

IN A RAGING INFERNO

COMBAT UNITS OF THE HITLER YOUTH 1944–45

Hans Holzträger

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HELION & COMPANY

The publishers wish to dedicate this book to the memory of Hans Holzträger, who sadly died shortly before its publication

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This book was originally published in Germany under the title *Kampfeinsatz der Hitler-Jugend im Chaos der letzten Kriegsmonate*. Although the text remains identical to that of the German version, this English language edition has been greatly enhanced by expanding the book's photographic content, and by the addition of four pages of specially-commissioned colour plates by Stephen Andrew. The publishers' believe *In a Raging Inferno* features more photographs illustrating the combat deployment of the Hitler Youth than have ever appeared in a single book before, a high proportion of which are previously unpublished.

A note regarding eyewitness reports. Due to the sensitive nature of many of the reports, a proportion of the contributors to the author's work wished to remain anonymous, hence the frequency of footnote references reading, for example, "Report of A.B. in H., to the author." Many did not even wish to reveal their place of residence.

The publishers' wish to extend their thanks to the following individuals and organisations, without whose help publication of this book would have proven impossible: Stephen Andrew; Philip Baker; Dr. Johann Böhm, AGK-Verlag; Monika Kokalj Kocevar, Senior Curator, Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Janusz Mierzejewski; Tony Munoz; Emil Nagel; Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel; the staffs of the Bundesarchiv, Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Süddeutscher Verlag Bilderdienst and Ullstein Bilderdienst.

FOREWORD

Many European countries, and especially their politicians, had learned little or nothing from the murderous battles of the First World War. Instead of determining upon a convincing policy of peace, in many cases old-style nationalistic politics with the old images of the enemy and an emphasis on military strength were continued; part of this process involved the education of youth in "military readiness" and placing a high value on things military. This was particularly evident in Hitler's Germany, where since 1936 young people had received pre-military training. However this pre-military training was intensified following the Reich Minister for Education's decree of 26 May 1942 concerning the "Hitler Youth military training camps".

On Hitler's orders, three-week Hitler Youth military training camps were set up, to which every young man was to be drafted before he was called up into the Wehrmacht. During these three weeks there were 166 hours training: 4 hours for drill, 13½ hours physical education, 27½ hours firing practice, 92 hours of field service (instruction 16½ hours; general training 75½ hours), 6 hours first-aid training, 14 hours ideological education, 9 hours structured free time, thus making a total of 166 hours. But the pre-military training of boys began as early as at the age of 10. In the *Deutsches Jungvolk* (DJ) boys aged between ten and fourteen regularly took part in field exercises and learned to shoot with air-rifles, and those aged between fourteen and eighteen received an even more intensive field training which was complemented by firing exercises with small-calibre weapons. The main aim of these exercises was not to train soldiers for immediate action in war, but to educate youth to a state of military readiness. The Reich Youth leadership repeatedly insisted that the military training of the HJ had nothing to do with the training of military recruits, in contrast with the Hungarian state youth organisation *Levente* and the Polish Pathfinder Youth, in which young people practised

and were trained on military rifles, machine guns, hand grenades, even tanks and in some individual cases also powered aircraft.



Wartime poster promoting the Hitler Youth military training camps, or *Wehrertüchtigungslager*. The wording at the bottom comments on the suitability of the camps as places in which new recruits are prepared for life at the front. (Philip Baker)



Hitler Youth flood out of their huts at a military training camp in a photograph

taken in early 1944. (Emil Nagel)



Hitler Youth are shown basic military theory on a sandtable, at *Wehrertüchtigungslager* "Hainwalde", Saxony (AGK-Verlag)



HJ learning how to estimate distances, 1944. (AGK-Verlag)



Target practice! (AGK-Verlag)



Instruction in rock climbing, c.1944. (AGK-Verlag)

For the "Day of Military Training", which was first instituted at the beginning of September 1943, Hitler sent the following telegram to the Reich Youth Leader:

> "With the Day of Military Training on 4 and 5 September 1943, the Hitler Youth from the various areas of the Reich is demonstrating before the German people their pre-military training capability as a preparation for service under arms in the Wehrmacht. In the future, each year's intake in the military training camps will be trained by soldiers with frontline experience, most of whom were themselves Hitler Youth leaders. Soldierly thinking and action based on the principles of National Socialism are the aim of this training".[1]

In the *Deutsches Jungvolk*, the Hitler Youth and in the military training camps, particular value was placed upon ideological education. This education took place both in morning and evening roll-calls and also during certain education periods and home evenings. For twenty days the National

Socialist ideology was literally hammered into the youth during the morning and evening roll-calls. For example:

1st Day – morning roll-call

Song: *A young people rises up ready for battle …*

Refrain: *One became a leader, one of many / and he formed one goal from many…/ One full of faith bore the banner before them all, / it has never fallen yet, / it will shine on for all eternity*

Song: *A young people …* (verse 2)

1st Day – evening roll-call

Song: *Just tell us of every feud! I will win because I can believe and fight.*

To this was added education in the politics of race. The expansion of German *Lebensraum*, the fact that many Germans met and worked with foreign workers required two decisive questions to be addressed: (1) education in "correct" attitudes to foreigners, (2) education in a "healthy" attitude to family and children.

Towards the end of the war in 1945, however, Hitler Youth, even *Pimpfe* (aged just fourteen) were given hasty military training, armed, and senselessly sent into action. In my archive there is a written document from M. Sch., an extract from which I quote here:

> On 14 January 1945 I arrived at the main reporting point (Litzmannstadt railway station) – with me were 200–250 ranks of Hitler Youth from the whole Reich. In addition there were about 1,200 young men from the Baltic States, almost all of whom came from the Warthe-Gau, to which they had emigrated. Meanwhile the Russian offensive was rolling forward, and in Litzmannstadt we were almost surrounded, increasingly isolated from other German units. During the night of 14–15 January 1945, a Finnish Waffen-SS *Obersturmführer* and an Army sergeant-major arrived. The SS leader and the Waffen-SS NCOs had been provided for our Reich training camp Litzmannstadt. After a short discussion we formed into units of 60–100 young men, under the command of an SS or Wehrmacht NCO and set off westwards. We were sent into action as late as 7 May 1945 under various names (*Lützow*, *HJ-Panzer-vernichtungsbrigade*) as anti-tank units.

In the European democracies, principally in England and France, pre-military training was a voluntary affair, in contrast to the situation in Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union and Hungary, where it was compulsory. In Poland the "State Department for Physical Education and Military Training", the controlling authority for pre-military youth training, was placed under the control of the War Ministry. From the age of sixteen every school pupil was

obliged to take part in certain military courses. But pre-military training was only an obligation for those of Polish nationality, not for the millions of Ukrainians, Jews, White Russians and Germans also resident in Poland.

The present work is the result of years of research by the author, who hopes thus to be able to fill a gap in the existing literature. It is about the combat deployment of the Hitler Youth, although it could equally well be called "front-line deployment", even if the front on German soil was significantly different from that of previous years when outside the borders of Germany.

The author's interest in this subject originates in the fact that he himself was called up in March-April 1945 into an HJ military training camp in the Zittau Mountains. We, German grammar-school pupils from Hungary, so-called *Volksdeutsche*, or "ethnic Germans", 140 in number, were supposed to be sent into action at the front at Jägersdorf in Upper Silesia – after less than three weeks' training. At the instigation of the Hungarian-German *Volksgruppenführer* Dr Franz Basch this course was not pursued. His argument that too many of the relatively few Hungarian-German grammar-school pupils had already been killed in battle, and that after the war the remainder could be used as Hungarian-German intelligence, convinced the SS leadership.



Hitler with the-then *Reichsjugendführer* Baldur v. Schirach, Jutta Rüdiger, head

of the BDM, and (far right) Clementine zu Castell, representative of the youth organisation *Glaube und Schönheit*. The Führer is being shown the new *Führerinnenuniform* to be worn by the BDM leadership, April 1938. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)

The sources which I found to be available were scanty and necessarily marked by often "highly-coloured" accounts of the "perpetrators" themselves. I traced contemporary witnesses, wrote to them and questioned them, and evaluated archive material. Thus there gradually emerged a picture of the combat deployment of the HJ. Outside of the German Reich, it began as early as September 1944 in Transylvania, in October in the Banat, continuing through to April/May 1945 with the *DJ Heimatschutz* of the Hungarian-German youth in the areas of Gutenstein, Schneeberg, Dürre-and Hohe Wand in Lower Austria.

In February/March 1945 the HJ units were sent into a hopeless battle at many places along the collapsing front in the east, south, and west of Germany. In this, these boys/children of the HJ were victims of the National Socialist Party leadership and the military. But they were also perpetrators of war crimes, as the appendices show.

Was and is such deployment of fourteen-sixteen year-old Hitler Youth justifiable? "Without doubt the answer to that today would have to be 'no' " writes the Reich Leader of Female Youth, Dr Jutta Rüdiger. But she and other National Socialist officials leave a little door open: "At the time the situation was quite different".[2]

But as early as 1945 there was a clear, unequivocal 'no' to the combat deployment of the HJ. Forty hours after Hitler's death, the Gestapo and the SD (the security service of the SS) were still hanging countless German soldiers. Half of these were wearing *Volkssturm* and Hitler Youth uniforms.

Hans Holzträger



Reichsjugendführer Artur Axmann inspects Hitler Youth born in 1928, who have reported to Berlin for military service, 10 October 1944. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)

INTRODUCTION

How the combat deployment of the Hitler Youth came about

In the summer of 1944 all theatres of war had developed totally unfavourably for the German Wehrmacht. The Western Allies were in Italy and were pressing forward from the Normandy front towards the frontier of the German Reich. Army Group Centre was shattered by a large-scale Soviet offensive. Rumania and Bulgaria had surrendered and were now fighting against their former German allies. In autumn 1944 an uprising broke out in Slovakia, which could only be fought with difficulty, since at this time the German Wehrmacht was already suffering from a great lack of men and matérial. In Europe, only Croatia and Hungary remained allied to Germany. Croatia could scarcely help itself; the Hungarians were fighting on with twelve divisions, side-by-side with Hitler's troops.

The loss of the oilfields in Rumania and the Anglo-American bomber offensive against the German petrochemical works were having a disastrous effect on the mobility of motorised troops, but most especially on the German Luftwaffe. It is true that in 1944 more tanks and fighter aircraft were being produced than ever before, but soon the lack of fuel made itself felt in a disastrous way; fighter aircraft could not take off, the Tiger and Panther tanks could not move. The strong air forces of the Western Allies were continuing to destroy the railway network. Chromium, tungsten, manganese and molybdenum were no longer available after the loss of the Ukraine, Rumania and Albania, and could no longer be brought in from Turkey and Spain.

Lines of defence were being set up at a feverish pace along the Reich frontier. With Hitler's decree of 25 September 1944 concerning the formation of the German *Volkssturm*, it was hoped to be able to stabilise the fronts around the Reich. It was intended to form *Volkssturm* battalions as security garrisons at frontier and defence positions within the area of the Reich. They were to serve withdrawing army forces as recruits and to counter enemy forces that had broken through. In total, throughout the German Reich, 4–5 million men were to be called up in this way.

The German *Volkssturm* was made up as follows:

The first draft: This included all those capable of combat deployment with dates of birth between 1884 and 1928, in all 1.2 million men in 1,850 battalions. *Volkssturm* battalions from the first draft could be deployed within and outside the regions of the homeland.

The second draft: This included, similarly, those capable of combat deployment with dates of birth between 1884 and 1928, but who were engaged in essential war work, in news or transport services or in other essential functions in the homeland. These men were to be deployed in combat, only if the enemy was standing "at the gates". Most of those called up belonged to the second draft, i.e. 2.8 million men in 4,860 *Volkssturm* battalions.

The third draft: This included those with dates of birth between 1925 and 1928, with the exception of those who were already members of the Wehrmacht. Since these young men belonged either to the Hitler Youth or to the Reich Labour Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst)*, they were drafted into the *Volkssturm* within the framework of both these organisations, the members of the Hitler Youth being prepared in "defence training camps". The third draft included in all 600,000 young men. Most young men with dates of birth between 1925 and 1928 were already in the Wehrmacht. In March 1945, those with dates of birth in 1929 were also drafted into the Wehrmacht. By an order of the Party Chancellery of 27 February 1945, those with dates of birth in 1929, who were not already in the Wehrmacht, were enrolled in the *Volkssturm*.

The highest leadership of the *Volkssturm* did not envisage deployment of units of the Hitler Youth in combat. On 7 May 1945, the Party Chancellery, which had authority in this instance, issued the following order: "Those members of the *Volkssturm* with dates of birth in 1928 and 1929 may not be

drafted for combat deployment, not even if they volunteer".[1] The only exceptions were the "special units" whose formation Hitler himself had ordered. Among these were the raising of two battalions of Hitler Youth in the fortress of Breslau and several regiments of anti-tank units of Hitler Youth in Brandenburg and Berlin. During the final months of the war, when units of the Hitler Youth came to be deployed in combat, they fought independently, or as part of units of the Party, the Wehrmacht, or the Waffen-SS.

The fourth draft: This included 1.4 million who were not capable of armed deployment, but who could be used for guard or security tasks.

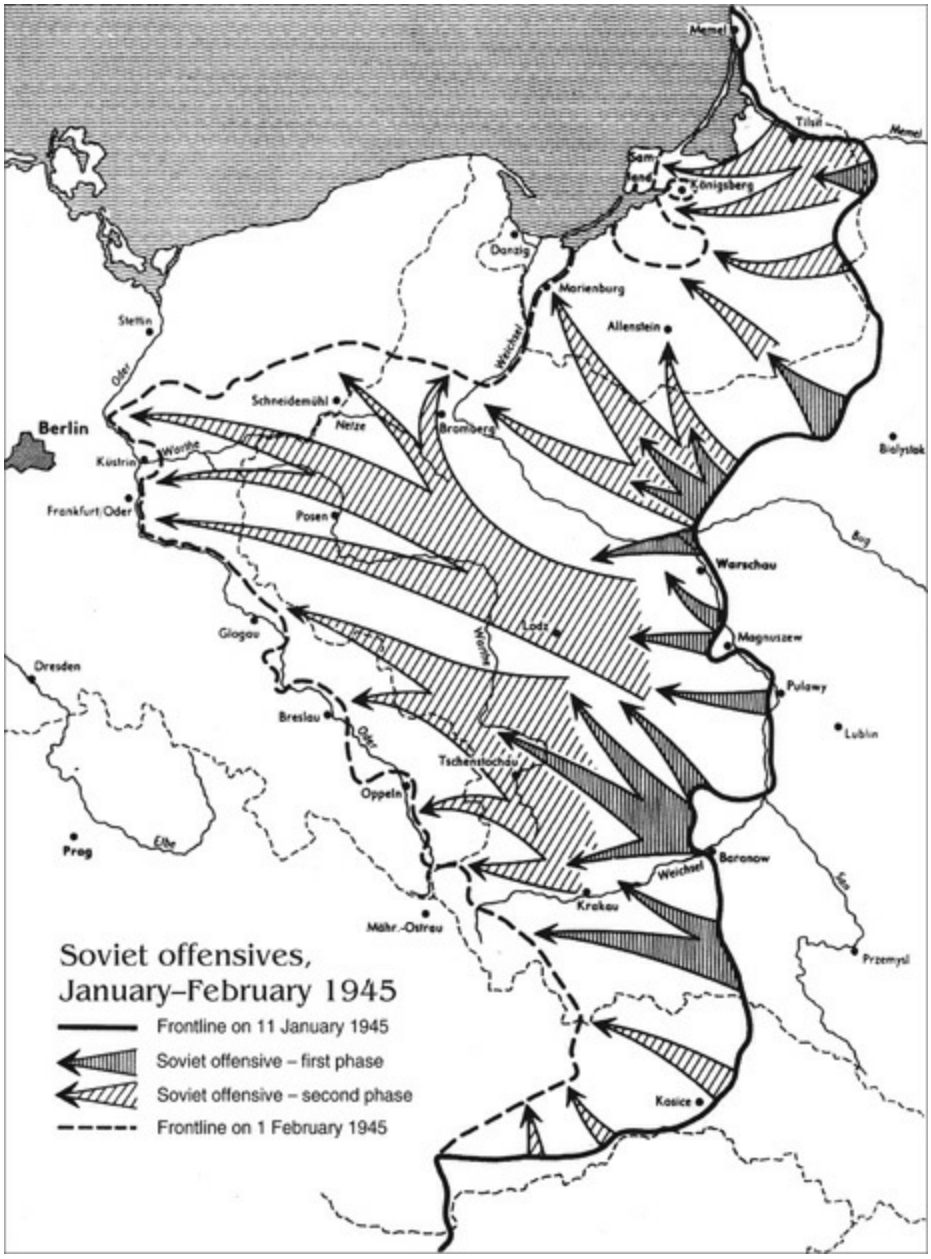
A decisive handicap for the arming of the German *Volkssturm* was the totally insufficient amount of weapons, ammunition and clothing. For the first draft alone 1.2 million rifles, 57,350 light and 11,000 heavy machine guns, together with many mortars and 5,500 artillery pieces, were required. However, by comparison, only 14,000 rifles, 1,350 light and 980 heavy machine guns, no mortars and no artillery pieces were available for all four drafts at the beginning of the *Volkssturm*'s creation.

During the course of the following months, the situation regarding weapons and ammunition for the *Volkssturm* did improve slightly. This was mainly through the production of the *Volksgewehr* (People's Rifle), but armament continued to range from unsatisfactory, to completely insufficient, for the majority.

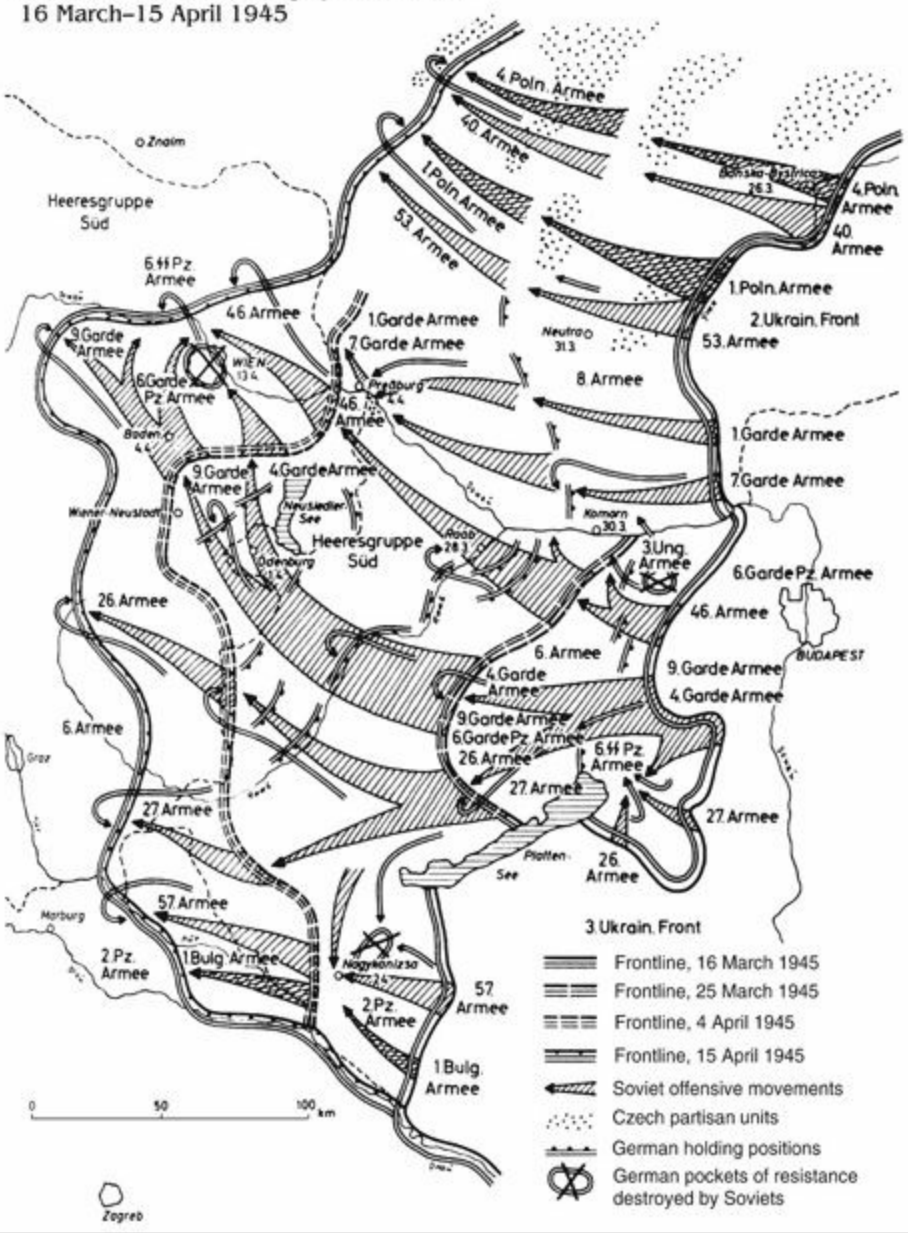
Chronologically speaking, the first instances of combat deployment of units of the *Deutschen Jugend* (belonging, in its constitution, training, and ideology, to the Hitler Youth) took place in Transylvania, and in the Rumanian and Serbian Banat, during September, October and November 1944.



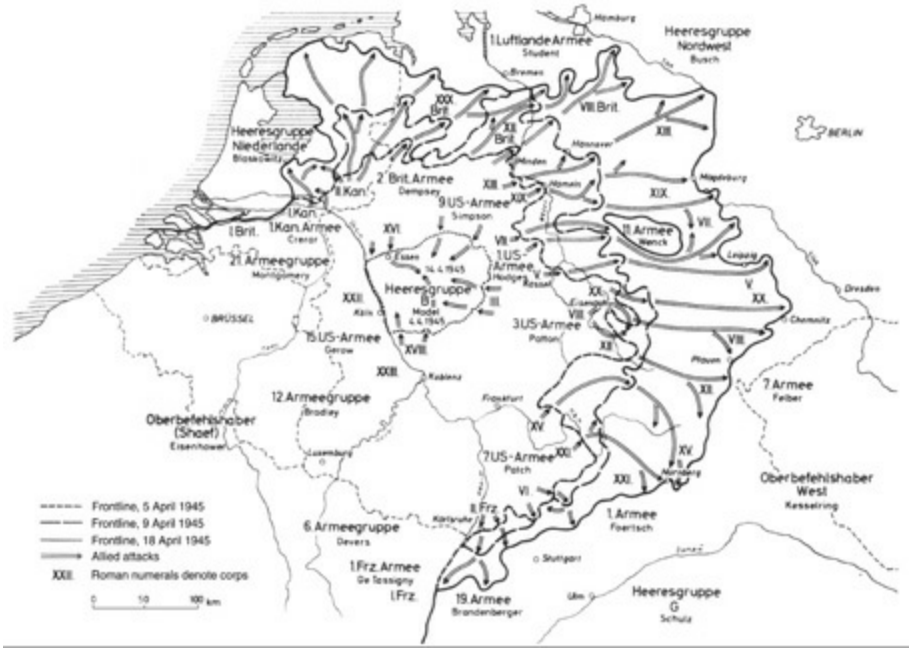
DJ *Pimpfe* from Munich collecting for the *Winterhilfswerk*, or 'Winter Relief' fund, which helped contribute towards providing the needy with food and fuel. From a painting by Adolf Reich entitled *Das Grössere Opfer*,or *The Greater Sacrifice*. (Philip Baker)


Memel
Tilsit
Memel
Samland
Königsberg
Danzig
Marienburg
Allenstein
Stettin
Oder
Weichsel
Schneidemühl
Netze
Bromberg
Berlin
Kustrin
Warthe
Frankfurt/Oder
Posen
Bialystok
Warschau
Bug
Glogau
Lodz
Warthe
Magnuszew
Dresden
Pulawy
Breslau
Oder
Lublin
Tschenstochau
Oppeln
Prag
Elbe
Baranow
Weichsel
San
Krakau
Mähr.-Ostrau
Przemysl
Kosice
Soviet offensives,
January–February 1945
Frontline on 11 January 1945
Soviet offensive – first phase
Soviet offensive – second phase
Frontline on 1 February 1945

Soviet offensives in Hungary and Austria
16 March–15 April 1945



Western Allied offensives from the Rhine to the Elbe, April 1945



Combat uniforms of the Hitler Youth 1944–45

General Uniform Notes

This section is not intended to provide a definitive reference regarding Hitler Youth combat uniforms, but rather to supply the reader with some pointers indicating general trends which can be observed when studying the combat gear worn by HJ during the last phase of the war.

