturmbannführer Rolf Kolitz**

XIII. 12th SS Panzer Maintenance Detachment

Detachment Commander (also Division Engineer) - **Sturmbannführer Artur Manthey**

XIV. 12th SS Economic Battalion

Battalion Commander - **Sturmbannführer Dr. Kos**

XV. 12th SS Medical Detachment

Detachment Commander - **Sturmbannführer Dr. Rolf Schultz**

XVI. 12th SS Field Replacement Battalion

Battalion Commander - **Hauptsturmführer Georg Urabl**

bold - denotes former members of 1 SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*.

Source: Craig W. H. Luther, *Blood and Honor: The History of the 12th SS Panzer Division "Hitler Youth," 1943-1945*. San Jose : R. James Bender, 1987, pp. 248-53.

Appendix 3

Secret Orders to the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*

1st Order: - attitude towards civilian population in occupied countries: If the population looks contemptuously at an SS soldier or spits at him, the person concerned may be beaten and arrested. If the cross-examination results in the impression that the arrested is an anti-German he shall be secretly executed.

2nd Order: - If a person tries to get information about weapons and ammunition he shall be arrested and cross-examined in the most rigorous manner. If the cross-examination results in the impression that the arrested is an anti-German he shall be executed for espionage. The same punishment shall be meted out to soldiers who pass out information about their weapons.

3rd Order: - Guards are not allowed to leave their posts, nor are they allowed to eat, drink, sleep, smoke, lay down, let their weapons out of their hands as long as they are on guard duty. Leaving the post before being relieved or passing on of the password to the population will be punished by death. The password is the most important thing of guard duties.

4th Order: - Attitude at the front: The SS troops shall take no prisoners. Prisoners are to be executed after having been interrogated. The SS soldiers shall not give themselves up and must commit suicide if there is no other choice left. The officers have stated that the British do not take prisoners as far as SS soldiers are concerned.

5th Order: - Information about enemy's troop movements is to be communicated quickly. Communications on paper shall, at the same time, be learned by heart. If a soldier gets into danger all papers must be burnt or eaten up. He is to carry nothing by his identification disk. Silence must be kept about everything. The traitors will be executed, even after the war.

6th Order: - The observers returning with information from the front and accompanying officers shall not take the same route as to the front.

Source: Directorate of History and Heritage, 159.95.023 (D7), *Record of Proceedings (revised) of the Trial by Canadian Military Court of S. S. Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer held at Aurich, Germany, 10-28 December, 1945., Vol I, pp. 42-3.*