HJ uniform variation 1944–45

Although smart, the M37 dark blue uniform was impractical for combat wear. Like its counterpart, the M44 Army field grey blouse, the winter HJ blouse had a number of shortcomings. It was uncomfortable for combat wear, and had only two chest pockets for storing the wearer's items. The German frontline soldier always preferred the four pocket field tunic, and this opinion was shared by the HJ. In addition, the colour of the HJ winter blouse – dark blue, almost black – was not a particularly suitable camouflage colour, causing the wearer to appear quite exposed due to its inability to blend into the surroundings.

If available, many HJ chose to wear more suitable uniforms for combat. These ranged from HJ olive-brown service tunics, to SA paramilitary uniforms. A commonly-seen uniform was that of the HJ *Feuerwehr*, or fire defence units. Other uniforms which were worn included those of the NPEA (National Political Educational Institutes, HJ élite schools), NSKK (National Socialist Motor Transport Corps), RAD (National Labour

Service) and assorted Army and Luftwaffe apparel. Sometimes, the HJ would wear a combination of these.

During the last days of the Reich, HJ combat squads were drafted into all branches of the German armed forces, from the *Volkssturm*, to Army Volksgrenadier units, from the Waffen-SS to Luftwaffe Field Divisions. The HJ were normally employed in filling out the infantry and anti-tank elements

of these units, the former arm suffering particularly from manpower shortages. Apart from the *Volkssturm*, the HJ would normally be issued the uniforms of the unit to which they had been attached or drafted into. In most cases, the regulation unit insignia, e.g. collar patches and shoulder straps, was missing from the uniform. HJ also added their own badges to their uniforms. These usually took the form of the small HJ diamond metal or cloth badge, or HJ merit badges.

HJ Headgear

A similar situation occurred when it came to headgear, with a wide variety being worn by the HJ. The type of headgear usually depended upon what was locally available. Army field grey, Luftwaffe blue-grey and Nazi paramilitary olive-brown service caps were usually preferred to the black HJ version. The most commonly-seen steel helmet was the M42, although older types – such as the M16, M18 and M35 – were all pressed into service in 1945. Even more obscure helmets, such as those worn by Air Raid Protection units, were worn *in extremis*.

HJ Ranks

Gemeinschaft	*Führerschaft*	*Höhere Führerschaft*	*Führerkorps*	*Höheres Führerkorps*
Oberrottenführer	Hauptkameradschaftführer	Hauptgefolgschaftführer	Bannführer	Stabsführer
Rottenführer	Oberkameradschaftführer	Obergefolgschaftsführer	Oberstammführer	Obergebietsführer
Junge	Kameradschaftführer	Gefolgschaftführer	Stammführer	Gebietsführer
				Hauptbannführer

HJ Ranks

The ranks and rank groupings above are based on 1940 regulations. Ranks listed in order of seniority, lowest at bottom ; rank groupings listed in seniority, reading left (lowest grouping) across to right.

The HJ armband

The frequency with which the HJ armband was worn at the front, by HJ in combat, is open to dispute. The majority of photographs showing HJ during

this period are propaganda shots, in which the armband *is* usually being worn. Conversely, the small number of combat photos of HJ suggest that the armband was rarely worn at the front ; the *Volkssturm* armband can be seen more frequently. Likewise, the majority of HJ photo graphed as prisoners wear no armbands, although this may be due to their wearer's throwing them away before capture to avoid retaliation from their captors. Overall, it is hard to form any conclusive judgements, and like so many other aspects of HJ uniforms and equipment, variation was probably the norm.

Summary

Overall, the HJ combat formations created during 1944–45 wore a very wide variety of uniforms and equipment. Apart from the M37 winter uniform, there was little uniformity save for those HJ drafted into Wehrmacht units. The HJ soldier tended to wear anything he was supplied with, or could get his hands on, and the more practical this was for combat, the better.

Captions to the colour plates

Plate 1 Hitler Youth combat uniforms

Figure 1 HJ-June, Berlin, April 1945

Hitler Youth units played a prominent role in the defence of Berlin, notably in the anti-tank role, in which they excelled. This well-armed *HJ-Junge* is wearing the M42 pattern HJ *Feuerwehr* (fire defence squads) tunic and trousers. This was a practical uniform for service in the field, and was frequently preferred, where available, to that shown being worn by figure 2 ; the tunic had four concealed buttons at the front, and this HJ has added M38 HJ shoulder straps – the narrow twisted red cord shows the wearer to be a *Kriegsfreiwilliger*, or 'war volunteer'. Headgear consists of a M42 steel helmet. This HJ has also been awarded the infantry assault badge.

Equipment is simple – aHJ belt, dagger, and short-handled entrenching tool, plus late pattern StG 44 ammo pouches. This *HJ-Oberrottenführer* is armed with a VG 1–5 assault rifle and M24 stick grenade.

Figure 2 HJ-Oberrottenführer, Pyritz, Pomerania, February 1945

This figure portrays another type of uniform frequently used by HJ combat units, here being worn by a *HJ-Oberrottenführer* during the defence of Pyritz against the advancing Soviets.

He wears the M37 HJ winter uniform blouse and trousers, the former with M38 HJ shoulder straps with appropriate rank markings, and *Kriegsfreiwilliger* cord. Although frequently noted as being "blue", the trousers and blouse were in effect a very dark blue/black, similar in shade to the dark blue uniforms of the Kriegsmarine. Like most of the figures appearing in the colour plates, he has the distinctive HJ/BDM triangular badge sewn on his left sleeve, which displayed the region and district of the wearer's unit. His cap is the black M35 winter service cap, embellished with the HJ diamond enamel badge.

Simple field equipment consists of a HJ-pattern belt with a single set of standard ammunition pouches. He carries the 7.92mm KAR 98a rifle, a shortened version of the Gew 98 rifle, and an older pattern weapon originally used by cavalry and stormtroop units in the First World War; in addition, he is armed with the ubiquitous *Panzerfaust*, (here a *Panzerfaust 100*).

Plate 2 Hitler Youth winter uniforms

Figure 1 HJ-Junge, East Prussia, January 1945

This HJ is wrapped up warmly to endure the biting cold of the East Prussian winter, clothed in a M42 Army greatcoat worn over the M37 HJ winter uniform. His cap is a black woollen HJ *Feuerwehr* model, with HJ diamond-shaped enamel badge added. HJ wore a variety of these sidecaps, the *Feuerwehr* model being the most frequently seen. The absence of the standard M35 winter service cap was probably due to a local shortage in supplies.

This *HJ-Junge* wears a simple HJ belt with rifle ammo pouches and a gas mask, the canister's strap for which can be seen passing over his left shoulder. His armament consists of a late war production model KAR 98k rifle, M43 stick grenade, and a *Panzerfaust 60*.

Figure 2 HJ-Kameradschaftführer (dispatch rider), Goldap, East Prussia, November 1944

One of the earliest combat deployments of HJ units occurred during the Soviet offensive into East Prussia during autumn 1944. This *HJ-Kameradschaftführer* wears the uniform of a Luftwaffe *Flakhelfer* – the single-breasted M43 Luftwaffe blue-grey *Flakhelfer* greatcoat over a M43 *Flakhelfer* tunic and trousers. An earth-brown version of this greatcoat for HJ units had been introduced in 1933. His shoulder straps are the M38 HJ *Flakhelfer* pattern, with the *bann* number and piping in light blue (standard HJ units had red piping), red *Kriegsfreiwilliger* cord, and appropriate rank markings. His armband denotes membership of the *Volkssturm.*

Plate 3 Hitler Youth serving in military units

Figure 1 Schütze, RAD Kampfgruppe, Rhineland, February 1945

Due to the great manpower shortages suffered by the German armed forces towards the end of the war, HJ members frequently found themselves serving in the Wehrmacht or other branches of service. This HJ is serving as a *Schütze* (lit. rifleman, or private), in a RAD *Kampfgruppe*.

He wears the standard RAD tunic and trousers with no insignia, over which he has placed a M31 RAD *zeltbahn* or camouflaged tent section. The unpopular gaiters have been replaced by grey socks. His M42 steel helmet has had HJ insignia hand-painted onto its side, as well as wire mesh added to help hold camouflage materials.

The HJ-pattern belt has standard rifle ammunition pouches added; a M39 egg grenade hangs off one. His gas mask canister strap passes over his left shoulder. His rifle is a late war KAR 98k with ZF41 sniper scope.

Figure 2 Schütze serving in an Army Panzerjäger unit, Breslau, Silesia, March 1945

HJ saw extensive action against the Soviets during the epic defence of Breslau against the Red Army, and a number of Hitler Youth appear to have served in Army *Panzerjäger* units which formed part of the city's garrison. This figure wears the distinctive field-grey *Sturmartillerie* uniform over a

M42 Army turtleneck sweater. In theory, this uniform was supposed to have been issued to all *Sturmartillerie* and *Panzerjäger* units save those in Panzer or Panzer Grenadier divisions, from 1944 onwards. In reality, the uniforms were in short supply and some units never received them. This HJ also wears a standard M42 Army steel helmet.

He has pinned the HJ diamond enamel badge to his tunic, and a ribbon for the Iron Cross 2nd Class can also be seen. He again wears a HJ belt – although both Luftwaffe and Army patterns were also worn – to which StG 44 magazine pouches have been attached. He is also equipped with an Army-pattern folding shovel, and standard Army M31 canteen and bakelite cup. He carries the very effective StG 44 assault rifle, and a *Panzerfaust* 60.

Plate 4 Miscellaneous Hitler Youth combat uniforms

Figure 1 HJ-Rottenführer as Luftwaffenhelfer, Friesland, April 1945

HJ were very active in the defence of northern Germany, and this *Rottenführer* is serving as a *Luftwaffenhelfer*, wearing the standard M43 HJ *Flakhelfer* Luftwaffe blue-grey uniform, with M38 HJ *Flakhelfer* shoulder straps, again decorated with red cord denoting a *Kriegsfreiwilliger*, and appropriate rank markings. He has attached the regulation HJ *Flakhelfer* badge to his tunic ; the standard pattern Luftwaffe eagle was also used, albeit unofficially. His HJ *Flakhelfer* cap carries the HJ enamel badge.

He wears a Luftwaffe-pattern belt plus rifle ammunition pouches, and carries a MG ammo box and an old-pattern Italian rifle (mod. 91.TS) – German designation 6.5 KAR 416(i.), the (i.) representing *italienische*, or Italian.

Figure 2 HJ-Oberscharführer, Küstrin, February 1945

The HJ helped conduct a fierce defence of Küstrin against the Soviets. This *HJ-Oberscharführer* (equivalent to a senior NCO), wears the olive-brown HJ service tunic, which was very similar to the Nazi Party tunic worn by various SA and other NSDAP paramilitary units. His shoulder straps are the standard HJ M38 pattern with appropriate rank markings and

Kriegsfreiwilliger cord added. Trousers are SA-pattern olive-brown. His cap is that of a *DJ* leader, with metal national insignia and aluminium piping around the crown.

This battle-hardened HJ displays the distinctive tank destruction badge on his right sleeve – one badge being awarded for each enemy tank knocked out single-handedly by the recipient. He also wears a silver HJ proficiency badge. His HJ-pattern belt carries standard ammunition pouches and a P38 revolver in second-model holster. The *HJ-Oberscharführer* is armed with a *Panzerfaust* 60, and a Soviet Moisin-Nagant M38 carbine – German designation 7.62 KAR 454(r.), the (r.) representing *russische*, or Russian.

Figure 3 BDM-Mädelscharführerin, Frankfurt-ander-Oder, March 1945

BDM girls are known to have seen action against the Soviets in several locations in 1945, notably in HJ Regiment *Frank-furt/Oder*, and in Breslau. This *BDM-Mädelscharführerin* wears the short BDM suedette *Kletterjacke* over an M42 Army-pattern grey wool sweater. The green cording on the jacket signifies the girl's rank, and standard BDM badges – including the triangular regional/district badge – are sewn to her left sleeve. Her trousers are the standard dark blue/black BDM ski trousers, fastening at the side. She holds a M42 *Luftschutz* steel helmet in her left hand.

A holster containing a Czech 7.65mm pistol 27(t.) – again, the (t.) representing *tschechisch*, or Czech in the German designation – is carried on her belt. She also carries an Army-pattern entrenching tool, and a *Panzerfaust* 30 – both of which were used on Soviet troops, according to accounts!

The publishers wish to acknowledge the kind assistance given by Stephen Andrew in preparing this information.

Part I
Combat deployment of the Hitler Youth outside the German Reich

1
In Transylvania
The Siebenbürgen ("Transylvania") Regiment in the battle for the homeland, Autumn 1944

After the surrender of Rumania on 23 August 1944, Soviet units pushed quickly forward, crossed the Walachei and on 6 September advance units reached the Danube at Turnu Severin. Other Soviet forces broke into Transylvania from the south and encountered unexpectedly strong resistance there from the newly-formed defensive front.[1] It is little known that on this front there were many pupils from the German Honterus Grammar School in Kronstadt/Transylvania, members of the *Deutschen Jugend* organisation. As early as the night of 23–24 August word was passed by the regional authorities in Kronstadt, to the German population (Transylvanian Saxons, who had settled there since the 12th century) that all men capable of bearing arms should report to the Honterus School. An anonymous eyewitness reported:

> "On the morning of the 24 August, as I entered the Honterus School (incidentally one of the oldest German grammar schools), there were some 250–300 armed civilians and about 100 members of the Wehrmacht in the schoolyard and in the schoolrooms. Men called up by the

regional authorities had received carbines, machine guns and hand grenades from the Wehrmacht. With great enthusiasm the grammar school pupils placed themselves at their disposal. In addition, some members of the Rumanian Legion (Iron Guard) had presented themselves.

Suddenly word spread that the Wehrmacht was pulling out. In St. Georgen (in the Hungarian part of Transylvania) the leader of the Kronstadt *SS-Ersatzkommando*,a *Hauptsturmführer*, was setting up an ad-hoc combat unit from the inhabitants of Kronstadt. For the most part it consisted of seventeen and eighteen year-old Honterus School pupils and young lads. It later suffered many casualties."[2]

From Gerda Knopf's report of her experiences we find similar cases of German men and "boy" volunteers who, as long as their number lasted, were put into German uniforms. Trenches were dug and machine guns set up.[3]

From "O.F." in "Sch." we know that the head of the Kronstadt *SS-Ersatzkommando*, *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Neuweiler, led the combat group. The command also included *SS-Untersturmführer* Lakinger, who was killed in April 1945 during the fighting around Merkendorf, near Ansbach, and *SS-Unterscharführer* Schmidt. Fierce fighting took place in Central Transylvania, mainly in the area of Neumarkt[4] near Mieresch, where according to "O.F.'s" account a large part of the school pupils met their death.[5]

More precise information, about individual units, is given by "F. Sch." in "J.":

"On 23 August 1944 Rumania left the Axis alliance. On 24 August the air-raid sirens sounded in Kronstadt. Afterwards the German men and youths received the order to report to the-then Sprengel School, as eventual reinforcements for the German Wehrmacht. On Friday 25 August they carried out patrol duties in the town. On the Saturday morning it was explained to the Transylvanians, stationed in the Honterus School, that the German Wehrmacht was withdrawing without a fight from Kronstadt, to somewhere around the Kokel region near Schässburg in order that the town should not be destroyed. The SS division *Florian Geyer* was due to reach Schässburg soon. Alongside the units coming from the Kronstadt area, it was hoped to reach the South Carpathian frontier and to remain there. The majority of Honterus School pupils were in favour of going with them".[6]



HJ Peter Martin from Hamburg at a training camp in Transylvania, March 1944.
(Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)

"F. Sch.", too, was in the St. Georgen[7] camp. Here he saw the floods of retreating German troops and realised that "This is no retreat any more, this is a defeated army".

In St. Georgen, the Honterus School pupils, from fifteen years of age upwards, always reported enthusiastically for reconnaissance patrols. "F. Sch." never saw any of these patrols return – he could not understand how untrained boys could senselessly sacrifice themselves in hopeless operations. After about a week, the Honterus School pupils other Transylvanians belonging to the combat group, such as the pupils from the Kronstadt Merkuria Business School, were moved from St. Georgen to Neumarkt-am-Mieresch (capital of the Szekler), and since 1940 part of Hungary. Romanian Stukas bombed the camp, causing a number of fatalities. Apart from pupils from the Honterus and Merkuria schools, numerous German boys from Kronstadt and the area around Kronstadt, the Burzenland, turned up. Using them as recruits, the *Freiwilligen-Regiment-Siebenbürgen* was formed and soon brought into position in the vicinity of Neumarkt. The regiment is said to have possessed only four artillery pieces.

At night the lads often fired off tracer bullets through nervousness and over-enthusiasm, which very much annoyed the experienced soldiers. Enemy sharpshooters found it very easy to be successful here. One of the victims was seventeen-year-old Willi Schwarz from Kronstadt. While some of his comrades were digging a grave for their comrade, there rang out, on a piano which was in the room of a half-destroyed house, Mozart's *Kleine Nachtmusik*, played by a friend of the dead boy. Only after night had fallen was the burial party ordered back into position. "F. Sch." lay behind his MG 42. If they risked a quick look into the valley from their trenches, they saw below them a little village with a church tower – it was the Hungarian village of Balavasar. The weather was getting worse – it rained for four days and nights.

> "After four days, on a Friday – it must have been around three or four o'clock in the morning – a dreadful noise broke out over us. Enemy funs were hurling round after round onto our positions. When the sound of firing abated after some two hours, I happened to glance down the slope in front of us. 'Hey', I said to my friend, 'look, figures in khaki uniforms are coming up!' This heavy barrage spelled disaster for many of the Honterus pupils and other compatriots. The *Siebenbürgen* Regiment was smashed here so that only a few survived, having the good luck to escape somehow from this Hell".[8]

"F. Sch." ran off with a friend in the direction of Neumarkt. They swam the Mieresch which was running in spate, and because of this had to leave their machine gun behind. As a result of this, "F. Sch." was assigned to a punishment company. The *Freiwilligen-Regiment-Siebenbürgen* was wiped out. Its commanding officer, Colonel Csaki, was killed.

On the Plattensee, *SS-Ersatzbataillon Siebenbürgen* was set up. But almost none of the lads from *Freiwilligen-Regiment-Siebenbürgen* reported to this. "F. Sch." concludes from this that these young men had for the most part been killed in the fighting to the south of Neumarkt.

A more precise account is given by "G.B.", then sixteen. He too gives an account of the training camp in Neumarkt and continues:

> "The fitting-out with clothing and weapons went very quickly. Training was limited to two days. A battalion with four companies, each company with four platoons, was set up. Each platoon was 40–50 strong. Armament consisted of carbines and light Czech machine guns. The troops were led by officers from the Wehrmacht. On the night of 6

– 7 September, this unit was deployed for the first time, to the south of Neumarkt. I myself was company dispatch rider in the 2nd Company. The youngest in our company was the Honterus School pupil Georg Rhein, born

in 1929; I myself, born in 1928, was not much older".



An Army instructor hands a rifle to a youthful-looking HJ, seventeen years old according to the original caption, 1944. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag / Scherl)

The battalion, with no combat experience, suffered high casualties, especially in its first two weeks of duty. The retreat proceeded in a northerly direction. The plan to set up a second battalion with Transylvanian Saxons (Germans) from the district of Hermannstadt, could not be implemented because only a very few had escaped from this district. So the whole regiment consisted of only one battalion, together with a signals platoon and a heavy weapons platoon equipped with machine guns and mortars.

On 18 October 1944 the *Siebenburgen* Regiment was dissolved and the troops re-allocated to the 8th SS Cavalry Division *Florian Geyer*.[9] The *SS-Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler wanted the Transylvanian Germans to set-up up a widespread partisan movement in their homeland. However, *SS-Obergruppenführer* Phleps, himself a Transylvanian Saxon, opposed this:

"The *SS-Obergruppenführer* declares that the latter course is impossible; a people which has been a people of order for 800 years cannot be turned into partisans. The remainder consists

of little children, old men and injured people".[10]

No official listings were kept of the *Siebenbürgen* Regiment, the members of which fought without a *Soldbuch*. Subsequently led by Major Zornig, the regiment knocked out numerous tanks several weeks later. Together with other units they tried to recapture Klausenburg, and as a result of this action contributed directly to the fact that the Germans from the Reener Ländchen and the Nösnergau could be evacuated without greater losses than would otherwise have been the case.[11]

2
The Serbian Banat
The combat deployment of the Deutschen Jugend during the evacuation of the Serbian Banat, Autumn 1944

The breakaway of Rumania from the Axis alliance on 23 August 1944 confronted the German ethnic groups in Rumania, Hungary, Serbia and Croatia with some difficult decisions.

Shortly after Rumania had surrendered, the ethnic groups' leadership of the Serbian Banat was called to a night meeting in Grossbetschkerek. Unanimous agreement was reached that measures should immediately be taken for the total evacuation of the German population.[1] None of this could be managed without the deployment of the *Heimatschutz*, or home defence force, in particular the troops at the disposal of the ethnic leadership.

By 1944, Tito's partisan movement had grown to an extraordinary extent and had spread uncertainty in the German villages. Attack upon attack, thefts, and arson were the order of the day. This general uncertainty caused the German administration of the Banat to form a home defence force from old men and a still greater number of young men from the *Deutschen Jugend* (equivalent of the Hitler Youth) aged between sixteen and twenty years. They were ordered to keep watch over the streets, and open land, and to prevent the partisans from committing acts of sabotage. The partisans were certainly far more numerous than the home defence forces, and better armed.

After Rumania broke away from the Axis, the *Heimatschutz* was completely overwhelmed. The very weak German troops and the

Heimatschutz were attacked by an enemy pouring through a 100km-wide gap in the front. From early September, at first on an individual basis, they were attacked by small Rumanian and Soviet units. In addition, there were attacks conducted by former Soviet prisoners of war, armed by the Rumanians. There was no shortage of attempts on the part of the Germans to take advantage of the *Heimatschutz* and to deploy it against the advancing enemy. In addition, the 4th SS Polizei Division had tried to break out of the Serbian Banat. In a brave push forward to recapture Timisuara this effort had deployed alongside them 200–300 young men between fifteen and nineteen years of age from the Serbian Banat. This attempt failed because in the meantime the Soviets had brought up tanks and artillery.

Volksgruppenführer Dr Sepp Janko energetically opposed the use of the *Heimatschutz* by the Wehrmacht and ordered the home defence units to follow only the orders of the *Volksgruppe* leadership.[2] Unfortunately, the SS *Gebirgsdivision* Prinz Eugen, which consisted mainly of inhabitants from the Banat and Transylvania, was not moved to the Serbian Banat. It would certainly have made possible an ordered evacuation of the German population. Purely military considerations had the upper hand. This division had to take over the task of protecting the flank on the Bulgarian frontier, in order to cover the retreat of the German forces from Greece.

The *Heimatschutz* consisted of old men, those unfit for war service, and above all, in contrast to the German *Volkssturm*, of young men. For at this time in Hungary and Serbia all men up to the age of fifty-two had already been called up by the Waffen-SS, not all to the front, but many to security and guard duties. The *Heimatschutz* was similar to the German *Volkssturm* in the Reich. Pupils of the grammar schools, business schools and teacher training establishments, enrolled in separate platoons under the leadership of their teachers and of the area youth leadership. They received only two weeks training, including marksmanship. Nevertheless, strict order and discipline held sway among the young men.[3]

The first contact with the enemy, between a unit of the *Heimatschutz* and Rumanian troops, occurred at Sudischte.[4] During the night of 28–29 September a strong Soviet military breakthrough took place in the area Stefansfeld-Modosch. As early as 27 September, armed former Soviet prisoners of war and Rumanian units had entered Modosch and were continuing to advancing from there. Only one weak unit of customs officials,

frontier guards, and a unit of the ethnic German *Reichsarbeitsdienst* were available for the initial resistance.



Boys report for military training at an unknown location, December 1944. (Ullstein Bilderdienst / Wolfgang Weber)

On 30 September Soviet and Rumanian troops, as well as Tito's partisans, reached Lazarfeld. During the night of 30 September–1 October, the German

regional headquarters in Grossbetsckerek put together alarm units and threw them in to Stefansfeld with orders to put up delaying resistance until combat units arrived. But these never did. The alarm units consisted of the HQ office staff and reservists. The agreement of the *Volksgruppe* leadership for this deployment was not obtained.[5] Even before these alarm units arrived, a unit consisting of school pupils tried to bring about the evacuation of Stefansfeld. They rang the bells and ran from house to house, calling on the population to flee. But the noise of fighting had already sent them all into the cellars. The whole village acted as if it were paralysed. Not one person sought to save themselves by fleeing. The young men, fighting a delaying action, withdrew to the end of the village. In the meantime the advance units of two Soviet divisions had arrived.[6]

Josef Beer, *Stabsleiter* in the Serbian Banat, explained that even with only the available weak forces, it would have been possible to keep the enemy at bay until the planned evacuation of the German population could be carried out. But the German military leadership acted as if it had no aim and no plan. It forbade the *Volksgruppe* from acting on its own initiative.[7] *Landesjugendführer* Franz Germann, received orders from Dr Sepp Janko to march his signals unit from Grossbetschkerek (the capital of the Serbian Banat) to the pontoon bridge at Aradac. He had to hold the bridge long enough for the fleeing Danube Swabian population to reach safety on the other side of the Theiss in South Batschka, which was part of Hungary and held by Hungarian troops.[8]

In a letter to the author, *Volksgruppenführer* Janko speaks of a mobile reserve unit of ten companies, mainly of educated young men under the leadership of teachers, reserve officers and, where available, youth leaders and officials of the *Volksgruppe*, insofar as these had military training. In order to allow this reserve unit to act as regular troops, in the event that they encountered the Soviets, they were dressed in Wehrmacht uniforms and issued with pay books. The boys were armed with rifles, the officers had machine pistols and there were two light machine guns per company. All ten companies were under the command of Dr Sepp Janko. After a period of training lasting two weeks the companies were transferred to villages where they continued their training. They were, in the event of the order for evacuation being given, to cover the line Central Banat – Betschkerek, Werschetz – Weisskirchen – Pantschowa – Rudolfsgrad, Kikinda and the

surrounding area as a rearguard and to provide flanking protection. Because events happened in a rush, the Soviets and the partisans pushed forward more quickly than expected and several companies were placed under military command. They must have experienced considerable casualties. But even the companies that had remained under the command of Dr Janko came into contact with the enemy. They threw the Soviets out of many villages, made flight possible for many thousands of people, and in this process, of course, suffered casualties in wounded and dead. Others fell into Soviet captivity and had to suffer bastinadoes, hunger, thirst and other tortures. Again and again this ended in the murder of prisoners.[9]

Events came to a catastrophic climax on the pontoon bridge at Aradac. A company of young men found this bridge had been blown up, or collapsed by tanks as they drove across. In front of the bridge there was a jam of refugees' vehicles, and Wehrmacht lorries loaded with bacon, cheese, fruit and dried fruit. Famished, the young men hurled themselves upon these lorries instead of trying to reach the other side of the river. The lads were no longer following the orders of the company commander, *Jugendführer* Adam. Because they had posted no sentries, they were suddenly fired on by the Soviet machine guns and mortars. Out of this unholy mess, order was gradually established, and a defensive position was formed. As a result, after the crossing of the Theiss, 70 troops were found to be missing.

A large barge, loaded up with wounded, was hit in the middle of the river by a shell and sank immediately. Several lads tried to swim across the Theiss, were fired on, and many of them sank, shot, into the water. Many boys from the four youth companies who had fought a way through to the pontoon bridge, must have fallen into Soviet captivity.

3
Hungary
The ethnic German Heimatschutz in Hungary, October 1944 to the end of the war

The number of people who have heard of the ethnic German *Heimatschutz* in Hungary must be very small. There are in fact no published accounts of it. However, the former *Bannführer* of Swabian Turkey, Dr Hans Christ, mentions the *Heimatschutz* in his retrospective account of his own experiences, dated 8 May 1945:

> In the surrounding villages (of Ödenburg, the seat of the *Volksgruppe* leadership under Dr Franz Basch, following the flight from Budapest) the *Heimatschutz* had its quarters. The élite of our youngest boys and our German school pupils were based there. The leadership had some officers and NCOs of the Waffen-SS who had been made available for this purpose. We found ourselves in Ödenburg and its surrounding area, and celebrated Heroes' Memorial Day with them. I had to prepare and carry out the morning celebrations that were attached to it. I was the link man between the youth leadership and the young members of the *Heimatschutz*.
>
> It was damp and cold on that day, wet snow was still falling. When the *Volksbund* leadership and a detachment of the Wehrmacht had drawn up in an open square, on a hill with a view down over the town of Ödenburg and the nearby area, the songs rang out loud and clear. Baby faces under the steel helmets. I can no longer clearly remember what I said in my short address. But my thoughts at the sight of these lads were: 'I hope you don't become heroes, but come through safe and sound to the end which is facing us!' To be sure, I was not alone in these thoughts".[1]

But how did the creation and subsequent actions of the *Heimatschutz* proceed? After much research which lasted for years, two so-called "material sources" could be established. In August 1943, "G.P."[2] was transferred on health grounds to the headquarters of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* in Berlin, whose head was *SS-Obergruppenführer* Lorenz. There were strong links

between the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* and the *Volksgruppe* in Budapest. "G.P." comments:

> "When the Rumanian army surrendered in 1944, I was given the task of travelling to Neusatz in the Batschka and building up the *Heimatschutz* there. The location was the municipality of Futok, in Neusatz. Young men between the ages of twelve and fifteen reported there. I brought with me French rifles and some ammunition. Training began. On the bank of the Danube near our quarters we built a strong defensive position against possible partisan attacks. If I remember rightly, at that time we were some 100 volunteers and rising. The company leader was *SS-Untersturmführer* "K.", who came from Neusatz.[3] The young people went to it enthusiastically. They were in good shape and I always saw to it that they had good, nourishing, food. What we needed by way of technical equipment I got in Neusatz. It was in doing this that I almost lost my life when the first big air raid was launched against Neusatz.
>
> Following the surrender of the Rumanian army, the gates were flung wide open to the Russian troops and advance units of their armour were pushing forward 150km to the north of us, over the Theiss in the direction of the Danube. In view of the threatening situation, Berlin ordered the evacuation of all German children from the Batschka. A special train was to take them. But it became impossible. While the *Heimatschutz* company was marched off to Hidas-Bonyhad in Swabian Turkey, I, together with a fellow-countryman from Ödenburg, by trade a motor mechanic, requisitioned a bus in which we were to transport the children to the special train. The children, some 100 in number, were boys and girls between the ages of six and eleven. On the way, on the open road, the bus broke down. I went into the next village, and there organised some horse-drawn vehicles. On the way we found out that the Hungarians were no longer prepared to fight on beside us. We arrived in Hidas just as "K." was about to occupy the police station with the *Heimatschutz*. Certainly it made an impression as the young lads came marching past in a long line. The Gendarmerie gave up, and were placed under supervision until the situation in Budapest had calmed down. When the Gendarmes were allowed back to their wives and families, they were overjoyed. They prepared a celebration meal and we were all happy.
>
> A little later I had to go to Budapest as adjutant to *Volksgruppenführer* Dr Basch. Before Budapest was encircled, I received orders to report back to Ödenburg. I had the task of safeguarding the supplies of our *Heimatschutz* units. Many a time it was necessary to take energetic and drastic action when officers said that they were entitled to bigger portions in the allocation of meat, flour, sugar, etc. In the meantime more and more young people were coming in and wanting to join the *Heimatschutz*, mainly from the Ödenburg district. Thus it was necessary to move some individual companies out into the surrounding villages.



General Streccius inspects HJ at a military training camp in the Lower Danube region, 24 March 1943. (Philip Baker)

After the surrender of the troops in Budapest, defensive trenches were dug in front of Ödenburg. However, the Russian troops advanced from the south-west and pushed forward to Wiener Neustadt. So, once again, the time had come for the individual companies of the *Heimatschutz* to move off to the north as quickly as possible. Their goal was Gutenstein. There we all reunited, and as far as I know, all arrived safely. In Gutenstein we were

assigned to Kampfgruppe Keitel, and moved into position with only light equipment. Russian observers watched our march into position. The lines of sight were good, the branches were still bare, and then the first Russian shells hit us. A comrade beside me was wounded. I brought him to the dressing station. Soon we were boxed in. There remained only the possibility of breaking out in the middle of the night.



Training with the *Panzerfaust* at an unknown HJ military training camp, 1 February 1945. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin)

We succeeded! New positions were to be taken up on a high plateau. First we went up a steep mountain. The weather changed. Heavy snowfalls and cold made the climb more difficult. I stamped out tracks in front, but the lads were for the most part not in a position to follow. Scarcely had we arrived on the plateau than the Russians came storming in like ants in the deep snow. They were trying to stop our operation with mortars. How it then went on, day by day, I really don't know any more. The second and last position was Hill 1056. It was a cliff which we suspected was held by the Russians. We were ordered to storm this exposed position. We set out under covering fire but we didn't encounter any Russians. We lay up there for the remaining days of the war, right up to the surrender.

In the high mountains we were entirely cut off from the world outside. We only learned of the surrender when we had moved out of our positions in the middle of the night. Arriving safely down below in the valley, I [as leader of a *Heimatschutz* unit, of Hungarian-German child soldiers – author's note] had the task of making the road as impassable as possible and of preventing a quick advance by the Russian troops".

G.P. continues …

> " … in the last days there were a number of individual counter-attacks. Together with experienced frontline troops from the 1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* attacks were undertaken in which our lads acted very bravely. Some were awarded the Iron Cross Second Class. After the collapse the word was, 'Move off to the west, just as long as you don't fall into Russian hands'." A second historical witness concerning the *Heimatschutz*, *SS-Unterscharführer* "A.R.", joined it in November 1944 as a trainer, at Ödenburg in the Kirchenallee, the headquarters of the *Volksgruppe* leadership, where he stayed until Easter 1945. He arrived with a group of about 300 boys. Some of them were to be deployed at the front.

"A.R." writes nothing about the *Heimatschutz* group from Futok.

In mid-October 1944, the first *Heimatschutz* group was created with 80 lads under the leadership of two *SS- Untersturmführer* and two *SS-Unterscharführer*. A detachment came from Swabian Turkey with 120 boys, an SS officer and 3 SS NCOs. At the end of November 1944, 120 youths were moved to Bogenriegel, where some 40 found accommodation on the Hubertushütte in a former hunting lodge. The Ödenburg detachment was accommodated in the Institute for Maladjusted Boys in the Kirchenallee.

First, the *Heimatschutz* set up a military training camp. The youths were from fifteen to eighteen years old. "A.R." continues …

> "About the end of November 1944 the name *Heimatschutz* was officially used. As its ultimate aim, if the Russians were forced back, the *Heimatschutz* was to have the task of following up into the Hungarian German settlements, and maintaining order".

So officer "A.O." set off with an advance command, as the bridgehead at Mohács-Baja was being formed.[4] This advance command was afterwards lost without trace. The *Heimatschutz* was under the command of the *Volksgruppe* leader and the VOMI (*Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*). They were paid via the finance department of the German *Volksgruppe*. Their uniforms were field grey, their rations the same as the German Wehrmacht.

> "Manoeuvres took place in Agendorf on the Hutweide, Dr Basch and Ferenz Szálasi were

spectators. The *Heimatschutz* carried out a practice attack on a bunker with hand grenades and some mortars. After the manoeuvres came the parade, then the formation in an open square. Dr Basch was also wearing field grey. Szálasi, in the midst of some Hungarian officers, made a short speech: 'Sons of our Fatherland, you have been splendid. You too may defend our Fatherland'. As the Russians were coming nearer and nearer before Easter, the *Heimatschutz* was to be posted to the defence of Ödenburg. We were already taking up position, it was Alert Phase I. But Dr Basch succeeded in keeping us from being deployed in combat, and we were moved to Waidhofen-an-der-Ybbs, in Lower Austria. At the same time, a further 40 men over fifty years old, who had not been enlisted in the last SS recruiting drive, came to our *Heimatschutz* detachment. They were originally to be deployed to protect the lines of refugees.

In Waidhofen, the sick and those not capable of deployment at the front were to break through to Weyregg, on Lake Atter (the headquarters of the *Volksgruppe* leader) for discharge. The rest were sent into action with a *Sonderkommando* at Mariazell. A platoon of some 40 men was thought to have been wiped out by the Russians. The rest of the *Heimatschutz* were taken prisoner".[5]

"A.R." managed to bring the elderly and the sick back, to be discharged by the regional administration in Amstetten. They were advised to obtain civilian clothes so that they could then take up the search for their families as refugees.

Part II
Combat Deployment of the Hitler Youth on the Eastern Front

The summer months of 1944 brought Germany one setback after another. On 1 August, the land connection between Army Group North and the region of East Prussia was cut off. On 22 June 1944, the third anniversary of the beginning of the campaign against Russia, a major Soviet offensive was launched against Army Group Centre. Hundreds of thousands of German troops marched into Soviet captivity in the June heat, and an endless amount of war matériel fell into enemy hands or had to be blown up. Altogether some 25 German divisions were wiped out and the front broken along 350km. By bringing up reserves, the Germans succeeded in stopping the advance of the Red Army. On 21 July 1944, 160 Soviet divisions faced only 16 German divisions.

1
East Prussia

The Party strictly contested the idea that the Soviets could ever step onto German soil. 20km east of the Reich frontier the East Prussian defence line was hurriedly built. Later, close to the frontier, a second line of defence was erected. Hundreds of thousands of people from all around the German Reich were digging anti-tank trenches and foxholes and building bunkers – Hitler Youth, women, men, prisoners of war, Jews, draftees. It was hoped to make Germany impregnable. That this attempt could not succeed was clear to those with any understanding, but few of them would stand up and be counted at that time. As more and more German Wehrmacht supply units rolled through East Prussia, many looked eastward full of grim foreboding. Women and children evacuated to East Prussia from Berlin and the Rhineland, because of the Allied terror bombing, felt instinctively that it would be more sensible to

return home than to fall into Soviet hands and they set off westwards again.

As was inevitable, by 4 August the Red Army had almost reached the Reich frontier at Schirwindt. Reserves were being brought in from all around, in hurried transports, to try to get a grip on this dangerous situation. A breakthrough by the Soviets on 1 September in Schaken was foiled that same evening. The Soviets were supported by the British, who launched two bombing raids on Königsberg. During the nights of 26–27 and 29–30 August, the city was bombed and 50% of it destroyed.

In October, the Soviets began a large-scale offensive at Schirwindt, resulting in bloody house-to-house fighting in the town. Since the Wehrmacht could not stop the offensive, *Volkssturm* battalions were deployed, among them many members of the Hitler Youth. Insufficiently trained, poorly-armed men and youths were to defy the Soviets, with their thousands of tanks and aircraft. Falling without uniforms into Soviet captivity, they were often shot, and were treated as partisans.

The military leadership had difficulty in integrating the *Volkssturm* into the Wehrmacht, because the Party was very eager to keep and deploy the *Volkssturm* battalions under its own control. This becomes clear when we take the example of the Goldap *Volkssturm*. This battalion consisted of 4 companies, each of 100 men. By way of weapons the battalion had Soviet rifles, *Panzerfäuste*, and German light machine guns. Uniforms, identity discs and bandages were not issued, nor were shoes. Only after many difficulties were overcome was the Goldap *Volkssturm* put under the command of a division of the Wehrmacht, following which the men of the *Volkssturm* finally got uniforms and better weapons.



Hitler Youth dig anti-tank ditches as part of the construction of the East Prussian defence line, Autumn 1944. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin)

In East Prussia, 13 German divisions faced 40 Soviet divisions. At Goldap, the Soviets lost some 200 tanks, as many anti-tank guns, a great deal of artillery and paid a high price in blood for their breakthrough into East Prussia. Many *Volkssturm* battalions, amongst them Hitler Youth, were involved in the defensive battles fought during late 1944, up until the major Soviet offensive launched on 11 January 1945; the Soviets continually possessed up to ten times superior numbers. Up until the large-scale Soviet offensive of 11–12 January 1945, Hitler Youth units had only been deployed in smaller numbers, although HJ also served in *Volkssturm* battalions or as *Panzervernichtungstruppe*. The Hitler Youth from Königsberg and those who had moved into Königsberg from the whole of East Prussia, received military training and were assigned to Wehrmacht divisions, with 60–80 members of the Hitler Youth being assigned to one Wehrmacht battalion.[1] In the battle for Königsberg, members of the Hitler Youth stood side by side with units of the Wehrmacht, the Waffen-SS and the *Volkssturm*. Even boys of the *Jungvolk* were used as runners and for looking after refugees and wounded soldiers and civilians.[2]

It can be established that the Hitler Youth proved its worth in battle in East

Prussia, no matter how this combat deployment was viewed then and is viewed today. “Through the lasting failures of the Wehrmacht, and although the fighting spirit of the *Volkssturm* suffered a great deal, I know of cases of the deployment of Hitler Youth members of the *Volkssturm* around me who fought very bravely”.[3] During the months of 1944 and 1945, Hitler Youth stood at anti-tank barriers in East Prussia, armed with rifles and *Panzerfäuste*.[4] HJ units were also deployed to defend villages.[5]

AHJ *Kampfgruppe* of 50 Hitler Youth leaders, together with units of the Wehrmacht, fought to clear the road for refugees to Pillau. 30 were killed, the rest defended Königsberg until the bitter end. Only 7 of them were to march into captivity.[6] The members of the Hitler Youth, enrolled in the battalions of the Wehrmacht, formed a very high percentage of the equally high losses in the battle for Metgethen (a suburb to the west of Königsberg) and in the Samland in the area Seerappen – Fischhausen – Lochstedt – Pillau. 30% to 40% of the Hitler Youth deployed were killed there, and about as many were wounded.[7]



Hitler Youth and older men assemble at a railway station. They have been drafted in to assist with the construction of the East Prussian defence line, Autumn 1944. (Bundesarchiv 146/74/152/15)

From 30 January 1945, Königsberg could only be reached by sea. The 3rd

Panzer Army, which was defending the Königsberg area, was shattered. In order to link Königsberg with the Samland once again, the German units began an attack on the strongly fortified heights of Galtgarben, and on Metgethen. The German attack began at 5.30 a.m., 19 February, and was launched from both the Samland area and from Königsberg itself. As early as 20 February advance elements of the attacking forces from east and west met. This was a great success in which the 2,000 members of the Hitler Youth who were involved, had fought with an unequalled spirit of self-sacrifice.[8]

The recapture of Methgeten revealed appalling scenes. Murdered men, women, and children, lay everywhere, outside and inside the houses. 32 bodies were found in one crater alone.[9] Königsberg enjoyed a period of relative quiet. Shops were opened again and cinema performances took place. But many Hitler Youth members belonging to *Kampfgruppe* Malotka, which had recaptured Methgeten and Wargen, were no longer alive. Death had claimed them during its attack and defence.

There must have been some 3,000 to 4,000 Hitler Youth still present in Königsberg, perhaps even more, as the exact number is unknown. There were some 280,000 inhabitants, in addition to about 200,000 refugees, in the city. Deploying numerous infantry divisions, thousands of guns, mortars, tanks and aircraft, the Soviets hammered the positions of the defenders into submission. Königsberg, already 50% destroyed by two heavy British bombing raids, now sank completely into ruins, rubble and ashes. Here the Hitler Youth members also met their end. Since most of them were wearing Wehrmacht uniforms, their relatively high numbers may have attracted little attention. Many of them were engaged in supply, entrenching or fire-fighting duties. One surgeon, an eyewitness, recalled:



A member of the Hitler Youth drafted into one of the newly-formed Volksgrenadier divisions, hastily-created in the late summer of 1944 to assist in the defence of East Prussia. This photograph was taken in East Prussia, early September 1944. (Janusz Mierzejewski)



Members of the East Prussian *Volkssturm* photographed shortly after their call-up, 1 November 1944. (Bundesarchiv, 183/730795)



A HJ belonging to a *Volkssturm* unit, East Prussia, late 1944. (Janusz Mierzejewski)

East Prussian HJ are sworn into the Volkssturm



HJ belonging to a *Volkssturm* unit, East Prussia, November 1944. This sequence of photographs was taken by *SS-Kriegsberichter* Falkowski at a *Volkssturm* parade inspected by *Generaloberst* Reinhard (CO Army Group Centre), and *Gauleiter* Koch. (Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)



A close-up of some of the HJ on parade. The boy nearest the camera carries a *Panzerschreck,* a bazooka-style anti-tank weapon. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag)



HJ take an oath of loyalty to Hitler as they join an East Prussian *Volkssturm* unit. (Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)



Two HJ swear an oath of loyalty; elder members of the *Volkssturm* unit can be seen in the background. (Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)



A very grainy but extremely rare photograph taken in Königsberg, January 1945, showing a group of Hitler Youth marching to a swearing-in ceremony accompanied by a military band. (Janusz Mierzejewski)

"Beside us lay fifteen and sixteen year-old boys, many of whom had only hours before been fetched off the street and ordered to the front. Since the boys were natives of Königsberg, of course very soon, their mothers got involved. We allowed them to stay with their children, because since we only received stomach wounds, the majority of them didn't last very long".[10]

The battle to the death over Königsberg began on 6 April 1945 and ended three days later. General Lasch surrendered. At the time of the surrender there were about 35,000 soldiers and more than 100,000 civilians in the city.

When members of the Hitler Youth deserted, the drumhead courts martial were no different than for other soldiers who ran away. As soon as they had been caught, they were hanged from lamp posts and trees "to discourage others".



A HJ serving in an Army unit, possibly as a bicycle-mounted messenger. Eastern Front, 1945. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag)

2
Silesia

For the Germans in the east, Silesia, above all Upper Silesia, was strategically far more important than East Prussia. Upper Silesia, with its coal mines, blast furnaces, hydrogenation plants and factories producing arms and equipment, was most important to the continuation of the war, most especially after the loss of the oilfields in Rumania and the destruction by bombing of plants in western Germany.

When the Soviets began their large-scale attack in Poland on 12 January 1945, their superiority in numbers was as follows:

Infantry	11:1
Armour	7:1
Artillery	20:1
Air Forces	20:1 at least[1]

Generaloberst Guderian believed that until September 1944, the German soldier could be successfully pitted against a five-fold superiority in numbers. However after five years of heavy, bloody, fighting at the front and after three years of bomber offensives over the homeland, German units were no longer as combat capable. In spite of good armament, there was insufficient ammunition, and catastrophic shortages in the supply of petrol and fuel.[2] In this situation, even the *Panzerfäuste* which were being produced in large numbers, could achieve nothing decisive.[3] The military and Party authorities were aware of this inferiority and as early as the beginning of August 1944 were giving orders for a line of fortifications to be built in Upper Silesia. The whole operation was called “Operation Barthold” named after Barthold, the regional President responsible for its initiation.[4]



Hitler Youth and their commander pose proudly for the camera, after helping to recapture a village in Upper Silesia. (AGK-Verlag)

A defensive ‘wall’ was constructed along Silesia’s eastern border. The lion’s share in this construction and fortification work was borne by the Hitler Youth. Millions of cubic metres of earth were moved, as anti-tank ditches were dug along the border. Construction of defensive positions and bunkers followed in a second phase of building. These structures turned out to be significantly more difficult to construct. In order to provide against the danger of collapse, the walls of the trenches had to be carefully reinforced with woven ‘fascines’. Special units fetched the material required for these from the woodlands. Busy girls’ hands worked brushwood and reeds, mostly on the spot, into mats. In the evening hours, farm vehicles carried the woven mats to the construction site. The defence training camps of the Hitler Youth in Bartnig and Liegnitz also took part in the work on the “Barthold Line”.[5] On the approach of the Red Army there seem to have been plans to have had the defensive positions occupied and defended by members of several military training camps.[6]

Not as much is known about the combat deployment of the Hitler Youth in Upper Silesia as is known about the fighting in Lower Silesia, but we may assume that in the heavy fighting, lasting for months, the Hitler Youth was indeed involved. HJ members, and lads from the defence training camps in Petersgräz and Läsen served in the Gleiwitz *Volkssturm*. One of these

Volkssturm companies was completely wiped out during 17 and 18 January 1945 between Tschenstochau and Lublintz, the other on 23 January at Labstand, to the north-west of Gleiwitz.[7]

A report in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, made well-known to the general public *Hitlerjunge* Nowak from Upper Silesia, who within the space of two days destroyed nine Soviet tanks with *Panzerfäuste*. He was awarded the Knight's Cross for this action on 17 February 1945. Nowak is said to have destroyed another four or five tanks before being killed.[8]

For information concerning the combat deployment of members of the Hitler Youth in Upper Silesia, we must rely on reports which appeared in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, such as the following: "The town of Hindenburg seemed to have been overcome by the Soviets, but there were still hot-blooded German hearts beating right in its centre. 60 Hindenburg Hitler Youth, armed with explosives and rifles, together with their comrades in the *Volkssturm*, enthusiastically mounted a successful surprise attack on the Kolonialschule which was occupied by about 60 Bolsheviks. They surrounded the house, shot the sentries, and blew the school building, together with the hated enemies, sky-high."[9]

On 19 March 1945, in front of the Führerbunker in Berlin, Hitler received 20 members of the Hitler Youth who had proved themselves in the fighting in Pomerania, Lower and Upper Silesia, and awarded them medals:

> "In these 20 boys the Führer was at the same time paying honour to their comrades who, at such a tender age, had laid down their lives as martyrs, and blood witnesses of German youth, in the battle for their nation.
>
> The youngest of the force present was twelve-year-old Alfred Czech, awarded the Iron Cross Second Class, who in the area of Oppeln, amid enemy artillery and machine-gun fire, had hidden 12 wounded soldiers and captured a Soviet spy. The Führer greeted each member of the Hitler Youth with a handshake and listened to them tell of their experiences. 'You already know of the battle from your own experience', the Führer told the boys present, 'and know that we are in the midst of a struggle for the very existence or non-existence of the German people. I am, in spite of all the difficulties of this time, convinced that we shall win the victory in this battle, above all when I look at the German youth, and especially you, my lads!' The boys, as if with one voice, answered the Führer's greeting with a passionate 'Heil, my Führer!'."[10]

The final battle for Lower Silesia lasted four months. In Lauban a battalion had paraded on the market square. *Reichsminister* Josef Goebbels appeared and inspected the parade. Several Hitler Youth members received

the Iron Cross.[11] In the battle for Krappitz, Hitler Youth and Wehrmacht fought shoulder to shoulder.[12] In Silesia the fighting was hard, dogged and often successful. In his book *Das letzte Aufgebot. Vom Sterben der deutschen Jugend*, Günther Fraschka describes these battles:

> "I was there. I experienced it and suffered it. And the boys who fell beside me were fourteen and fifteen years old, children in uniforms too big for them. I saw them fall, I saw them die. They fell one after the other. They, so trusting and so eager to sacrifice themselves and who were so dreadfully betrayed that I flush with anger when I think of the men who bore the responsibility.



An extremely rare photo showing Hitler Youth in *Festung* Breslau, early 1945. They have just been awarded the Iron Cross, and wear the special field grey *Sturmartillerie* uniform of an Army unit. (Janusz Mierzejewski)

I can't get away from it. Even today, after fifteen years, the memories overcome me. Then I see them in front of me, those thin, careworn boys' faces under steel helmets much too big for them. I can see their questioning child's eyes, but I have no answer to their questions. I shall never forget it. Then, I was in command of a Kampfgruppe which consisted almost solely of children. I am one of the few who survived. The others were killed, dying in dreadful pain. I experienced it. With a shot-up leg and a chopped-up jaw I got away. And the eyes of the dead boys pursue me in hot nights. I must tell of it.

Tell how these boys suffered, fought and died, one after another. Perhaps this is the mission that fate has given me, the survivor. I had to write this book, it is my bequest, never to allow it to come to war again and under no circumstances to throw children in to the front line".[13]

After 1945 children were still fighting and dying, in the ranks of the PLO, in Iran, in Cambodia and in Central America, with weapons in their hands, on the front line!

"With weapons in their hands, BDM leaders fought in *Festung* Breslau."[14] Two battalions of Hitler Youth saw action during the defence of Breslau. These two battalions, HJ Battalion 55 (Seifert) and 56 (Lindenschmitt) were in action as early as the end of January, well-equipped and well-armed, deployed under the command of capable and experienced NCOs.[15] These Hitler Youth lads stormed and recaptured the Rüttgers factory and Pöpelwitz railway station, and also proved their worth in the subsequent defensive fighting. Hitler had been dead for several days when these boys, whose fate had long since been decided, were still fighting on for their home town.[16]

The Soviet soldiers would often take their revenge on the fighting spirit of the Hitler Youth when they were captured. Above all they picked on the HJ leaders. In this way a fifteen-year-old boy was shot by the Soviets because they assumed that they were dealing with an HJ leader.[17]



A rare photo showing Goebbels surrounded by Hitler Youth who had distinguished themselves during the fighting in Pomerania, and Lower and Upper

Silesia. The boys had served as tank hunters armed with *Panzerfäuste*, in machine-gun and reconnaissance units, as messengers, or undertaken the demolition of key structures, and had consequently been awarded the Iron Cross First and Second class. Several of those in the photograph appear to be HJ instructors and unit commanders. Note also the camouflage trousers being worn by the boy at far left, who also sports a tank destruction badge. Photograph taken in Berlin, 22 March 1945. (Bundesarchiv 183/298733)

The former SS soldier Fritz Lenhardt has reported of one instance of HJ combat deployment, and Hans von Ahlfen has recorded that a HJ *Kampfgruppe* saw combat to the north of Wansen.[18] It was left to a group of "Adolf Hitler pupils" from the Wartha Adolf Hitler School in Lower Silesia to repeat a second "Langemarck".[19] An older pupil of the Thüringen Adolf Hitler School who was on leave at Brieg, in the area of embattled Wansen, took part in a counter-attack involving Adolf Hitler pupils and soldiers. He gave an account of the action on 10 February 1945:

> "Ten days ago I volunteered from home to take part in an attack. We prised a village near us away from Ivan. With us in the attack were 40–60 members of the Hitler Youth. The majority were Adolf Hitler School pupils from Wartha, the other boys from a teacher training establishment. It was a joy to me to see these chaps, how they would boldly shoot, spring up, and were always the people furthest in front. The ordinary soldiers stayed 200m behind. Our boys were singing as they attacked and shouted 'Hurrah', and had the greatest casualties. The youngest of them were fourteen and a half. That was the way we translated our ideals into action".[20]

In contrast to this account a younger member of the Wartha Adolf Hitler School reported fewer killed. Three participants in this attack have continued to decline to comment on the episode.[21]

During the winter of 1944–45 the Adolf Hitler School pupils from Wartha were self-sacrificingly digging trenches along the Barthold line in the district of Riesengebirge, the county of Glatz. Under the command of a highly-decorated sergeant they shot up a motorised Soviet supply column at an anti-tank barrier in a narrow valley. Petrol and ammunition exploded together and several vehicles were burnt out. The Soviets are said to have suffered heavy casualties in this action.[22]

A Hitler Youth combat unit in Lauban, Silesia, March 1945



Kriegsberichter Benno Wundshammer snapped these outstanding photographs of a HJ combat unit in the streets of Lauban on 30 March 1945. The town had been recaptured from the Soviets earlier in the month, the Red Army losing over 150 tanks in fierce fighting. This particular image is an excellent study of some of these Silesian Hitler Youth. Note the evidence of recent fighting on the wall behind them. The boys were moving up to the frontline when PK-Wundshammer took these photographs. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / PK-Benno Wundshammer)



The HJ group poses with its commander. The extreme youth of some of the boys can be seen only too easily in this image. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / PK-Benno Wundshammer)



Two HJ pose with *Panzerfäuste*, full packs and slung rifles. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / PK-Benno Wundshammer)

No wonder the Soviets addressed themselves directly to the Hitler Youth with a leaflet campaign in Lower Silesia and Breslau. In one leaflet of 24 April 1945 it read:

“To the members of the Hitler Youth! You have all realised that Hitler has lost the war. The Nazi Party and its leaders are completely bankrupt. Hitler and his cronies are doomed! A heavy punishment awaits them very soon. But they are still trying to prolong their stay of execution and so are forcing you to further senseless resistance. To this end, the Hitlerites are intimidating you by saying that the Russians would supposedly exterminate the members of the Hitler Youth! Don’t believe these vicious lies! In actual fact nothing will happen either to ordinary members of the Nazi Party or to members of the Hitler Youth if they behave loyally towards the Soviet troops.

Tens of thousands of young people have remained in the regions occupied by the Red Army. None of you will be hunted down. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners from the ranks of the Hitler Youth are now in Russia. They are all safe and well. This is the truth! MEMBERS OF THE HITLER YOUTH! Hitler is forcing you to fight to the finish for a little pack of doomed criminals. In this way he is robbing you of your future and giving you up to inevitable death. But we are asking you to stop your resistance, to leave the front and to go home or give yourselves up. In this way we are showing you how to save yourselves! It’s the only right way! Take action now!”[23]



This photo shows a solitary HJ – note the simplicity of uniform issued by this stage of the war. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / PK-Benno Wundshammer)

Only a very few members of the Hitler Youth must have given in to these enticements. On the contrary, there were members of the Hitler Youth who, as Werwolves, buried about 70 canisters containing ammunition, explosives, weapons and highly nutritious foodstuffs in the Riesengebirge. The places in which these were buried were marked precisely on maps. In this way a *Kampfgruppe* from the Wartha Adolf Hitler School was still carrying out operations in the Riesengebirge for over half a year after the end of the war. Its leader was Major Dr Grall, badly wounded at Sevastopol. The major is said to have been killed by Poles. The Adolf Hitler School pupils were, with the exception of two boys, all lost without trace.[24]



HJ Willi Hübner posing with other HJ at an awards ceremony in Berlin, March 1945. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

The spirit of the Hitler Youth remained, at least as far as the heavy fighting in Silesia is concerned, unbroken. Indeed, in mid-March 1945, 45 Hitler Youth from *Bann* 23 (Heisse) completely repulsed a combined infantry and tank attack at Ludwigsdorf. The Soviets had many dead and wounded, in addition to losing some tanks. The HJ lost 6 dead and some wounded.[25]

Günther Fratschka gives a striking account of the Hitler Youth's fighting courage, one could even say fighting fury, their fanaticism and their determination to die for Germany (and also for the Führer?):

" 'Report: eyes right!' 84 heads whipped round. The man in the Tyrolean hat reported to the

Party officials: *'Volkssturm* paraded as ordered!' I reported to the General, '84 Silesian men of the *Volkssturm* who are ready to risk their lives for the good of the nation!' He raised his hand high. 'And for the Führer!' he added. Two metres further on there stood, in the right-hand corner to the front of the old men, lads with clear eyes and narrow shoulders, arrayed in a dead straight line. The flank 'man' was no more than five feet tall and no older than fifteen.

They stood like organ pipes, with chests puffed out and motionless faces, showing expectation and devotion. They still believed in the Reich, in the great mission, in the honourable struggle, the good cause and, in the Führer, whose name they bore, whose youth they were. 'Führer, we belong to you. We comrades belong to you!'

They were still dreaming of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, of the victory of good over evil. They had no idea that it was evil for which they, in pure belief, wanted to go into battle. What the General finally said was no speech: 'And with this I hand over the *Volkssturm* battalion to *Leutnant* Zolin who will lead you, German men, to the front, into position!' Dörfler (the General) bathed his face in a charming smile. 'You will do another bit of training, with *Panzerfaust* and machine-gun, and then tomorrow you will report to me again.'

A string snapped in Zolin. 'But I can't wage war with children, Herr General!' 'With what, did you say?' Dörfler stumped to his car, he felt miserable. 'God Almighty, what am I doing! I'm not only deceiving the *Leutnant*, I'm deceiving myself as well.' 'With children, Herr General!' 'What?' Dörfler stood still as if he had been hit by an arrow. He had trouble swallowing. 'With children', the Leutnant had said. They were actually children, of course, children! 'These are no longer children!' he said, then under pressure, he walked on. 'Herr General, they are fifteen at the most!' 'Who tells you that?' Dörfler did not look at the *Leutnant*. 'I have orders, and you have orders, and we must hold to those. We must obey without thinking. Unconditional discipline is the foundation stone of every healthy state!' 'We have no weapons! The boys can't just go into that gap in the front.' 'And why not?' Dörfler was already holding the car door open. 'Because when they are taken prisoner they will be treated as partisans and shot.' The General started. Painfully slowly he said: 'Do you think so? As far as I have been informed, negotiations are under way with representatives of the International Red Cross in which it is being agreed that the *Volkssturm* should receive the same treatment as the Wehrmacht. But that should make no difference to us. We have our orders.'

Willi Hübner – a Silesian HJ hero



Sixteen-year-old Willi Hübner is awarded the Iron Cross Second Class following the recapture of Lauban, Lower Silesia. March 1945. During the fierce fighting which raged for the recapture of the town, Hübner served as a messenger, distinguishing himself on a number of occasions. (Bundesarchiv G0627/500/1)



Goebbels meets Hübner whilst on a morale-boosting tour of Lauban, March 1945. (AGK-Verlag)



Another view of Goebbels, with Hübner at far right of the photo. Lauban, March 1945. (Janusz Mierzejewski)

'How old are you all?' 'Fifteen', came the answer in chorus. 'And who is your leader?'. 'We have no leader! Our *Bannführer* has not been seen for weeks, and the *Stammführers* and *Gefolgschaftsführers* have enlisted.' 'Who

is older than fifteen?' cried Zolin loudly. No-one came forward. 'Who is younger than fifteen?' Almost all of them raised their hands, and now he saw that apart from a couple of boys they were all only fourteen. His stomach heaved. He felt how the palms of his hands were sweating. But that can't be true! Fourteen-year-old lads! Then he heard a thin voice, 'Herr Leutnant, aren't you feeling well?' As if from a bad dream he woke up and stared at Heydebrandt.

In the late afternoon the *Volkssturm* was completely uniformed. The boys looked as if they were going to a fancy-dress ball. Wide trousers flapped round their legs, long jackets hung down over them. There were no overcoats. The steel helmets (not everyone had one), were much too big. There were still no rifles and hand grenades. Twenty *Panzerfäuste* were said to be enough. The boys were giggling and clowning around. They were excited and were chattering as if they were going on a long trip. 'Quiet there', cried Zolin and mustered them. In no time the trouser legs were cut off, the sleeves shortened; at least the uniforms should not get in the way of walking and firing.

Two boys were standing guard at the school gate, *Panzerfäuste* in their thin hands. With expressionless faces they turned back some women who wanted to go through the school gate into the building. Leutnant Zolin pushed himself through the press of women with difficulty. One of them ran, scarlet-faced, up to him. 'Give me my boy! I'll buy back the lad!'

A small woman with narrow shoulders and lined face grasped Zolin's hand, 'Please, you can't take the little lad from me. He's my last child, the others have been killed.' A corpulent woman placed her hands on her broad hips. 'It's a right disgrace, sending our children as cannon-fodder to the front'. It was a double farewell which took place here. The boys were to go to the front, the mothers soon found themselves back on the refugee's trek. It was hard for Zolin to move the mothers on out of the school. Many tears were shed, and in desperation the women tried again and again to persuade their sons. They could not understand that they had no influence any more. 'This damned Party is the only one to blame!' one of the mothers cried, filled with hatred …

… One and a half hours had passed since the last attack. Suddenly, movement surged over the embankment again. Groups of men in brown uniforms ran over the embankment and dropped down the slope. Within

seconds the lads were all lying behind their rifles again, ready to fire. The machine guns followed the *muzhiks* as they ran up. But there was still no firing; the Soviets had still not come close enough.

The soldiers of the Red Army hurried at a run through the mist which was lying over the land. Behind them was the embankment, over which countless numbers of their shot comrades lay sprawled. In front of them was the wood, in which the Germans had taken up position. Then they were within firing range. Their cries of jubilation rang out horribly.

Now the machine guns were hammering. Rifle fire rattled around. Ceaselessly, the bursts of machine-gun fire swept the ground, cutting wide gaps in the ranks of the attacking Soviets. Even the third attack was stopped in the noman's land between the frontlines. Those boys had never heard of anything else. There was nothing in the world but Germany. Their fathers and brothers had worn the uniform. Many of them were badly wounded, like Heydebrandt's brother, or killed, like Heydebrandt's father. They had sworn to be no less brave than their brothers and fathers. They volunteered because they believed that this war was their people's fight for freedom against a world of enemies. That was why they fought on so doggedly. That was why they swallowed their fear and gritted their teeth, even if terror was about to overcome them. And their hate against the world full of enemies helped them when they were beginning to weaken."[26]

3
West Prussia and Pomerania

When the Red Army broke into this German province, Pomerania had experienced no war on its own territory for 132 years. Apart from bombing raids on Stettin, Pölitz (petrochemical works) and Stralsund, as well as on the V2 testing establishment on Peenemünde, the area remained an oasis of peace into which the inhabitants of Berlin and Western Germany fled when in danger from bombing raids. Only a few far-sighted individuals had reckoned with the possibility of fighting occurring on Pomeranian soil. NSDAP *Gauleiter* Schwede-Coburg had been at the head of the province of Pomerania since 1934. He also acted as President of Pomerania. Schwede remained a man of sonorous words and unsatisfactory deeds, who wanted to catch the Soviets in the net and yet fled himself behind the Oder.

Schwede, too, had trenches and defensive positions built on the eastern frontier, positions which, of course, could not stand up to the assault of the Soviet divisions. Of the 90 *Volkssturm* battalions which reported for duty, only a few were really even approximately adequately armed, and in addition there was a shortage of uniforms. Their armament consisted of shotguns and old rifles, carried by old men and young lads. When the *Volkssturm* battalion from Stolp was thrown into the battle on 25 and 26 January at Schönlanke, it had at its disposal only 8 Italian rifles and 2 *Panzerfäuste*! At 15 degrees below freezing, the men had neither winter overcoats, gloves, nor rations. For the most part the *Volkssturm* battalions were disbanded, in agreement with the Wehrmacht.



Volkssturm recruiting poster drawn by Hans Schweitzer, using the pseudonym Mjölnir, late 1944. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

The members of the Hitler Youth who had been sworn in as members of the *Volkssturm* thought and acted quite differently. They believed that they had been called up to save their homeland and burned with enthusiasm to be deployed at the front. They had no heavy weapons, they possessed no proper military training and for the most part were also badly-equipped, so it is no wonder that they suffered heavy losses. The military leaders only made use of the Hitler Youth in urgent circumstances, such as in Pollnow, for example. 60–80 members of the Wehrmacht, mostly sick and wounded, supported by the local Hitler Youth, held up the Soviets for over twenty hours until the civilian population had vacated the town and reached safety.[1]

On the tactical map of Army Group Vistula, an HJ battalion is shown as a security group in Königsfelde, to the west of the Papenwasser. Was this the same unit which later exchanged fire with advance units of Soviet armour in the Anklam area?[2] Boys from the Hitler Youth fought in Pyritz and defied the Soviets to such an extent that their tank advance was stopped. In Camin the boys also made a stand.[3] A platoon occupied the island of Murswiek, on the Oder.

The sort of qualities of spirit, character and body which were required of

these boys in this fighting becomes clear in an account of the fighting in Pyritz during the period from 1 to 8 February 1945:

> "The boys were badly affected by the cold on the first day, then came the thaw, when they stood up to their bellies in the water in the trenches. They didn't bat an eyelid. But in the counter-attack they stormed forward as if they had just come from a rest period."[4]



Hitler Youth photographed shortly after being awarded the Iron Cross, March/April 1945. (AGK-Verlag)

The Wehrmacht in Rügen had to forcibly prevent the combat deployment of over 400 pupils from the *Napola* School.[5] This did not always succeed. On 30 April 1945, defying military leadership and responsibility, platoons of the HJ threw themselves against the advancing Soviet tanks. 17 were left dead at Andershof, in the vicinity of Stralsund, in a true spirit of self-sacrifice. A senseless sacrifice, too, in view of the fact that it had been decided to evacuate the town of Stralsund.[6] A small HJ *Werwolf* group hid in the woods in the area of Bütow and surprised Soviet troops.[7] At least two military training camps of the HJ on Pomeranian soil, one of them on the island of Wollin, were deployed in combat.[8]

> "The Hitler Youth marched to the sports field, not to throw the javelin, but to do target practice with twenty old rifles. They were preparing themselves in the town of Greifenburg for war, these fourteen-year-old boys".[9]

As far as Mecklenburg, desperate Hitler Youth fired on the Soviets. First and foremost, they fired on the Soviet T34s, but also on advancing US tanks.

Josef Trabusch, from Limburg, reported:

> "On 2 May two Hitler Youth members on the outskirts of the town of Schwerin shot up an American tank. On the Schorfheide a Hitler Youth fired with a small-calibre rifle on an

advancing Russian tank. He paid for this with his life."[10]

Herbert Reinecker gives a striking account of the fanatical eagerness for combat of the Pomeranian Hitler Youth in his book *Kinder, Mütter und ein General*:

> "Yesterday afternoon about 30 young people appeared here. 'Children', the pastor's wife cried. 'Young people', the *Hauptmann* repeated, 'all between fifteen and sixteen years old'. 'Fourteen', cried the pastor's wife, 'mine is fourteen'. 'It's all the same' said the general. 'It's not the same', said the pastor's wife in a thin and stubborn voice, 'mine is fourteen'. They sang *Siehst du im Osten das Morgenrot, ein Zeichen zur Freiheit, zur Sonn* ('Do you see the gleam of dawn in the East, a sign of freedom, of sun'). They wanted to be armed and immediately let loose on the Russians. I gave them everything. They received rations, uniforms and weapons".[11]



The company commander of a HJ company, forming part of a *Volkssturm* battalion, advises members of his unit as they prepare to defend an unknown town in Pomerania, 28 February 1945. Note the distinctly non-regulation leather coat worn by the HJ at far left. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)



A less frequently seen image showing the same HJ unit. Younger HJ lads (probably serving as dispatch riders, judging from their goggles) reporting to their commander. Pomerania, late February 1945. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag / Scherl)

4
On the Oder and in Brandenburg

After the Soviets had stormed forward from the Vistula, through Poland, West Prussia and East Brandenburg, the Oder formed the last defensive barrier barring the capture of Berlin, the capital of the Reich, and their ultimate goal. Hitler, Goebbels and the Wehrmacht leadership threw in all available military units, *Volkssturm* and separate units of the Hitler Youth. The Oder had frozen over for a few weeks, and this caused defensive problems for the Germans. One of the units serving at the front was Hitler Youth Regiment *Frankfurt/Oder* under the command of *HJ-Bannführer* Kiesgen.[1] "With weapons in their hands, BDM leaders fought in HJ Regiment *Frankfurt/Oder*."[2]

The HJ was not deployed in combat in all areas of Brandenburg. For example, no HJ units were deployed on the Seelow Heights, which were hotly fought over, and where, it is true, very young soldiers born in 1928 and 1929 served, although in Wehrmacht units.[3] In contrast to this, strong HJ units defended the town and the area of Küstrin, and in the same way, Frankfurt an der Oder. In *Der Deutsche Volkssturm,* Hans Kissel reports that on 31 January 1945 a HJ unit destroyed several Soviet tanks which penetrated into Küstrin new town from the north. The Soviets immediately retreated. The Hitler Youth from Küstrin and the region around took part wholeheartedly in the fighting for their homeland. How many of them lost their lives in this can no longer be established. Many of them were taken prisoner by the Soviets and found themselves in the prisoner-of-war camps of Neudamm, in the Neumark, and Woldenburg, near Landsberg an der Warthe. A large number of them died in these prisoner-of-war camps.[4]

We know more about instances of combat deployment of the HJ in the province of Brandenburg and in the area surrounding Berlin. At the beginning of April 1945 over 2,000 members of the Hitler Youth were concentrated in the area Baeskow – Storkow – Strausberg, and sent into

battle.[5] Whether this involved the *Panzerkampfbrigade* of the Hitler Youth can no longer be established. Horst Voigt speaks of the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade Hitlerjugend* (*Oberbannführer* Kern) and also of the *Panzervernichtungs-Ersatzbrigade-Hitler-Jugend* (*Oberbannführer* Ohlendorf). Each of these brigades had four battalions with the field post numbers 43711, 44625, 45422, 46319. The staff had the field post number 42797. Apart from what we know about the 1st and 2nd battalions, we know very little about this HJ unit. Thus the 1st Battalion was formed in April 1945 from pupils with dates of birth in 1929 and 1928, from the Luftwaffe technical schools in Brandenburg/Havel, Luckenwalde, Oranienburg and Oschersleben, and the Luftwaffe schools in Klein-Könies and Königswusterhausen. In a one-week course of instruction the pupils were trained and armed for close-quarter anti-tank combat.



A member of the Hitler Youth receives *Panzerfaust* training from a soldier belonging to Panzer Grenadier Division *Großdeutschland*, 1944. (Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Under pressure from the Soviet offensive against Berlin, the 1st Battalion was moved into the area Buckow – Müncheberg on the nights of 15 and 16 April 1945. They took up position close behind the German front near to Garzin, near Strausberg. In order to escape a threatened encirclement, on 20 April the Hitler Youth were withdrawn via Strausberg to Berlin-Friedrichshagen, and on the evening of the same day to Berlin-Spandau. Here

the battalion was joined one day later by the members of the Spandau technical school. The battalion, thus strengthened, was put on a train at the Spandau goods station and moved to Neustadt an der Dosse. From here a two-day march to Neuruppin followed. They found quarters on an estate. But scarcely had the lads arrived than the first fighting took place with Soviet armour which had broken through, mainly at Fehrbellin. Once again, after a week's stay in the area of Altruppin – Fehrbellin, the 1st Battalion, along with the remains of the scattered 2nd Battalion, was moved to Kyritz. This unit was wiped out in heavy defensive fighting south-west of Berlin. The 2nd Battalion consisted of members of the Hitler Youth who had been recruited from the columns of refugees, and had received scarcely any training.



Hitler Youth in action somewhere on the Oder front, early 1945. (Janusz Mierzejewski)



HJ serving in a RAD 8.8cm flak battery rest in a hastily-dug “scrape” next to their gun. A photograph taken on the Oder front, February 1945. (Janusz Mierzejewski)

On 30 April the 1st Battalion, still intact if somewhat shattered, and with the remains of the 2nd Battalion in its ranks, received orders to go into position in the area of Wittenberge an der Elbe, with its front facing westwards. In a forced march during the nights of 30 April and 1 May, the unit tried to reach the Elbe, but individual companies became involved in fighting with enemy armour which had broken through, so only one part of the battalion succeeded in reaching the river. On 1 May one company and the baggage train managed to break through as far as the point where the Havel flows into the Elbe. American troops disarmed the unit and gave instructions to wait on the bank of the Elbe for transport away. At midnight, the Americans closed off the Elbe. Now no German could swim over to the western bank. Thus the HJ company, together with its baggage train, was taken prisoner on the morning of 2 May by Soviet troops of the 1st White Russian front and marched off eastwards. At the first collection camp on the march, further members of the battalion joined the HJ company. These had been taken prisoner by the Soviets in Havelberg and Wittenberge. For four weeks the Hitler Youth, together with troops from the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, marched eastwards. During this time they briefly occupied transit camps at Biesenthal and Wriezen. They spent the night out in the open and buried their dead in the morning. Many of the Hitler Youth were not up to the

strain of this wretched march, having been given scarcely any rations. The Soviet guards demanded that the graves they dug should be levelled off. How many members of these Hitler Youth antitank units were lost without trace in this way will never be known. One figure, however, is given by the survivors. About 2,000 members of the Hitler Youth, among them members of the 1st and 2nd *Panzer-Nahkampf* brigades (Klein-Körries) were in the Schwersenz prisoner-of-war camp near Posen.[6]

From another account we learn something of the fate of the *Panzer-Nahkampfungbrigade HJ*, probably another name for *HJ Regiment Frankfurt/Oder* under the command of *Bannführer* Kiesgen (formerly *Hauptmann*, and holder of the Knight's Cross). In the designation of HJ units there are different names given in the accounts of different individuals.

After the HJ regiment had withdrawn from Frankfurt an der Oder following heavy fighting, one battalion was moved to Jakobsdorf. The commander of the battalion was Gutschke, formerly an *Oberleutnant*. On 19 April the battalion was moved to Sieversdorf. There was still no vehicle available for the transport of the wounded, and the members of the battalion had no rest. After only one day it left for Petersdorf. 22 April – the battalion had been engaged in combat near Jakobsdorf since 5 a.m. About 9 a.m. the battalion commander, *Bannführer* Gutschke, was badly wounded. The battalion had fairly heavy losses and not all the dead could be buried. On 24 April the 3rd Company began a counter-attack, and a fight developed in woodland. At 2 a.m. the following day, 25 April, the battalion withdrew in the direction of the Storkower See. The Hitler Youth carried their weapons and ammunition on handcarts. They almost reached Märkisch-Buchholz via paths through the woods, not knowing the Soviets had encircled them. Orders for 26 April were to breakout in the direction of Berlin. The breakout failed. There were several small engagements on 27 and 28 April. Finally, at 3 a.m. on 29 April, the battalion assembled for another attempt at breaking through. Immense columns of refugees were surging towards Berlin. Artillery fire caused heavy losses among the Hitler Youth and above all among the civilians. Women and children lay dead in the ditches. The breakout had only very limited success. On 2 May 1945 the battalion fell into Soviet captivity. Soviet soldiers let the Hitler Youth leave the ranks of the prisoners with the comment "You're still a child", and sent them home.[7]

Not only the HJ *Panzervernichtungsbrigaden* 1 and 2 were thrown into the

defensive fighting against the Soviets in Brandenburg, but also smaller units such as a 50 strong unit from Guben, which served independently of these brigades. In the “Feldschlösschen”, a beer garden in Guben, the boys found accommodation, and as early as the end of 1944 were receiving a thorough training of ten weeks. Their trainers were members of the Waffen-SS. Well-armed, their HJ uniforms changed for Wehrmacht uniforms, they possessed sufficient ammunition for their 98K carbines, 08 pistols, MP38s, MG42s and *Panzerfäuste*. This group was deployed at Rathenow, surviving heavy fighting against the Soviets. The Soviets suffered much heavier losses in dead and wounded than their HJ enemies. In further fighting the HJ group from Guben had to mourn 30 dead.[8]



A powerful photograph taken in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, 12 February 1945. The original caption describes the boy as seventeen-year-old “Gotthard R.”, a trainee mechanic who had been awarded the War Service Cross Second Class for his actions during an Allied bombing raid. He was now expected to help defend Frankfurt against the Soviets. (Bundesarchiv 183/R96980)



A HJ trains with a *Panzerfaust* whilst attached to *Wachregiment Großdeutschland*, March 1945. (Bundesarchiv 183/R96781)

Again and again one comes across accounts of military training camps of the Hitler Youth which in spite of, and against higher orders, mostly miserably armed and equipped, were pushed into battle during the last weeks and days. Fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth from a defence training camp in Lückenwalde, trained and led by troops of the Waffen-SS, were marched to

the “front” at Niemegk. 3 HJ had one rifle and a *Panzerfaust* between them. A surviving group of them came back the next day, abused by the SS men, who told them they were cowards who had run away from the Soviets. What could the boys do? Many were killed. An old man brought back various dead members of the Hitler Youth in Niemegk to his garden and buried them. Many Hitler Youth lie buried in the cemeteries of the villages around Belzig and on both sides of the South Autobahn.[9]



Girls from the BDM in more peaceful times. In 1945 small numbers fought in several HJ combat units, incl. HJ Regiment *Frankfurt/Oder*. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)

The battles in Brandenburg caused heavy losses, including those in which the Hitler Youth were engaged. In Fürstenfelde and especially in the area surrounding this town, an entire HJ unit was lost without trace.[10] That the *HJ Panzer-Nahkampfbrigade* was trained up on the parade ground at Jüterbog during March 1945, and that its members wore SA uniforms can be gleaned from another account.

The fate of the individual battalions varied. One source gives an account of boys aged from fifteen to seventeen, who had been recruited from the area

of Strausberg. After a short time, this HJ brigade was moved into the Fürstenwalde area. When the Soviets had broken through at Frankfurt an der Oder, the unit marched to Bad Saarow-Storkow. From here they went by buses operated by the Berlin bus companies, via Königswusterhausen to Berlin, to the Olympic Village. One battalion was deployed here against the advancing Soviets. Other units, always under pressure from the Soviets, fought their way, via Friesack – Fehrbellin – Altruppin – Neuruppin, through to Havelberg. Only two companies of the brigade managed to get a boat, and despite intense fire cross over to the heights of Salzwedel, where they were taken prisoner by the Americans on 2 May.[11]

A comprehensive account of HJ combat activity in the region was written by Horst Voigt, HJ leader, and liaison officer between the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* and the high command of the 12th Army (General Wenck). In January 1945 Voigt found himself in for treatment at the Luftwaffe hospital I/XI, Brunswick. He was a graduate of the sixth, and last, war instruction course at the Academy for Youth Leadership in Brunswick. During this time he raised two HJ battalions for the defence of the town of Heinrichs des Löwen. Following its deployment on the Elm, in the Königslutter area, his HJ combat unit was dissolved. Voigt slipped through the advancing US units, travelled over the Letzlinger Heath and crossed the Elbe at Rögatz. On 18 April he reported to Reich Youth Leader Axmann, in the air-raid shelter of the Reich Youth leadership, and gave him an account of the fate of the students of the Academy in Brunswick. Afterwards Voigt visited the Seeland camp, where the *Ersatzbrigade* of the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* was stationed. In the meantime, a Soviet breakthrough between Guben and Forst, on the Oder front, was taking place. He retreated to Havelberg with the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* and became a witness to the dramatic developments leading up to the final surrender of the 12th Army and the remains of the 9th Army, which thanks to General Wenck's advance to Potsdam could now be freed.



A BDM girl on wartime service. Her cuff title indicates she is a *BVG Hilfsschaffnerin*, or assistant conductor with the Berlin Transport Service. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)

This final surrender to the Americans took place at Tangermünde. The East Prussian Hitler Youth Battalion *Königsberg* and a Saxon HJ battalion also surrendered here. The majority of the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* escaped to Mecklenburg. Voigt went into American captivity with the remains of HJ Regiment *Frankfurt/Oder*, which, together with some especially courageous BDM leaders, had fought its way through the Soviet positions to reach US captivity in fierce hand-to-hand fighting, the boys and girls resorting to using their spades on the Soviets at times. After Voigt and other HJ leaders had made clear to the East Prussian and Saxon HJ battalions that the war was lost, the boys spontaneously struck up the HJ song *Nur der Freiheit gehört unser Leben* ("To freedom alone does our life belong").

In a second account, Voigt is more precise about the HJ units which fought in Brandenburg, and his own activities with them. Being one of the few people who knew about these events, he gives an account of the raising, training, combat deployment and the surrender of the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"*:

> "In Brunswick, we had already encountered news of this [combat deployment of the HJ]. Within the framework of the third draft of the *Volkssturm*, two HJ battalions were trained as so-called *Jagdkommandos*, that is to say, fighting battalions".

Voigt only tells of what he himself saw, heard and experienced, especially the events in Brunswick, at Berlin, in Neuruppin and at Havelberg. From Voigt we also learn that a HJ *Volkssturm* battalion which was trained by the *HJ-Oberbannführer* and representative commanding officer of the HJ Academy in Brunswick was never deployed in action, although Voigt does not elaborate upon its fate further.



Flakhelfer are shown how to use a *Panzerfaust* by an experienced infantryman. Berlin, 30 March 1945. (Bundesarchiv 183/728/885)

HJ leaders, mainly from the Army but also some from the Luftwaffe, commanded both the HJ battalions (*Jagdbattailone*) from Brunswick, also designated as *HJ-Kampfgruppe Stünke*. The officers wore the officers' uniforms of their branch of service, but with HJ epaulettes commensurate to their rank. Officers were ordered to report to the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* from the Army, to whom a corresponding HJ rank was given. The commanding officer of the 1st

Panzervernichtungsbrigade, previously called *Panzerjagdbrigade*, was the then Youth Leader of the German Reich, *Reichsjugendführer* Artur Axmann. He did not lead it himself but let it be led, as his representative, by *Oberbannführer* Kern, a Luftwaffe officer. The organisation of the brigade was strictly upon military lines. The battalion and company leaders were for the most part experienced, in part also highly decorated frontline soldiers, who once were leaders in the old youth movements, notably of the Evangelical Youth Unions. Some came from the Hitler Youth. The NCOs mostly came from the Army, and wore the service insignia and uniforms of the Army. The uniforms of the Hitler Youth in the Brunswick units consisted of field-grey combat fatigues with black HJ ski caps, with HJ insignia. The uniforms of 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* consisted of olive-brown trousers and blouses, in colour and cut resembling those of the *Organisation Todt*, with black HJ caps or grey steel helmets. The boys were armed with rifles, machine-guns and especially *Panzerfäuste*. Actually, they were supposed to be deployed only behind the main frontline against enemy tanks which had broken through, but the military under whose command they came deployed them at the very front of the fighting line beside the Wehrmacht, and the boys were given the tasks of infantry.

On 2 April, orders reached the Youth Leadership instructors in Brunswick, from the *Kreisleiter,* as representative of the Reich Commissar for Defence, advising them to erect anti-tank barriers in Brunswick. At the same time, orders were received to raise the 1st Brunswick *Jagd-Bataillon* (*Oberbannführer* Stünke) from the HJ units quartered at the teacher training college and the Volkswagen factory. The creation of the 2nd Brunswick *Jagd-Bataillon* (*Bannführer* Zachau), in which Horst Voigt became battalion adjutant, took place on 4 April, drawing from the oldest age groups of HJ *Bann* 42.

On 7 April, preparations began for the defence of Brunswick. On 8 April, marching and deployment orders for the 1st and 2nd Brunswick *Jagd-Bataillon* for the night of 8–9 April were sent out. On the same day *HJ Kampfgruppe Stünke* was formed from the 1st and 2nd Brunswick *Jagd-Bataillon,* with a command post in Weddel. Occasional American artillery fire was coming in from the area Salzgitter – Wolfenbüttel. The roads and byways were overflowing with retreating Wehrmacht units, earmarked for the 12th Army. Among the columns were were pris oners of war, the slightly

wounded, prisoners from concentration camps and civilians. The first signs of disintegration were beginning to appear. The *Kreisleiter* of Brunswick left the town and retired to the 11th Army's positions in *Festung* Harz.



Hitler Youth at an awards ceremony, early 1945. Most have been decorated with the Iron Cross Second Class; the boy in the centre of the photograph also wears a tank destruction badge on his right upper sleeve. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)

On 10 April, there was a change of position and the boys were deployed in the area to the north of Königslutter. The left wing was responsible for security duties around the Mittelland Canal at Wolfsburg – Fallersleben. An order concerning the deployment of Hitler Youth as part of the *Volkssturm* specified that this deployment should only take place within the Brunswick region, otherwise the boys were to be discharged from duty. Accordingly the following day, on the basis of this order, the dispersal of the battalions and the discharge of the young men took place. The leaders and their immediate subordinates stood at the disposal of the Wehrmacht. In the meantime, Brunswick was occupied by the Americans, whose troops had now reached Schöppenstedt am Elm.

On 12 April, the commanders of *Kampfgruppe Stünke* and their immediate subordinates, were transferred to Süpplingenburg. Here it was decided that

they should become motorised and should be transported to Magdeburg in order to take part in the defence of the Elbe line in that area. However this was no longer possible, since American motorised units and armoured troops were swiftly advancing on Süpplingenburg. Voigt hid in a clump of woodland and let the American vehicles roll past. Members of *Kampfgruppe Stünke* managed to destroy 6 American tanks with *Panzerfäuste* at Süpplingenburg. This was a remarkable success! However, due to the changed situation, the *Kampfgruppe* broke up.

After lunch the staff set out for Calvörde, and Voigt got permission to accompany them. American units took them prisoner together with a general. Many German soldiers and officers had donned civilian clothes, others were hiding in the woods and waiting for the war to end. Many units of the German Wehrmacht were demoralised. Voigt, however, wanted to help defend Germany and was looking for a piece of German soil which had not yet been conquered and occupied by the enemy. He intended to break through to Berlin, a foolhardy enterprise. In the early hours of 13 April, Voigt, not yet recovered from his wound, reached Rogätz. In Rogätz the *Sturmgeschützschule* from Burg had formed a bridgehead under the command of an energetic captain and recipient of the Knight's Cross. At the Burg headquarters at Magdeburg, Voigt obtained a written order to proceed to the Berlin garrison. He succeeded in finding a lorry which was driving to Berlin. He reached Potsdam via Brandenburg, and went to the Hitler Youth *Reichsführerschule I* in order to report, by telephone, the fate of the Brunswick Academy to the Reich Youth leadership. From Potsdam Voigt took himself to Berlin, to visit the Reich Youth leadership.



A HJ *Panzerjagdkommando* cycle through a street in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, early February 1945. Note the *Panzerfäuste* slung across the front of their bicycles, and the camouflage netting over the street. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin)

On the nights of 13 and 14 April, Potsdam experienced very heavy air raids. On the evening of 17 April, during an air raid, Voigt reported to Axmann and asked for a role which would make allowances for his wound. The task of travelling to Bayreuth and assisting *Hauptbannführer* Overbeck to oversee the work of digging trenches in the Bavarian forest did not come to anything, since in the meantime the Americans had taken Bayreuth. Soon after this, Voigt received orders to go via Teupitz to Lein Koris into "Camp Seeland" (Reich Hitler Youth Training Camp I), where he was assigned to duties with the *HJ Panzervernichtungsersatzbrigade*. Voigt arrived there on 18 April, and reported to the brigade commander, *Oberbannführer* Ohlendorf. At the same time, two captains decorated with the Close Combat Clasp, together with some 10 young lieutenants and sergeants, had arrived. There were only 50 Hitler Youth in the camp.

On 19 April, Soviet armour made a deep breakthrough on the Oder front. The brigade was alerted to go into position immediately, deploying small anti-tank units along the Reichsautobahn in the area of Gross Köris. Voigt remained in "Camp Seeland" to keep the section ticking over. On 20 April the entire complement of the camp was moved by lorry to Siethen, south of

Berlin. The following day the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* received personal orders from Axmann to operate from the outside, behind the lines of encirclement. He himself, as commander of the Wilhelmsplatz, took over the defence of the Reich Chancellery and thereby of Hitler himself.

The boys of the *Ersatzbrigade* left Potsdam by lorry on the last road which was still open. Travelling via Friesack, they reached Läsikow, and on 25 April Banzendorf, in the region of Rüppin. On his own wishes Voigt went to visit the commander of the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend", Oberbannführer* Kern, at the brigade command post in Vielitz. Voigt became liaison officer between the brigade and army headquarters. The HJ brigade found itself on the march to the Elbe, in order to give support to the troops positioned there for an attack towards Berlin.

From 28–29 April the situation became chaotic. Voigt stayed on as liaison officer in the barracks. The HJ battalion *Mecklenburg* and a RAD detachment took over the defence of the northern section of Neuruppin. A Kriegsmarine infantry division took over the combat section of the HJ battalion and the RAD detachment on 30 April. The Hitler Youth went to Schönhauser Damm. On 1 May, heavy fighting was taking place round Neuruppin. The link with the headquarters of the 12th Army was cut. Nevertheless Voigt went to Schönhauser Damm where he learned of Hitler's death. Strong Soviet air power hindered every movement. Events now came thick and fast.

On 2 May Voigt learned that the 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend"* was on the march to Mecklenburg. In Sandau there were German prisoners waiting to be transported by the Americans to the west bank of the Elbe. In Havelberg, some 4km away, the Germans were still holding on, hard-pressed by the Soviets. A German grenadier regiment was routed by the Soviet attack. It was difficult for officers persuade their men to stay at the front. In this hopeless situation *Stammführer* Zoch intended to lead his HJ battalion nearer to the Havel bridge and to form a bridgehead. There was no longer any communication with the nearest regiment.

Voigt met a state of chaos which was further increased by deserted groups of refugees, in flight, moving packed together in double columns. There were dead civilians on the road, soldiers in panic crying out loudly on the Elbe bank for the Americans to help. It was a hopeless muddle. Two burning Soviet tanks were blocking the Havel bridge, having been destroyed single-handedly by the commander of a Luftwaffe *Jäger* regiment, a colonel, with

Panzerfäuste. The combat commandant of Havelberg, a major and holder of the Knight's Cross, refrained from blowing up the Havel bridge. Instead the HJ battalion was brought up. A bridgehead was to be formed. The 4th HJ *Jagdbattalion,* 1st *Panzervernichtungsbrigade "Hitlerjugend",* covered the Havel bridge and in part also the town of Havelberg. They received no other support.

Voigt got through to the combat commandant and woke him. He succeeded in persuading the colonel to have the reserves under his command relieve the HJ. The fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth were tired out and hungry and would never have stood up to an attack by the Soviets. Via Schönfeld wounded Germans succeeded in crossing the Elbe in boats. Voigt and the HJ battalion *Königsberg*, marching on, had to take over another security detail and clashed with Polish units. Voigt took command of a company in Zoch's HJ unit. On 4 May Zoch's unit put itself under the command of the HJ Regiment *Frankfurt/Oder* (Kiesgen), which had broken out of encirclement with the 9th Army. In this regiment there were some BDM leaders who, for personal bravery during the breakout, had been decorated with the Iron Cross. They had fought for their lives in hand-to-hand combat with entrenching tools. *Bannführer* Kiesgen and *Stammführer* Zoch visited the higher command and requested that their troops no longer be deployed again in the frontline. The commanding general fully understood this and ordered that the reinforced Regiment *Kiesgen* should be among the first units which were to cross the Elbe at Tangermünde on 6 May 1945.

At Havelberg, Voigt became convinced that fifteen and sixteen-year-old Hitler Youth must not to be responsible for defending the lives of serving soldiers.[12]

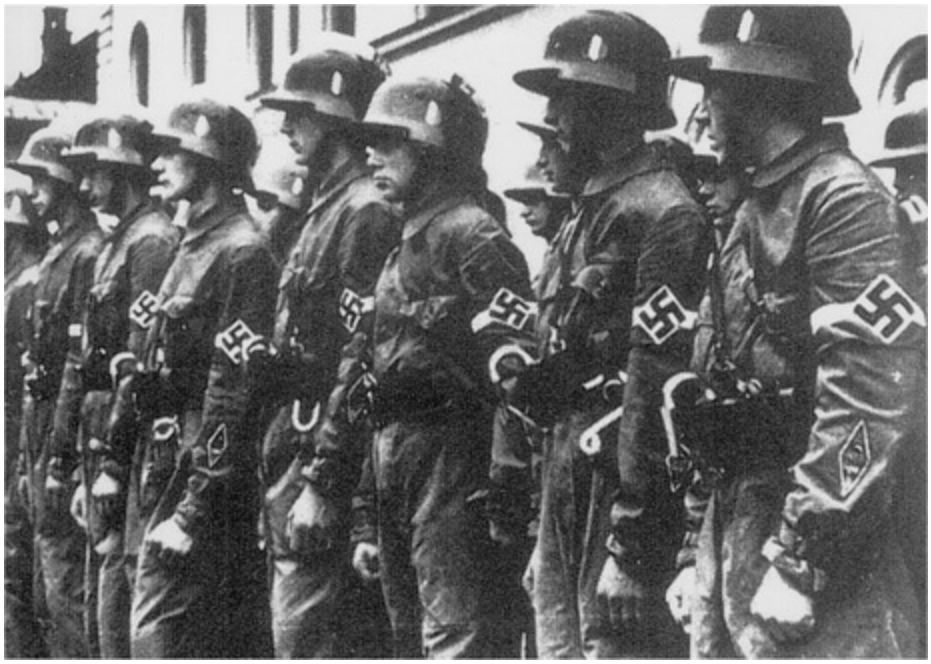
5 Berlin

During March and April 1945 Hitler and the Wehrmacht leadership had thrown all available forces onto the Oder, in order to halt the Soviet advance there. Thus there were only a few troops available for the defence of Berlin itself, into which the Führer had withdrawn. On 23 April 1945 the garrison numbered 44,630 soldiers, 42,531 men of the *Volkssturm* (half of them without weapons), and 3,532 members of the Hitler Youth. *Festung* Berlin was, and remained, a fortress in name only.[1]

In February 1945 the Soviets could easily have taken Berlin by surprise, as they suddenly found themselves on the Oder. Between Berlin and the Oder at this time there were neither anti-tank units, nor anti-tank barriers, scarcely a single German soldier. A division was raised from the *Volkssturm*, officer cadets and Hitler Youth, and quickly thrown onto the Oder front. 300 heavy tanks and self-propelled guns were found in Berlin tank factories, in addition to plenty of munitions and over a million litres of fuel. The miracle on the Oder came true, and the Soviets did not advance on Berlin immediately. Instead they halted and brought up 2.5 million troops, 7,500 aircraft and 6,250 tanks before the Soviet leadership gave the order for a large-scale attack. On the night of 15–16 April the assault began, and Soviet artillery alone fired 98,000 tons of steel onto German positions.

The main German combat line was soon overrun. Hitler had many of the few units in Berlin thrown forward on the Oder front, military, *Volkssturm*, and Hitler Youth. He was relying on holding the positions which had been formed around the Reich capital after 1 February 1945. In any event the number of defenders in Berlin was small.[2] When the Soviet marshals Chuikov and Zhukov inflated this number it was only to make their victory seem all the greater. Zhukov speaks of 200,000, later also of 400,000 German defenders.[3] This was not so, there were a few soldiers, *Volkssturm* and Hitler Youth who, lying in wait behind windows or behind barricades and anti-tank barriers, inflicted tangible losses on the Soviets with *Panzerfäuste*, even on the arterial roads. In the town itself the three flak towers at the Zoo,

Friedrichshain and the Humboldthain, formed the backbone of the defence. The number of defenders varies. In April it was said to have been 7,160 men from the Army, 6,707 from the Luftwaffe, 421 men from the Navy, 1,713 police, 24,000 *Volkssturm* and 1,252 Hitler Youth.[4]



A HJ *Feuerwehr* team on parade, Berlin, 1942. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)



Training for war … Veterans from Panzer Grenadier Division *Großdeutschland* test the map-reading skills of two members of the Berlin HJ at a military training camp in Brandenburg, 11 March 1944. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)



Another photograph from the same sequence: *Eichenlaubträger Oberst* Horst Niemack (centre, bending down) questions Berlin HJ whilst other members of *Großdeutschland* look on, evidently with some amusement. Brandenburg, 11 March 1944. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)



From schoolboys into soldiers … A teacher bids his pupils farewell outside their school, before entrusting them into the hands of a waiting Luftwaffe officer, 16 February 1943. The boys are destined to become *Flakhelfer*. (Museum of

Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Of the 200 *Volkssturm* battalions, which according to Marshal Zhukov, were supposed to have defended Berlin, on closer examination only 30 remained, and of these only half were armed.[5] Because of the fact that the military, *Volkssturm* and Hitler Youth were flooding back to Berlin from the shattered Oder front, the number of defenders constantly fluctuated. For a time, only every other defender of Berlin had a weapon. On 22 April Hitler decided to stay in Berlin. His idea was that German divisions from the north and south, commanded by *SS-Obergruppenführer* Steiner and General Wenck, were to march in, and drive the Soviets out of Brandenburg again. This was unrealistic. On 24 April the city commandant of Berlin, General Weidling, divided the capital into defence sectors A-H.[6] Remnants of the LVI Panzer Corps, 9th *Fallschirmjäger* Division, 11th Waffen-SS Panzergrenadier Divsion *Nordland*, 27th Waffen-SS Panzergrenadier Division *Langemarck*, and 33rd Waffen-SS Grenadier Division *Charlemagne* were deployed to defend Berlin. The Reich Chancellery was defended by the *Ersatzbrigade* of 1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* and by the Hitler Youth. Where deserters were apprehended they received a short trial and were summarily hanged.



HJ parade through a Berlin street on "The Day of the *Volkssturm*"(*Tag des Volkssturms*), 12 November 1944. The day consisted of a series of orchestrated marches by *Volkssturm* and HJ units in a number of cities, providing plenty of opportunities for propaganda photographs and newsreel to be taken. (Bundesarchiv 183/730/879)

The Germans in Brandenburg fought with unprecedented bravery, but at noon on 25 April units from the forces of marshals Zhukov and Konev met to the north-west of Potsdam. This meeting meant that Berlin was cut off from the outside world. The Soviets pressed in upon Berlin from all sides. The weak, shattered, German units had to withdraw. Berlin's position was such that it could not be held for any reasonable period of time. General Weidling repeatedly asked Hitler to agree to a breakout from Berlin towards the west, but the Führer categorically refused this suggestion. After the airfields of Gatow and Tempelhof were lost, reinforcements and ammunition could only be flown in on the East-West axis. One naval battalion, two battalions of police and Waffen-SS came from Mecklenburg. On the same day heavy fighting was already raging in the inner city. On 29 April, French SS volunteers destroyed 62 Soviet tanks in a counter-attack on the Belle-Alliance Platz.[7] Over 800 Soviet tanks are said to have been destroyed by men of the Waffen-SS alone, within one single week in Berlin. The SS troops were from a variety of units, including the *Nordland*, *Nederland*, *Langemarck*, *Wallonien* and *Charlemagne* divisions, and the remnants of Latvian SS units.

The actual battle for Berlin began in full force at 5.30 a.m. on 25 April, with a one-hour-long heavy barrage from thousands of pieces of Soviet artillery. On all sectors of the front, the fighting was hard and merciless. On 30 April Hitler had to acknowledge that there would be no relief from the 12th Army (Wenck), and shot himself. The German defenders fought on. Only on 2 May 1945, in the early morning, did General Weidling surrender in order to save his units from complete annihilation.

Following this outline picture of the battle, it will be a matter of determining where, how, when and under what circumstances and conditions the Hitler Youth played its part in the defensive fighting.

"Daily, over and over again, our Berlin Hitler Youth are proving themselves. They are fighting side by side with our soldiers and men of the *Volkssturm* in the heavy hand-to-hand and house-to-house fighting in the frontline city of Berlin. In a concerted counter-attack, a unit of the Waffen-SS together with a *Kampfgruppe* of the Hitler Youth threw back the Bolshevists who had broken through as far as the Landsberger Allee S-Bahn station.

‘From the Ostkreuz station the enemy succeeded in advancing as far as the Küstriner Platz. A HJ *Panzervernichtungstruppe* with 20 boys went to clear them out immediately.’

This is the sober language of the reports. They show in their clear insistence the passionate battle-eagerness of our Hitler Youth. Thus, yesterday, HJ Company *Ritter von Halt* distinguished itself in the battle in east Berlin during overwhelmingly heavy fighting, by destroying 10 tanks with the *Panzerfaust*. Even when their *Kampfgruppe* leader, *Obergefolgschaftsführer* Meckel, had been killed, they dauntlessly fought on.”[8]

The further the Soviets penetrated into the city, the more bitterly the German defenders defended it, even without fixed positions. Certainly the many-storied houses, with their strong walls of the period 1870–1914, and their underground lines of communication, offered some advantages to the defenders. For example the Germans could even manoeuvre underground and at any time fall upon the rear of their attackers and inflict losses on them.

The larger complexes of buildings were at that time defended by a battalion. Only when the heavy Soviet artillery destroyed the individual buildings in direct fire did they succeed in advancing any further at all. Day and night the Soviets attacked and, with their unprecedented superiority in men and matériel, prevented the defenders from gathering and concentrating their forces. The rounds of the Soviet siege guns with which they gradually destroyed the inner city of Berlin, weighed one 1,000kg per shell. Despite German efforts, the Soviets were surprised that Berlin had not been turned into more of a fortress than was the case. To do this would have required more troops and a better supply of weapons and ammunition; then the Soviet losses would have been even higher. Even so, they were very high.[9]

The Hitler Youth played its part in inflicting heavy Soviet losses. From the beginning, when the HJ occupied the street barricades round Berlin, they prevented the Soviets penetrating the city by surprise. For far and wide there was not a soldier to be seen who might have resisted the Soviets, so quickly did the units of the Red Army advance after the breakthrough on the Oder. 4–5 Hitler Youth in HJ uniforms occupied each barricade and held them.[10]

In the east of Berlin a former HJ leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Bärenfänger, led the resistance. He was the holder of the Knight’s Cross Oak-Leaf Cluster and the Oak Leaf with Swords, awarded to him as a soldier of the Wehrmacht, a major, during the fighting in the Kertsch area of the Eastern Front. His wife was with him at the very front of the fighting. Shortly before his death, Hitler promoted him to Major General. From 1 January 1944 he

was inspector of the Hitler Youth military training camps. Erich Bärenfänger and his wife committed suicide because an attempted breakout of the HJ unit which he was leading failed. He and his wife felt that living on in conquered Germany would be impossible. Elsewhere it was said that the Major General fell in battle.

The Hitler Youth were deployed at many places in Berlin, in the inner city, in Charlottenburg, Friedrichhain, Spandau, the Tiergarten, Tempelhof, Ruhleben, on the Heerstrasse and on the Pichelsdorf bridges, on the Reichsportfeld, in the flak towers and in many other places and districts. Everyone who could bear arms and fight was deployed during the fighting of these dark days. The defence training camp of the HJ in Berlin-Reinickendorf fought in the Hermann Göring Barracks in Friedrichhain, and in the flak tower in this part of the city.[11] Hitler Youth were involved in knocking out tanks in the Tiergarten area, from 21 April. Sometimes the *Panzerfaust* was as big as its fourteen to sixteen-year-old bearer. Unshaken, the Hitler Youth lads stood fast under Soviet artillery fire, in the hail of bombs from Soviet bombers and in the machine-gun and cannon fire of Soviet fighter squadrons. SS soldiers tried to send the boys home, since no significant change could be effected by sending them into action. But the lads refused and fought on doggedly and successfully. In exemplary fashion they defended bridges in the Berlin city area, houses, and also larger building complexes such as the Haus des Deutschen Fremdenverkehrs, a building complex not then completed.[12]

The scorn of death with which fourteen to sixteen-year-old HJ boys fought against the Soviets was outstanding. Mobile *Panzerjagdkommando* had great success, hunting down and destroying tanks which had broken through in considerable numbers.[13] Marshal Chuikov gives the following account of an attack by the Hitler Youth:

> "Imagine a crowd of 400 boys, none older than fifteen, and all in black uniform shirts. They marched in the middle of the street in the direction of the fighting. They marched against our assault detachments, *Panzerfäuste* on their shoulders. Hitler was throwing even these boys into the battle against the tanks. 'What should we do?', my commanders asked me by radio. 'Don't fire. Try to disarm them'. The yellow flares did not hold the boys back. They had already come close to our positions, and when they saw artillery pieces and vehicles they stormed forwards as if they were crazy. The *Panzerfäuste* flew through the air and tore horses and men into shreds. We opened fire. When they saw that the front ranks were falling, the survivors ran away. That happened on 25 April, after we had taken the Tempelhof airfield. The crowd of boys had come from the Tiergarten and had come close to the positions of the 27th Guard Corps. Who could be sending these lads to certain death? Only a madman."[14]

Further reports concerning the HJ in Berlin:

"Many came from underground (the Reich Chancellery bunker, or the Führerbunker). The Hitler Youth looked shabby and had a pale face, but his eyes shone. 'The lad has seen off a tank with a *Panzerfaust*. The Führer has pinned an Iron Cross on him', the adjutant explained."[15]

"It was in the Reich Chancellery garden. Sixteen-year-olds, fifteen-year-olds, fourteen-year-olds, with them also a twelve-year-old, had arrived. A rank of Hitler Youth boys, not even particularly exceptional, daring, foolhardy, full of faith, all of them, and here they stood with bated breath, they were overwhelmed, their Supreme Head was inspecting the line. The Splendid One, adored, now so terribly shattered, was inspecting the line. He stopped, spending a moment with each of the boys, dressed in an unprepossessing overcoat, very old and half-deaf. The large peak of his cap covered the deep-set vacant eyes, covered the expressionless face, left only the big bulbous nose showing. The old uncle stroked his lads who are still fighting, biting and clawing after the Wehrmacht and even the SS are sick of fighting. The good uncle had the mask of an aged king, and was now the cloaked postillion of death. He has for his lads of the Hitler Youth nothing but the *Panzerfaust* and a dog's death in the street.

Berlin Hitler Youth preparing to defend the Reich, 1945



A Berlin HJ enrolled into the *Volkssturm* poses with his *Panzerfaust*. Like all the photographs in this sequence, this shot was taken in February/March 1945 by Arthur Grimm. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / Arthur Grimm)



The same HJ is instructed in the finer points of using a *Panzerfaust* by an *Obergefreiter* from the *Panzertruppe*. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / Arthur Grimm)



Close-up of two HJ. All the HJ in this sequence of photographs wear the distinctive dark blue/black winter uniform with shoulder straps, triangular district badge and Volkssturm armband. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)



HJ in conversation. This photo shows the detail on the HJ belt particularly well. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / Arthur Grimm)



The same two HJ standing to attention. Note cuff title being worn by the boy on the right. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / Arthur Grimm)



HJ man a drum-fed MG. Note the ribbon being worn by the boy on the right of the photograph, denoting the wearer as a recipient of the Iron Cross Second Class. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / Arthur Grimm)



A HJ in position with his *Panzerfaust*. The clarity of the photograph clearly shows the instruction label on the head of the *Panzerfaust* – if used incorrectly this weapon could cause lethal injuries to its user! This HJ has pinned a proficiency badge to his right breast pocket. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / Arthur Grimm)



Close-up of the same HJ posing with rifle. The detail on his *Volkssturm* armband can be clearly seen. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin / Arthur Grimm)

On, drummer-boy, keep going,
With high and merry heart,
Of love he nothing knowing
Nor how it feels to part.
And cold shivers run down the watcher's spine."[16]

On the Reichssportfeld a HJ brigade was drawn up. Boys, and girls, were receiving instruction in the use of *Panzerfäuste* and hand grenades.[17] In Berlin, the HJ Regiment *Berlin* (*Gebietsführer* Harmann) and the HJ Infantry Division *Spandau* (Colonel Marreck) were drawn up on parade. On the Reichssportfeld, too, was a battalion under *Oberbannführer* Schlünder. At least 6,000 Hitler Youth were being armed and sent into combat. But Schlünder was in command of only 500. He was *Obergebietsführer* and, since 1940, commander and Inspector General of the HJ defence training camps. Dr Ernst Schlünder, former member of the Students' Bible Circle, never a member of the Nazi Party, and always true to his Protestant church, was a veteran of the First World War, highly decorated and wounded in Transylvania in 1916, and as early as the Weimar Republic, responsible for youth sport.

A direct order from Hitler obliged Dr Schlünder to take over the task of

securing the Pichelsdorf bridges. These bridges were neither to be blown up nor given up, because over them Wenck's 12th Army was to advance into Berlin. When Schlünder took over the task of securing these bridges, the front still lay far to the west. When the Soviets advanced through the Grunewald to the Havel bridges, 300 boys from the HJ battalion formed a western bridgehead, with the remaining Hitler Youth forming an eastern bridgehead. The left wing of the eastern bridgehead maintained a loose connection to the Reichssportfeld. Here the tactical and strategic capabilities of the First World War officer came into his own. These bridgeheads were only to be held until the 12th Army arrived.

Schlünder saw in this deployment something sensible, that is, to hold the road to Berlin open for the 12th Army, and at the same time to bar the way to Berlin for the Soviets, at least from his side. In the HJ battalion there were sixteen-year-old Hitler Youth, well trained by Schlünder. Indeed, from 3 March 1945 seventeen-year-olds were officially enlisted into the Wehrmacht; why, asked Schlünder, should I not be in command of an HJ volunteer unit of seventeen-yearolds? They could handle the *Panzerfaust*, light machine gun and rifle excellently, and could have prevented the Soviets, who had at their disposal a lot of artillery and even more tanks, from taking the Pichelsdorf bridges. The Hitler Youth had dug themselves in, in woods and parks, and had taken up position in houses and cellars. As soon as a Soviet soldier moved even a muscle, *Panzerfäuste* (they had more than enough of them) and machine-gun bursts hailed down. Dr Schlünder considered the casualties of the HJ on the section of front including the Pichelsdorf bridges as having been low.[18]



Very rare photograph of a HJ on one of the Havel bridges, Berlin, April 1945. (Janusz Mierzejewski)

But the losses of Schlünder's HJ battalion seem to have been greater than he admitted, for one knowledgeable source remembers exactly how many graves there were of Hitler Youth boys on the Pichelsdorf bridges, on the island of Pichelswerder, and to the right and the left of the Heerstrasse.[19] Singly, or in pairs, Hitler Youth lay in the shallow trenches in front of the Pichelsdorf Bridge, and on both sides of the Heerstrasse.[20]

In any event an overall picture of the fighting in Berlin, as far as the Hitler Youth is concerned, is not possible. Attempts can only be made to sketch certain incidents. What happened in Berlin from 20 April to 2 May will never be able to be investigated. War diaries were no longer kept. An overview of the fighting in Berlin, especially as far as the Hitler Youth are concerned, is completely lacking. Personal notes and diaries from this time do exist, but there are only a few of them. In any case, many diaries do not mention the Hitler Youth.[21]

On 23 April the Soviets took the north of Berlin, the Tegel district, whilst in the east they were penetrating into Friedrichshain. The HJ companies in

this sector, together with scattered sections of the Wehrmacht, pulled back to the Friedrichshain flak tower. The Soviets did not succeed in capturing or destroying the flak tower, and from this point they were prevented from advancing further into the inner city, the centre of Berlin. In this sector, Lieutenant-Colonel Bärenfänger was fighting almost exclusively with Hitler Youth, and held his positions.[22] HJ units also displayed outstanding bravery fighting in the Lichterfelde – Steglitz – Lankwitz districts.[23]

A woman in Berlin wrote:

> "Along the barricade the *Volkssturm* is standing guard in vari-coloured *ad hoc* uniforms. You can see very young children there, with baby faces under steel helmets far too big for them. They can, at the most, be fifteen, and are so thin and tiny in the baggy uniforms. Why do our feelings so revolt against this child-murder? If the children are only three or four years older, their being shot and torn apart appears quite natural to us. Where is the dividing line? Somewhere around the time when the voice breaks? For in my memory, really what causes me the most anguish, is the high bright voices of these little 'worms'. Soldier and man were, up to now, one and the same. A man is a begetter of children. That these lads are already being squandered before they are ripe must really fly in the face of the laws of nature. It is against natural instinct, against every instinct for preservation of the species. Like certain fish and insects that eat their own offspring. That must not be the case among human beings. That it is the case, nevertheless, is a sign of madness."[24]

> "Even the 'Werewolves' of the HJ are fighting in Berlin, destroying a Soviet transport column."[25]

In Berlin-Neukölln, SS troops from the *Nederland* and the *Charlemagne* divisions mustered alongside Hitler Youth units for a counter-attack.[26] The HJ units were often successful despite possessing only had small arms and *Panzerfäuste*, and because of this remained mercilessly exposed to Soviet artillery fire.[27] Members of the Hitler Youth were trained and deployed for combat underground, in U-Bahn tunnels and cellars.[28]

On 25 April heavy fighting raged in Spandau, involving HJ combat troops under the command of *SS-Gruppenführer* Heissmeyer. The Soviets were forced to accept high, bloody losses for each block of houses they took. As early as 20 April, his birthday, Hitler had received some Hitler Youth members and decorated them as part of the official celebrations in the Reich Chancellery.[29]

In the Olympic Stadium the *Panzerjagdkommando*, 2nd Battalion, was deployed under Major Theilhacker. The Führer had awarded the Golden Cross of the German Order to the Reich Youth Leader Artur Axmann in

recognition of his former services in deployment and leadership of German youth and now in the battle for Berlin. He also awarded him the Iron Cross 1st Class for his brave action.

Alongside *Gauleiter* Hanke of Breslau and *Gauleiter* Holz of Nuremberg, Artur Axmann is the third living German awarded the Golden Cross of the German Order. The Führer handed the decoration to Axmann in his headquarters on 28 April with the words, "Without your boys the battle could not have been carried through, not only here in Berlin, but in the whole of Germany". Axmann replied, "They are your boys, my Führer!"

We know little about the casualties of the Hitler Youth in Berlin, except that there must have been many, even if only the accounts of the fighting in Spandau are taken into consideration.[30]

> "In Spandau the Soviets were driven out. Hitler Youth and remnants of German combat troops made a surprise attack in the early hours of 1 May on the Soviet positions. They broke through, destroyed artillery pieces and blew up tanks. Towards noon, General Chuikov threw some regiments of his army into the battle. The Soviet casualties were very high. Confusion reigned among the staff. Where did those Germans come from all of a sudden? What kind of children were they who attacked? Where did they get their courage from? Without pausing, the lads, who were between fifteen and seventeen years old, attacked. They slipped like Indians past the Soviet snipers who had hidden on the roofs. They stood fast as they saw the T34s and the Stalin tanks creeping forward behind the houses and shooting wildly round the district. What did they care about the accompanying Soviet infantry? They would soon be seen off by machine-gun fire. And then they tackled the steel monsters. 41 were annihilated on 1 May in Spandau alone.
>
> They were waiting for Wenck's army. And then they slipped back into their positions, fell upon Soviet bases and did not waver when murderous artillery fire rained down on them. When the Soviets mustered for a counter-attack they thought they would meet no more of the enemy. Who could survive this kind of fire? Their tanks moved on with open hatches, the infantry did not worry about cover. These lads of Spandau simply let themselves be overrun, pretended to be dead, kept hidden. Only when the tanks had rolled by and the infantry had burst into the houses did they come out, carefully and quietly. Then at a stroke twenty tanks were on fire. And while the lads brought new *Panzerfäuste* from the cellars and fed new belts of ammunition into their machine-guns, because they wanted to fight on in order to hold open a way to Berlin for the Wenck Army, Soviet reinforcements arrived."[31]

On 26 April the Wehrmacht reported:

> "In the east and the north our troops, bravely supported by units of the Hitler Youth, the Party and the *Volkssturm*, are putting up dogged resistance at the Schlesischer and Görlitz Station as well as between Tegel and Siemensstadt. From all sides the Soviets are streaming into the city. They are throwing back the weak defending units and occupying one district after another. In some places badly-armed *Volkssturm* men have simply ran away. Zehlendorf fell after a short resistance. Hitler Youth, *Volkssturm*, police and fire brigade are fighting side by

side, but under different commanders, who often issued highly contradictory orders".[32]

Two companies of Hitler Youth were put under the command of a regimental commander of a Panzergrenadier regi ment which was deployed in the area of the Tiergarten. These boys had the task of defending bridges in the Tiergarten district against Soviet tanks. Their arma ment consisted of *Panzerfäuste*. At the first attack of the enemy armour on one of the bridges the boys let the armour advance to within some 5–10 metres and destroyed the first vehicles with *Panzerfäuste*, so that the bridge was blocked. This was also repeated on the other bridges. In the meantime they tried out new anti-tank tactics. They took cover at street crossings, if possible in the first or second storey of a house, let the tanks advance and fired the *Panzerfäuste* from upstairs in the buildings. They had 100% success. The HJ provided themselves with *Panzerfäuste*. Since radio communications were often broken, the Wehrmacht could fall back on using the Hitler Youth as messengers; the Hitler Youth would carry reports by using canals or climbing over roofs. So the Soviets could not understand that their overwhelming superiority in men and matériel had met with such stiff resistance, and that they could only advance with difficulty and with heavy casualties.[33]

The Führer meets his young heroes



Hitler and Reichsjugendführer Artur Axmann meet members of the Hitler Youth, and decorate them with the Iron Cross. This sequence of six photographs was taken by Heinrich Hoffmann in the garden of the Reichs Chancellery, c.19–20 March 1945. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)



Hitler in conversation with a HJ. Third from right: HJ Wilhelm Hübner, second from right: HJ Alfred Czech. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

On 23 April, *Hitlerjunge* Forst, fifteen years old, knocked out two T34s with a *Panzerfaust* on the corner of Knieborde/Goldaper Strasse.[34] Four days before, 16 Hitler Youth were killed on the Tetlow Canal. They were laid side by side in a mass grave in the Bruschkrugallee.[35] Hildegard Knef saw many Hitler Youth members in combat during April 1945. During an attack in Schmargendorf, Hitler Youth came under fire from Soviet snipers:



The Führer greets HJ Alfred Czech. During the meeting he told the boys 'You already know of the battle from your own experience and Grenadier Division *Charlemagne* fought in know that we are in the midst of a struggle for the very existence or non-Berlin, and gives this account: existence of the German people. I am, in spite of all the difficulties of this time, convinced that we shall win the victory in this battle, above all when I look at the German youth, and especially you, my lads!' receives reinforcements from several (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)



Hitler meets HJ Wilhelm Hübner, who had distinguished himself in the fighting around Oppeln and Lauban, Silesia, and was awarded the Iron Cross Second Class. (Credit: Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

"A boy stumbles over the gravel, jumps, cries, yells, calls 'Mother', twists his legs, twitches, stares up into the sky, stares endlessly. On the street the Soviets are lying, on top of one another, beside one another. In front of me, legs are dangling. Boys in uniform, tongues out, blue, hanging, a piece of cardboard with child's handwriting: 'I was too cowardly for the Fatherland.'[36]

Only very few Hitler Youth must have been hanged for "cowardice in the face of the enemy". On the contrary, most of them could not wait to be sent into action, something we can scarcely imagine today. Jean Mabire, a member of the 33rd Waffen-SS

"The French battalion commander hundred Hitler Youth. The new fighters [aged] between fourteen and fifteen are burning with eagerness to be sent into action like the soldiers. The Neukölln town hall was made into a fortress and doggedly defended.

'Slowly, lads', the NCOs put the brake on the newcomers. 'Don't get giddy. The Popoffs (Soviets) have more combat experience than you!' But in their enthusiasm these young chaps scarcely hear the warnings and hurl themselves with their *Panzerfäuste* and rifles onto the enemy, as if they were marching up with drums and fanfares.

At the least sign of sympathy and encouragement their faces light up. Their eyes burn like a strange fire. They want to be as heroic as the older men and take every kind of risk, and they obey the orders of the French NCOs with confidence and discipline. The defenders of the town hall cannot conceal how moved they are by these young men, in whom the same fire burns as in themselves. 'In the moment of greatest danger', remarks *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Fernet, 'Berlin is reaching for the greatest sacrifice, the blood of the people, to its youth'. V.W. Wallenroth, who is more struck by the heroism of these boys than he would like to show, objects: 'When the Reds take Berlin many will say that these boys were sacrificed unnecessarily'.

'No, surely not!' Doraux gets worked up. 'On such sacrifices alone can the future of a people be founded. And the future counts more than the present'."[37] Some Steglitz Hitler Youth defended the water tower on the Fichteberg until they were wiped out by the direct fire

of heavy Soviet artillery.[38] Those manning the Friedrichshain flak tower only surrender when the outlook is hopeless.[39] The Soviet interpreter Jelena Rskewskaya gives an account how a fifteen year-old member of the Hitler Youth was brought in with reddened eyes and tight lips. He had bitterly kept on firing. “We must hold on till the relief comes from the army”.[40]



Hitler and Axmann with the assembled Hitler Youth in the garden of the Reich Chancellery. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)



One of the older HJ shakes hands with Hitler. The boys had distinguished themselves during the fighting in Silesia and Pomerania. (AGK-Verlag)

A thirteen-year-old describes the battle for Oranienburg, in which some groups of *Jungvolk*, numbering 150 boys, were sent into action:

> "We were fetched by police from the houses on the orders of the *Standortführer*, *Hauptmann* Frischeffsky, and we had to muster in the SS barracks and on the Schlossplatz. Then the individual troops were divided and assigned to groups of the SS and the *Volkssturm*. Our groups were deployed to the north and the east of the city. Most of us were killed by infantry fire, since we had to attack over open ground. Later the battle raged in the city. In two days and two nights, Oranienburg changed hands four times. And in this fighting almost all of us bit the dust".[41]

Helmut Altner, who recorded this conversation with the thirteen-year-old *Jungvolk* member, took part in the withdrawal from the Oder to Berlin as a soldier of the Wehrmacht. They then fought with an HJ unit in Spandau, at the retaking of the Reichssportfeld, in Ruhleben and on the Spandau bridges. He also mentions in his book, *Totentanz Berlin*, that from 5 April Berlin women too, on a voluntary basis, received instruction in shooting and that the *Jungvolk* (ten-to fourteen-year-old boys) and not only the Hitler Youth, fifteen-to eighteen-year-olds, raised anti-tank units and were armed with old French and Belgian military rifles.

Many girls, too, his account goes, reported voluntarily to the front, forming a *Todesbattallion* or Death Battalion of young girls wearing lipstick, under the command of the Waffen-SS.[42] "Boys in the brown uniform of the *Napola*. Each group of these ten-to fourteen-year-olds is led by an SS man. They want to be sent into action as anti-tank units".[43] He also gives an account of Hitler Youth who were at the front wearing short trousers.[44] Out of one *Jungvolk* group of 120 boys, only 8 remained alive after the fighting.[45] Besides, according to Goebbels, Hitler and Hans Fritzsche, the chief of propaganda for the German radio, the Hitler Youth was the real backbone of the defence of Berlin.

> "But the most desperate of all desperate measures was the deployment of the Hitler Youth. To fifteen, yes, sometimes even to twelve-year-old boys, scanty instruction was given in the use of the Panzerfaust, evidently the only weapon with which Berlin was to be defended. They were told that it was only a matter of holding out for a few hours. In the pale, nervous faces of the undernourished children a fire would begin to glow which consumed them in their thousands.
>
> At that time this deployment of children seemed to serve as a proof of the credibility of the reasons for which the government was demanding one last effort only for a few hours. Today it appears as the high point of a cynical crime. This crime, lay not in the loyalty and readiness of self-sacrifice of the Youth Leader Artur Axmann, but with those who convinced him that

this deployment was necessary and made sense, and by which he did not spare himself."[46]

Until the last moments the Hitler Youth continued to fight. On 30 April, bitter fighting flared up around the government district. European volunteers, in particular, served alongside HJ combat units without respite, in the fire of the Soviet attack.[47] A typical example of the cynicism with which the boys of the *Jungvolk* and Hitler Youth were rushed into battle against a far superior enemy, is the fighting on the Reichssportsfeld – Olympic Stadium. An account of this is given by the former Wehrmacht captain, Helmut Sommer:



A well-known, stark, image of the defence of Berlin, photographed by Hilmar Pabel in April 1945. Two members of the *Volkssturm* prepare to defend the city from a hastily-dug slit trench. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)



Hitler Youth captured in Berlin, May 1945. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

"In the hours of the early morning of 23 April 1945 I, as company leader, brought a company from the Seeckt barracks in Spandau by S-Bahn to the Zoo bunker. As we arrived at the station, four members of the Hitler Youth reported to me immediately and they led us to the Zoo bunker. They also reported that the square in front of the bunker was under attack by artillery. The Hitler Youth led us confidently over the tracks and into the bunker, since they knew exactly how far apart the shells were falling. So we arrived without casualties in the bunker in which there reigned a complete chaos of soldiers and civilians, of field hospital, combat bunker and air-raid shelter for the population. Only the HJ runners, in their bright, resourceful boyish way, knew their way about, for example, where the commandant was to be found. The four HJ runners belonged to the runners' section of the Zoo bunker which consisted entirely of Hitler Youth. I estimated their strength at 30–40 Hitler Youth when I saw their room.

Defence of bridges in the stretch Spandau-Ruhleben (afternoon of 23 April)
In the afternoon the 'Reek' company was to take over the defence of the western power station in Ruhleben. On their march from the Seeckt barracks in Spandau to the place where they were to be deployed, the company marched very far apart under two railway bridges which lay close behind each other. As two Soviet aircraft suddenly flew low over the bridges, a wild cracking fire broke out from Italian rifles. This caused the Soviet aircraft to fire on the road with their machine-guns. The solution to the puzzle: two columns of HJ who, armed with Italian rifles, had been deployed to defend these railway bridges, had fired. The number of about 40 Hitler Youth were all from Spandau.

Reichssportfeld – Olympic Stadium (the night of 24–25 April, and the early morning of 25 April)
During the night I reached the Reichssportfeld with a RAD machine-gun detachment via the U-Bahn entrance to the stadium. As we did so, Soviet snipers drew a bead on us with so-called *Knallerbsen*, i.e. explosive phosphorous rounds.[48] A RAD man was wounded. His lower arm was ripped off. Such rounds are forbidden under the Hague Convention.

With a battle-experienced warrant officer I crept under cover into the stadium. Now and again a rifle shot rang out and sometimes the explosion of a hand grenade ripped through the stillness of the night. A strange scene showed itself in the first pale light of dawn in the wide, open circle of the spectators' seats in the stadium. Individual members of the Hitler Youth were evidently playing cat and mouse with individual Ivans. In doing so, the boys were able to rely on their greater agility, speed, and their knowledge of the area. If a Soviet let himself be tempted to run after him, the Hitler Youth boy ran all over and up and down over the spectators' seats until he was right by the dividing wall. The Soviet would be chasing behind like a dog after a hare. At about 20 metres, the boy, who looked unarmed, would let the Soviet approach. As soon as the boy reached the wall, the Soviet thought he would be able to fire; he stopped to aim his rifle. The boy would make good use of these few seconds. Fast as lightning, he would swing himself over the dividing wall and throw a hand grenade at the Soviet's feet. The shot would ring out and almost at the same time the hand grenade would explode. That this method had proved to be particularly effective during the night was shown by the grey-yellow bundles of the Soviet dead lying there hidden.

In the light of dawn we saw that the tower was held by the Soviets, who were firing a few shots with carbines and evidently only had a little ammunition. They did not have a machine-gun. In the other bell-tower stood the HJ. On the way back, we met a Hitler Youth who reported that there were 200 of them still in the stadium. The others had made off after they had been released from duty.

Reichssportfeld – Olympic Stadium (morning of 25 April)
A short time later, to our great surprise, we met a King Tiger tank on a street corner to the southern side (the main entrance) of the Reichssportfeld. It had only two rounds left for its gun, and a little bit of petrol. Over its radio, I received orders from the commander of the Führerbunker, *SS-Brigadeführer* Mohnke, to bring out, with his Hitler Youth lads, Axmann (Reich Youth Leader), who had just been sent directly into the stadium. We entered the stadium from the southern side, using an adjoining door. While we are climbing the stairs, blasts from signallers' whistles sound out. They were whistling orders to gather together. On the way round we meet a little group of Hitler Youth. To our questions we received the answer that Axmann had ordered the stadium to be cleared. 'On the Führer's orders', as the boys, for whom we feel sorry, moaned out to us. We met Axmann, who told of the difficulties he had getting the boys to clear out. After a good talking to by three of us – Captain Sommer, the warrant officer and Axmann – the 60–80 Hitler Youth become so sensible that we could even get them to put on some civilian clothes, which we got from the allotments. Axmann was so understanding that he sent them home to their families. The biggest group, some 30 strong, returned to Spandau after we explained to them that they could still get through via Ruhleben.

On our way together to the radio station in the Masurenallee, Axmann told me that at first more than 300 Hitler Youth had been deployed in the stadium. But out of these only a few had been killed. I cannot remember having seen even one dead Hitler Youth boy.

Company command post, 3rd Company, 11th Fallschirmjäger Division, in the 'Hildebrand' chocolate factory, Hochstrasse (the night of 26–27 April)
In the middle of the night two Hitler Youth reported to me with shining eyes in their smoke-streaked faces. 'Report: we have destroyed a T34 with two *Panzerfäuste*. It is on fire at the corner of Hochstrasse/Badstrasse!'. I convince myself of the accuracy of their report. When

we had worked ourselves forward under fire until we were close to the corner, there lay two T34s, burning. The occupants of houses confirmed that the two Hitler Youth had destroyed a tank. Whether the boys received the Iron Cross 2nd Class which I recommended for their feat, I cannot confirm, because shortly afterwards I was wounded. So this was the last voluntary Hitler Youth action I saw for myself.

Summing up

The foregoing accounts are observations which I made in those days and which even today, have remained in my memory. They display of course all the shortcomings which are attached to such momentary snapshots. In those last days of the inferno even details of dates and times are not able to be established with any degree of certainty, and can certainly not be reconstructed later. For this reason it is not surprising to me if other reports give contradictory details. I think that it is possible that 2,000 Hitler Youth were gathered together in the stadium for deployment and certainly not for a counterattack as Altner writes in *Totentanz Berlin*. The *Volkssturm* too was deployed from such gathering points. I suspect that by far the greater number of the boys will, during the course of the fighting and the end, have returned to their families.

Only a small part of the Hitler Youth was armed, since there was as much a shortage of weapons as there was of ammunition. For the most part the boys were used, in platoons or in groups, as runners, in which they gave excellent service.

For the tens of thousands of corpses which lay around in the streets and ruins of Berlin, there were neither lists of the dead nor anything else, not even for the dead Soviets. The bodies were thrown into mass graves, often dried-out reservoirs which had once been used for fire-fighting in air-raids, and given a scanty covering of earth."[49]

Completely contrary to these accounts are the two reports from Altner and Poche. The solution to the puzzle is that Helmut Sommer was only on the Reichssportfeld, and in the general vicinity of this fighting, until 27 April, before being wounded. The other two sources give an account of the fighting after this date, during which many things could certainly have changed completely.

"It happened in the morning of 30 April. 2,000 Hitler Youth and 1,000 soldiers had attacked the Reichssportfeld and the Heerstrasse on 28 April. In this attack, 805 of the boys met their deaths. The order for the attack had come from the Führerbunker, in order to free an escape route to the west. Among those who fled, who reached the West at the cost of over 2,000 dead, was *Rittmeister* Boldt. Those badly wounded in the attempt to free the escape route were now lying on the ground. People were digging mass graves, putting those already dead into them and waiting for the others to die before filling in the grave. The boys were crying for their mothers".[50]



"It's all over!" An unknown photographer captured these powerful images of *Flakhelfer* Hans-Georg Henke on a Berlin street following the Soviet occupation of the city, May 1945. (Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin)



Helmut Altner, who as a member of the army, was present at this counter-attack, gives the following account of the sequence of events:

"The enemy suddenly falls back. Runs, clambers up the slope. And behind us suddenly shots

ring out. Now it is clear why the enemy has left the position. From the barracks soldiers are running over the field, Hitler Youth in brown uniforms. The Reichssportfeld is to be retaken. Reinforcements have rushed up from the Deutsche Werke and the bases round about. *Pimpfe* of ten to fourteen who had not yet been kitted out with the uniform of the Wehrmacht or the *Volkssturm*, but have been fetched from houses in Spandau and Ruhleben. There are almost 2,000 Hitler Youth and 1,000 soldiers. The counter-attack is to be launched at ten o'clock sharp.

Time passes slowly. More and more Hitler Youth and soldiers are coming from behind and filling the trenches, so that you can scarcely budge. The enemy seems to be unsure. With machine-guns and rapid-fire weapons he is raking the area. The Hitler Youth press themselves anxiously behind the walls of the trenches. They have mostly rifles seized from France and Italy with a few cartridges which are scarcely useable. The *Pimpfe* have never had a rifle in their hands and are now expected to know how to use them. The recoil alone would be enough to knock most of them over. Not many of them will be left when the attack starts. At ten o'clock sharp we get up out of the trenches and charge forward. Furious infantry fire crashes into us. Then we are on top and the Reichssportfeld is lying in front of us. The enemy is withdrawing in the direction of the Heerstrasse. Slowly, step by step, the troops are scattered across the flat sports field and are advancing. Between the soldiers run the Hitler Youth, trying to use their weapons. Then suddenly, from the sportsmen's houses, machine-gun fire bursts out and mows down the ranks. More and more fall to the ground. We lie behind the dead and open fire. The *Kampfgruppe* to our left has already become involved in fierce fighting behind the houses. We jump up again and run on.

Other detachments occupy the sports field to prevent a counter-attack. We go back to barracks. The ground is strewn thickly with dead bodies, mostly Hitler Youth in their brown uniforms or in civilian dress, just where they had been hit. The remnants of the shattered groups gather together and number off. The remainder is allowed to go home, as a major tells them, 'Till the next time!' We try to get back to barracks. Between the houses along the street are lying Germans and Soviets. Here, too, it is mostly Hitler Youth who fell victims to the attack. A dearly-bought 'success'. It is not exaggerating to say that there are a good 2,000 dead and wounded.[51]

Are these casualty figures given by Helmut Altner believable? The editorial office of the *Spandauer Volksblatt* confirms them: "The details given by Helmut Altner in *Totentanz Berlin* match the facts".[52] A terrible, awful, dreadful balance sheet!

6
Eastern Austria
Burgenland, Lower Austria, Vienna, Styria

Battles between the Hitler Youth and the Red Army also took place in Austria, which during the Second World War was part of the German Reich; in Burgenland, Lower Austria, Vienna and Styria. In Austria, too, the National Socialist Party made desperate attempts to keep the Red Army from its borders. Anti-tank ditches were dug, defensive positions built, and the *Volkssturm* called up, but here, too, without sufficient arms and ammunition. It was little help when on 5 March 1945 those born in 1929 were drafted in.

On 6 March 1945 Army Group South-East mounted its last offensive, in Hungary. The aim of the operation was to destroy the Soviet forces between Drau, Lake Balaton and the Danube. However, the Germans were particularly short of fuel, and in addition, a period of bad weather intervened, bringing with it thaw and mud, which had an adverse effect on armoured operations. The offensive failed. Even before the German units had time to regroup the Soviet forces counter-attacked on 16 March. On both sides of Lake Balaton the Soviet offensive, "Operation Vienna", began; deploying 42 infantry divisions and 7–8 armoured corps the Soviets attacked. The German leadership had few forces with which to meet the attack. For example, the ratio between the German Luftwaffe and the Soviet air force was between 1:6 and 1:10.[1] There was a shortage of fuel, particularly aviation fuel, and even the tanks had to wait a long time for fuel, or were blown up or abandoned because of lack of fuel. Systematic bombing raids on the Hungarian oil refineries had brought fuel production almost completely to the point of collapse.[2]

What does the military leadership do in such a hopeless position? General

Wöhler, the commander of the German and Hungarian units, called on the troops to put up a determined struggle:

> "Every German and Hungarian soldier must be quite clear that the intentions of the enemy must be completely thwarted! I therefore give the order: 'Not one inch of ground must be given up without a fight.' We must be more determined than ever to fight and to win!"[3]

In a telegram to *Generaloberst* Guderian, General Wöhler gave the following situation report on the state of the troops and their combat morale as it appeared to him on 23 March 1945: the 9th Panzer Division had only 30% of its establishment vehicle strength; the 6th Army had seized 140 stragglers on 21 March. Of these 70% belonged to the Waffen-SS. Many local inhabitants were complaining about plundering by members of the Waffen-SS, mostly thefts of cattle.[4]

After the beginning of the Soviet offensive of 16 March 1945, in addition to a severe shortage of SS officers due to significant losses, the German troops were completely exhausted. Thus the commander of 1st SS Panzer Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* reported that his men had fallen asleep in their trenches during the defence of Vezsprem and thus been killed by the Soviets.[5] In this way the Soviets overran the German units. On 31 March 1945 the areas in Western Hungary not yet captured by the Soviets were finally lost to the Germans and their Hungarian Arrow-Cross allies. As a result of the setbacks they suffered, many Hungarian soldiers, even entire units of troops, went over to the Soviets, and from 29 March even turned on their own allies, and their own *Honvéd*. It was a dismal situation for Army Group South on this last day of the Spring month of March 1945. Added to the shortages of armour, fuel and ammunition, was the increasing physical and mental exhaustion of the troops.[6] The "frontier defence position", also called the "Reich defence position" or the "South-East Wall", was quickly reached and soon overrun. In vain had Hitler Youth, SA, prisoners of war and some 30,000 Jews been slaving away on its construction since September 1944, because, as the Soviets burst through, parts of them were not even manned by German units. Only to the south of the Murr were the frontier defence positions held until the end of the war.[7] The defensive positions which had been manned, had been abandoned by the *Volkssturm*, who were almost exclusively farmers from Burgenland and Lower Austria, on the orders of – although sometimes without the orders as well – of the *Gauleiter*

of the Lower Danube. The farmers were urgently required at home for work in the fields. The *Volkssturm* battalions from Wiener Neustadt, Lilienfeld, Neunkirchen, Tuln, Melk, Krems, Linz and Steyer moved forward too late. Very little could be expected even from the German troops. Army Group South did indeed still number 800,000 men, but only one in eight belonged to a combat unit.

So now, on the frontier defence position, Hitler Youth units were thrown into action against the enemy for the first time on Austrian soil.[8] This information is confirmed by a two-volume work entitled *Das Ende des tausendjährigen Reiches 1945* ("The End of the Thousand-Year Reich 1945") "The Reich defence position was overrun by the Soviets in most places. To defend it, very young lads of the Hitler Youth were sent into action".[9] This is further confirmed by the 3rd Panzer Division's history, which commented, "HJ units have been deployed to make secure and to close gaps in the front", on 1 April 1945, in the Raab Valley.[10]

Even if they were not "pure" HJ units, there were HJ units which were integrated into the regiments of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS:

> "We were sent into frontline action in February 1945 on Lake Balaton and at Stühlweissenburg, then for a few days withdrawn to rest areas. Young lads were enrolled in our defensive positions. Since our accommodation was not far from the main frontline, during the nightly exchanges of fire we could also hear the cries of fear of these children".[11]

There is a series of evidence that Hitler Youth were integrated as HJ units into the Wehrmacht and thus went into action. In this way, 183rd Grenadier Regiment, from 62nd Volksgrenadier Division, was formed from the Cologne Hitler Youth *Bann*. The Düsseldorf *Bann* formed the 164th Grenadier Regiment, in the same division. The same happened to the HJ defence training camp from Kammer-Schörfling in Upper Austria, and also that from Enns an der Enns. They were deployed in action in Hungary and Lower Austria, but within the framework of the Waffen-SS.[12]



HJ serving in an unidentified Waffen-SS Panzergrenadier unit, Hungary, April 1945 (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag)

In Austria itself the Soviets could only be held up with difficulty. As early as 4 April 1945, Soviet advance detachments were reaching the city limits of Vienna. On 7 April the Soviets were already standing at the Stadtgürtel. Now a concentric attack on Vienna began; it was led by the 4th Guards Army, parts of the 9th Guards Army and the 3rd Mechanised Corps. In Vienna the last resistance collapsed on 13 April.

The German 6th Army, reinforced by *Volkssturm* and Hitler Youth, succeeded in preventing the Soviets from breaking into the Raab Valley and in holding onto the greater part of Styria until the end of the war. Particularly heavy fighting occurred to the north of the Danube. Here the German 8th Army defended itself against hugely superior numbers of Soviets and Rumanians. The Soviet attempts to force a breakthrough in the area of Mistelbach were in vain.

To summarise: From mid-April 1945, although fiercely attacked, German units belonging to Army Group South succeeded in mounting a successful defence and in halting all enemy offensive actions during the last three weeks of the war. In this fighting, too, Hitler Youth units were involved.

The following pages will examine where, when and how these instances of HJ combat deployment took place from 4 April 1945, in the sectors of the

following:

(1) 2nd Panzer Army
(2) 6th Army
(3) 6th Panzer Army
(4) 8th Army
(5) II SS Panzer Corps

(1) 2nd Panzer Army Sector

No instances of HJ combat deployment are known.

(2) 6th Army

As a consequence of the Soviet advance in the direction of Graz, all available forces were called up to prevent further enemy advances. Hitler Youth units were among them. This can be seen, *inter alia*, from a telegram sent on 16 April by the Party Chancellery in Munich to *Reichsleiter* Bormann, in the Führer Headquarters. In it is mentioned the fact that units of the Hitler Youth under the leadership of *Kreisleiter* Meissl "have proved their worth excellently in hand-to-hand and night fighting around Fürstenfeld".[13] On 13 April the *Gau* leadership in Graz reported "*Jagdkommandos* of the Hitler Youth, who with exemplary bravery are operating behind the enemy lines, are destroying a large number of Bolshevists".[14]

SS war reporter Jürgen Funck wrote the following in his article "Deutsche Jungen als Panzervernichter" (German lads as tank destroyers):

> "Thus they whizzed along the street on their bicycles, hand grenades in their belts and *Panzerfäuste* strapped to their bicycle frames. If enemy armour was reported to be advancing, these boys with their bicycles and light motorcycles were quickly in position on the home terrain that they knew so well. Skilfully they made use of every bit of cover, and soon they had got into position, at the required range of 60 metres. Even as the first *Kampfgruppen* are leaving the training camps, new volunteers are streaming in to report. When it is a question of defending their homes all of them want to be in on the act."

The uniform of these Hitler Youth units was as follows: they wore Wehrmacht uniforms, on their left arm the armband of the *Volkssturm*, above it the triangular regional insignia of the Hitler Youth. They were considered part of the *Volkssturm* as far as pay and rations were concerned. Their arms and equipment were that of the Wehrmacht. The *Panzerfaust* was particularly

highly valued.[15]

The HJ was also thrown into combat where there were shortages of manpower. For instance, at the beginning of April 1945, a Hitler Youth unit with a strength of approximately 600 was sent into action, equipped with quantities of *Panzerfäuste*. This unit was almost completely wiped out.[16] Likewise, General Hubert Lanz remembers that a larger unit of Hitler Youth was placed under his command in Radkersburg.[17]



Well-equipped HJ at a military training camp, 1944. Armament includes an MG42 and rifles with telescopic sights (Emil Nagel)

In order to encourage the Hitler Youth to fight fanatically, the *Gauleiter* of Styria visited individual HJ defence training camps and spoke of the 'powers of darkness and Jewry', which were 'the main cause of the huge uprising' against Germany:

> "The Jew knows that there is one power in the world which can oppose him – that power is Germany. That is why he wants to kill and destroy everything that we hold dear". [18]

The author personally heard similar things said at an ideological training session in Thammühl am See, *Kreis* Böhmisch-Leipa.

In Fischbach the Soviets killed two fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth with shots to the back of the neck. The two boys, who came from Hartberg, had been asleep in an attic and had not noticed that the Soviets had penetrated

into the area. The killings were in revenge for the fact that the Hartberg Hitler Youth had dug in and prevented the Soviets, whose numbers were far superior to theirs, from entering the Mürz Valley, with its arms industry.[19] A unit of Hitler Youth in Fürstenfeld put up a desperate defence against the advancing Soviets.[20] Even on 8 May 1945 Hitler Youth fired on Soviets marching into Mürzzuschlag.[21] Indeed, even after the surrender of the Third Reich, groups of Styrian Hitler Youth put up resistance to the Soviets in the Alps. As months went by, these Werewolf groups were almost completely destroyed.[22] It is with incredible barbarity that the Soviets in Fischbach are said to have behaved towards six Hitler Youth boys who, at the end of the war, had not managed to withdraw from the Schanz in time. The boys were bound, thrown onto the road which leaves Fischbach from the south, and run over by lorries.[23]

(3) 6th Panzer Army

While the 6th Army was ordered to defend the borders of Styria, the 6th Panzer Army protected Lower Austria, including Vienna, to the south of the Danube.

Hitler Youth units were sent into action in order to stop the advance of the Soviets on Vienna from the south and east. For some days, bitter fighting raged along the line Biedermannsdorf – Laxenburg – Achau – Himberg – Hennersdorf. The complement of the HJ defence training camp in Laxenburg was deployed in the gravel pits of Biedermannsdorf. The Hitler Youth were certainly very enthusiastic, but had little training and suffered from a shortage of ammunition. When their ammunition was running out and some of them wanted to surrender, "the SS, who commanded them, knocked down several boys".[24]

Another account is given by the mayor of Biedermannsdorf:

> "On 5 April 1945 an exchange of fire took place in the sand and gravel pits of Biedermannsdorf between Soviets and 113 young soldiers (HJ) and members of the Waffen-SS. After some time the Germans hoisted the white flag. But as a Soviet lieutenant and two soldiers with a white flag approached the Germans, the latter opened fire and killed them. Upon this, the Soviets stormed in from all sides. All the Germans were either shot or killed with spades".[25]

The same happened to the sixteen-year-old Hitler Youth who put up a

fanatical defence against the Soviets on the Zeilerberg. They were taken prisoner by the Soviets and later probably killed.[26] Hitler Youth units also occupied some wooded heights to prevent the Soviets breaking through to the Triesting Valley.[27] There were also Hitler Youth in the units of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*. One of them, only fifteen years old, was among the prisoners taken in the municipality of Phyra.[28]

(4) 8th Army

While the northern bank of the Danube round Korneuburg was secured by II SS Panzer Corps, the 8th Army had taken up position in the northern area of the districts of Gänsendorf, Mistelbach and Laa an der Thaya. The Soviets tried to achieve a breakthrough on this sector of the front until the end of the war, but found the way was barred to them, as is mentioned in a Wehrmacht report of 14 April 1945. In and around Mannhardsbrunn a battalion of Hitler Youth from Vienna had taken up position. For three weeks they prevented the Soviets from reaching the Münich Valley. Mannhardsbrunn, a little municipality in the southernmost point of the district of Mistelbach, is surrounded on three sides by mountains and hills. On the highest point, in the west, there is a little deciduous wood. This HJ battalion had dug in at the edge of the wood, and in the wood itself. The boys could, it is true, not prevent the Soviets from occupying Mannhardsbrunn, but they threw them out of the area several times. As the inhabitants of the villages reported, the Hitler Youth were accompanied by SS troops. Four women from Mannhardsbrunn estimated the age of the boys as between fifteen and sixteen years old. They said that the boys were marched through the district, some clothed in HJ uniforms, and others in overalls; some boys were said to have been crying.[29]

"A member of the Hitler Youth fired the first shot into the churchyard. On 18 April the SS and HJ were thrown back".[30] Three members of the Hitler Youth lie buried in the Mannhardsbrunn municipal cemetery. By 15 April the Soviets had already suffered more than 90 killed in the fighting in and around Mannhardsbrunn.[31] From the parish records of Gross-Ebersdorf one can note that the Soviets received even higher casualties during the following days.[32] One can also conclude from them that the Hitler Youth, who had inflicted these casualties on the Soviets, had to mourn more than only 3 dead.

According to what the author established through enquiries, the fighting of the Vienna HJ battalion *Werwolf* was carried out with the most extreme bitterness, beginning at Flansdorf and on the Bisamberg.[33] The overwhelming superiority of the Soviets gradually pushed back the front. II SS Panzer Corps in Korneuberg was threatened encirclement because there was a large gap in the front at Mannhardsbrunn. It is interesting to see how those who were then in positions of responsibility, both Hitler Youth leaders and military officials, gave their accounts and judgements of these battles around Mannhardsbrunn …[34]

13 April

Scarcely have I completed my round of inspection when there is new movement on the street, "Roosevelt is dead!" I hurry to a Wehrmacht radio receiver and hear the Führer's call to arms. The last words make an impression: "Berlin remains German, Vienna will be German again; Europe will never be Soviet!" In the commentary it was said that this was a turning point, a turning point such as in the Seven Years' War. This news gives rise to animated debates, wild suppositions emerge again. The Führer is said to have in reserve a really fantastic weapon that is only to be brought into play at the last moment. Otherwise, how could he speak like that?

The *Gebietsführer* would like to lay particular stress on the name *Werwolf*. So in all pay books it is entered that we are members of the HJ battalion *Werwolf*, some werewolf insignia, a wolf's head, are painted on the vehicles, and an insignia is to be pinned on the uniforms.

14 April

At 4 a.m. I am woken and ordered to see the *Gebietsführer*. He explains to me that my 1st and 2nd companies, together with a unit coming from Pressburg, must be immediately deployed to secure the retreat of the remaining units from Vienna.

I am incensed, since we were assured that our unit would no longer be used in combat and would be moved to the west. Finally I must be convinced that this action is absolutely necessary, and that nothing can go wrong. The *Gebietsführer* assures me that it would, in any event, be only a short task. At Mannhardsbrunn there was a gaping hole in the front which at this time we were only just able to fill. During the last few days we have already been equipped with the modern automatic machine carbine 44 (MP44). Overall, therefore, we deploy considerable firepower. In addition we have three MG 42s and some fifty *Panzerfäuste*.



A warmly-clad HJ awaits another Soviet tank attack in his foxhole, February 1945 (Janusz Mierzejewski)

I am well provided with experienced troops, so that there is an old campaigner for every 6 to 8 boys. Our self-confidence is thus enormously increased. We then march to the positions to which we have been ordered, to the east of Mannhardsbrunn. The position lies on the forward slope of a valley, in a little wooded area and also partly in the wood. I myself direct each group to their positions and check cover and field of fire on all sides. The most urgent task is to dig proper shelter trenches. On the left is the 2nd Company. Communication will be maintained via a permanent patrol.

I site my command post in a wine cellar which lies in the middle of our position. The owner gives us bacon, bread and wine. As we were given our last orders, it was impressed upon all of us only to shoot at targets which could be seen quite distinctly, and in no circumstances to leave the shelter trenches.

Heavy weapons have, as yet, not arrived and are not to be seen anywhere, although there are some boxes of hand grenades, which I quickly share out. At about 10 p.m. I set off again with mixed feelings to look once more to the right of our position.

The password is ‘Vienna’.

The response: ‘Berlin’.

Hopefully nobody will shoot me through sheer excitement and nervousness. The lads, who have been digging at their shelter trenches all afternoon, are wide-awake. Everything is OK, things are going smoothly, as they did in old times in exciting field manoeuvres.

15 April, 2am

Orders to platoon leaders:

Inspect the positions immediately. Nobody may sleep any longer.

When the enemy is seen to be attacking I will fire a red signal flare.

The enemy can only be fired on when I have fired the first shot.

The next quarter of an hour crackles with tension. The early morning mist is beginning to lift slowly. A sentry bursts excitedly into the wine cellar. “They’re coming, the Soviets are coming!”

With one leap I am outside. It is true, they are coming up the slope as if they were on manoeuvres. Their fur caps with their flapping earflaps can be clearly seen. Three men are pulling a machine gun mounted on wheels.

Evidently they have not yet spotted our positions, perhaps they don’t suspect anyone is here, otherwise the attack would certainly have been preceded by preparatory fire from mortars and artillery. No tanks are to be seen either. If none of my men cracks up, the odds are on our side.

Seldom was I so excited as I am today, as, crouching behind a tree, I bring my automatic carbine to the ready and count the seconds. From below the boys are already looking up to me quite nervously. To calm them I lift up my hand.

When the Ivans are about a hundred metres away, it is time. I send up the flare and draw the trigger of my MP44. Our fire opens up suddenly. The Soviets are shocked. The first of them fall or throw themselves to the ground. The machine gunner closest to me turns his carriage and runs with it full tilt down the slope. That is the signal. Raising my MP44, I bellowed something and set off running. From all their foxholes my lads are getting up, yelling, firing and running after the Soviets.

This was the only way to gain us some breathing space and to give the young soldiers some self-confidence. Meanwhile the whole front has begun to move. With my binoculars I can see how the horse-drawn vehicles of mounted Soviet units are leaving Pfössing in wild flight. But we are much too weak to achieve any more. With difficulty I try to calm the wild enthusiasm of my people and bring them back again to the old positions. They are all set to run as far as Vienna. But it is only now that our real difficulties begin. This attack has been well foiled. But would the boys be able to stand, physically and psychologically, a second cold and rainy night with an enemy attack?

Just before our time came to march off, an SS advance detachment reports and asks to be shown to our positions. They say that the relief is already under way and that we can move out immediately. In groups the boys withdraw, creeping and crawling, from the position. Soon I think I can breathe again in relief, but then it happens. Near to the church the Soviets can observe the street for several metres. The last group is careless. In a great crowd they cross the danger-spot at a leisurely pace. The impact of shells falling right next to each other causes the group to scatter. But one remains, lying down, crying for help. Quickly, with the help of the *Gruppenführer*, I drag him behind a wall.

Blood is pouring from his foot, the lad’s face is whitish yellow. A shell splinter has injured him badly round the ankle, he must also have chest wounds. An SS Kubelwagen takes him to

unit headquarters straight away.

I was so proud to have escaped without casualties. Dispersed into platoons and groups, I order the company to march away at extended intervals. Only, get away from here, as far as possible, away from here.

17 April, Ruppersthal

Roll call is set for 9 a.m. in an orchard, for the whole of *Kampfgruppe Werwolf*, stationed in the area of Niederrussbach. It is raining. The *Gebietsführer* and General Bittrich appear. Newsreel pictures are whirring. Bittrich inspects us and gives a serious and sensible speech which is well-suited to the occasion. In addition, medals for bravery are awarded. Certainly we are proud, but the questions 'why' and 'what for' remain unanswered.

Dismiss, collect our rations. March off. So we march on the Führer's birthday, laden with many thoughts, doubts and hopes. We hope that everything was not in vain, that we had not pledged our loyalty to a false idea, and that our leaders are noble people.

The big doubts remain, whether this ideology and the implementation of its aims was right, or whether there is really something better in the world, something more worthy of striving for. Doubt and hope, who will show us the way?"[35]

A second attempt to break through the Germans' defensive front was made by the Soviets in the area Kettlasbrunn – Blumenthal – Wilfersdorf. Here too they had an operational aim in this move, namely to encircle and destroy the Germans north of Vienna.

"On Sunday 15 and Monday 16 April 1945 there was heavy fighting in the forest towards Obersulz and Blumenthal. The Germans (SS troops) dug trenches in front of the forest, and several trenches one behind another. In the first trenches were posted the Hitler Youth. The Soviets were able to overrun the first trench, but were stopped at the second. Kettlasbrunn was a district where fighting took place. The Soviets lay in the forest, the Germans in the built-up area. The battle lasted over eight days. During the last days, the SS brought in 40–50 lads of the Hitler Youth, gave them rifles with 5–10 rounds and towards evening led them into the trench which was in front of the forest. The Soviets overran the lads and killed them. For three to four days the SS held Hobersdorf, a hundred Soviets a day were killed.

After the battle, on the orders of the Soviets, we carried the Hobersdorf dead in handcarts to the cemetery and buried them. We did not know where the lads (Hitler Youth) were from, and we also could not find out their names. A mass grave was dug in the cemetery for all the German dead. Up to 50 Hitler Youth were shot by the Soviets in the Kettlasbrunn forest. After the fighting had moved away, the farmers brought away the boys' bodies in handcarts for burial".[36]

It must have looked like the scene after a local hunt; in earlier days the dead hares were brought home in hand carts after the hunt. Several farmers from Kettlasbrunn gave this account.[37]

Whilst at the cemetery in 1978, the author asked two women about these

events. Dean Karl Schilling, in the presence of Albert Howurek from Mistelbach, said that the Hitler Youth, some 80 in number, were no older than fifteen to sixteen years old. In this conversation, Dean Karl Schilling added, three or four times, that about 40 boys each time came down to his vicarage. The quarters of a Waffen-SS General or a high-ranking officer of these troops were there. The lads were kitted out with uniforms and led on further. He said that the bicycles of the last group were leaned against the outside wall of the vicarage and the barn, and were taken along by the Soviets as they marched in. He further reports that a suicide squad of three German SS men was hidden in the church tower of his church at Kettlasbrunn. Following the German withdrawal, the Soviets, not knowing what to do, had called together their officers for a discussion in the churchyard. When they were all gath ered there, the SS fired on them with automatic pistols and killed a large number of them, others being wounded. The SS men were killed in the battle. In Kettlasbrunn 114 German soldiers lie buried, in Blumenthal 127, among them a large number of Hitler Youth.

Which HJ units were involved in Kettlasbrunn, Wilfersdorf and Hobersdorf will never be established. Certainly, Dean Schilling spoke of Hitler Youth from Vienna and from the Reich, but could not be more precise.



A member of the Hitler Youth stands on guard outside a company command post, Vienna, 1945 (Emil Nagel)

(5) II SS Panzer Corps

In Vienna, to the south of the Danube, 3–15 April 1945.

In the Viennese edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 3 April 1945, Baldur von Schirach, the former Reich Youth Leader and *Gauleiter* of Vienna, called on his boys to do their duty.[38] But he himself remained in Vienna for only for a short time, then moved to the north of the Danube, in Flandorf, before driving to the Tirol with a driver in a motor car, appealing to a sinister order, and thence disappearing.[39]

Schirach had had the HJ *Werwolf* battalion, consisting of 6 or 7 companies, raised and trained in the surroundings of the Hungarian Krönungsstadt, on the March and the Danube. As the Soviets approached Pressburg, he called the battalion back to Vienna, but *Stabsführer* and *Gebietsführer* Lauterbacher and his lieutenants " … rebelled against this. They wanted to fight".[40] Certainly Schirach knew nothing of any combat deployment of this battalion. He maintained that this HJ battalion was

withdrawn further and further, until the Hitler Youth, together with *Gebietsführer* Lauterbacher, were finally in Gemunden/Upper Austria and thereby out of the area of the fighting. However, Schirach's supposition is wrong, because the commandant in the Vienna fighting, General von Bünau, expressly names the HJ battalion:

> "A counter-attack energetically led by a Hitler Youth battalion from the district of Hütteldorf in the direction of Mariabrunn, which had been raised within the framework of the Volkssturm, stopped the Soviet advance locally, indeed, even succeeded in advancing beyond Mariabrunn and in throwing back an enemy battalion".[41]

Shortly afterwards, the HJ battalion *Werwolf* had the task of securing the high ground to the north of Hütteldorf. The unit represented a kind of "fire brigade". HJ anti-tank troops forced Soviet armoured units, who had advanced towards the Westbahnhof, to turn and retreat. From 6 April until 10 April, the HJ battalion defended the line from the Nussdorfer Spitz on the Danube Canal via the Kahlenbergerplatz – Silbergasse – Billrothstrasse, up to the Danube Canal to the north of the Friedensbrücke. The HJ battalion repulsed two Soviet attacks on 9 April. Faced with Soviet numerical superiority, the battalion then withdrew in good order behind the Danube Canal.

Other, smaller HJ units, outside the command of HJ battalion *Werwolf*, must have been in battle. Three Soviet tanks were shot up by Hitler Youth near the Carmelite monastery. On 5–6 April HJ held up the Soviets for eight hours during fierce fighting, and they put up strong resistance at the Rudolfinerhaus.[42] Hitler Youth also fought at the Central Cemetery, counter-attacking and driving off Soviets who had penetrated that far.[43] The *Jagdkommandos* of the HJ were dispersed throughout Vienna, one of these units numbering 50 boys. On 6 April sixteen such *Jagdkommando* stood ready for action.[44]

In Vienna to the north of the Danube and on the Bisamberg, Flandorf, Königsbrunn.

We know scarcely anything at all about the fighting on the Bisamberg and in Königsbrunn. About 150 Hitler Youth fought at Flandorf under the Vienna *Bannführer* Franz Korn. These were the boys of the 491st HJ *Volkssturm* Company.[45]

In a short concluding comment, one can state that not only in Styria, but also in Vienna and Lower Austria, north of the Danube, the Hitler Youth

made a not insignificant contribution towards slowing the advance of the Soviets, and preventing them from breaking through.

Part III
Combat deployment of the Hitler Youth on the Western Front

1
North Germany

In the area of Northern Germany, the advance of the British Second and Canadian First armies progressed rapidly, although occasionally held up by German lines of resistance and fighting for individual villages and towns. After the heavy fighting on the Lower Rhine and the loss of over 350,000 prisoners in the Ruhr Pocket, the German divisions fighting in the West had been extraordinarily weakened. The military leadership was relieved to have every available soldier, *Volkssturm* man and member of the Hitler Youth.

Hitler Youth were deployed in defence as early as March 1945, in the area Gronau-Enschede.[1] 5 or 6 Hitler Youth from Lingen-Neuenhaus set off on their own initiative to fight tanks.[2] The Hitler Youth was also apparently in action in and around Geldern and Bocholt. Resistance became fiercer as the Allied advance gained more territory. There were only weak German units facing Montgomery, who commanded the 21st Allied Army Group – Canadian Second Army (two infantry and two armoured divisions), the British Second Army (seven infantry, airborne, three armoured divisions), and the 1st Polish Armoured Division. In addition, the US Ninth Army contained still more divisions, making a total of eighty four divisions. So, the Hitler Youth of the *Volkssturm's* third levy were most welcome.



The commander of a heavy flak battery hands flak badges to HJ Marine *Flakhelfer* who have proven themselves in action against the Anglo-American bomber offensive, 4 August 1944. Note the cuff title *Marinehelfer*. (Bundesarchiv / *Kriegsberichter* Dietrich, 146/95/12/17)



Hitler Youth, some of them barely uniformed, receive instruction in how to use a

Panzerfaust, November 1944 (Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Under the leadership of officers, NCOs and Hitler Youth leaders, these boys, in contrast to the older and elderly men of the *Volkssturm*, were, for the most part still eager for battle and believed in the victory of German arms. They were the contingent which made the greatest sacrifices. Many of them fought on till the last round and died at a time when any sacrificial death had become meaningless. Even the armament of the HJ units was for the most part scanty: rifles, mostly so-called "hunting pieces", with little ammunition, hand grenades and *Panzerfäuste*, seldom in sufficient numbers. The boys were clothed in HJ or Wehrmacht uniforms, or often wore only civilian dress with black-white-red swastika armband. And yet!

Without being stopped by anyone, a British tank drove on through the Münster area. Dozens of tanks followed after it, until a sixteen-year-old Hitler Youth destroyed the leading tank with a *Panzerfaust*. The boy was overpowered. Nothing happened to him: on the contrary, the crews of the other British tanks were so overwhelmed by the courage of the Hitler Youth that they stuffed his pockets with chocolate and sent him home.[3]

In and around the town of Grütlohn, Hitler Youth put up a fierce resistance to the British with *Panzerfäuste* and rifles. Under murderous fire the British overran the nests of resistance after two hours. Later they said, 'They put up a brave fight for this position".[4] They said it with respect. Again and again it was Hitler Youth who dug trenches, building defensive positions to stop the enemy, so that Hitler might have the opportunity to deploy the "terrible new weapons" which would decide the outcome of the war. HJ put up a fight between Borken and Romsdorf. For five hours they stopped the enemy. But on the morning of Maundy Thursday it was all over. The HJ combat unit had been destroyed.[5]

Under *HJ-Stabsleiter* H. Wichmann, HJ units of the *Freikorps Adolf Hitler* saw action in the area of Oldenburg, in Lüneburg, in the area of Cloppenburg, Ahlhorn, Dötlingen, Huntlosen, on the coastal canal at Erdewecht, then around Varel and Wilhelmshaven. A second detachment of the *Freikorps Adolf Hitler,* under the leadership of *HJ-Gebietsführer* Willi Löhel, formed a regiment which operated in the area of Oldenburg – Ammerland – Friesland. Both groups suffered casualties.[6]

We have the following additional information concerning the *Gau*

battalion of the *Freikorps Adolf Hitler* under the leadership of Heinz Wichmann:

> "The unit, which consisted wholly of young fanatics, was instructed in *Werwolf* guerilla tactics at a camp in Munster. It was to allow itself to be overrun by the enemy and then fight on behind the front, in civilian dress. On 14 April 1945, this unit shot farmer Rogge in Dötlingen, because he had raised the white flag"[7]

On a number of occasions, Hitler Youth wanted to play the "hero". So, many a time, battles developed where regular troops had already given up their resistance.[8] After the impact of the British troops, the regular German soldiers "had no more heart for fighting", as they were demoralised by the inevitable defeat.



Youthful occupants of an army halftrack, north-western Germany, January 1945. (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

At Brinkum, on 15 April 1945, 'hotheaded' boys aged between fourteen and eighteen were observed putting up fierce resistance to the British. Thus 18 boys from an SS training battalion, aged between sixteen and seventeen, were decorated with Iron Crosses for gallantry, in the middle of April 1945![9]

The Waffen-SS Training Battalion *Horst Wessel* consisted of boys aged fifteen.[10] At Verden/Aller, 105 Hitler Youth from *HJ-Panzervernichtungskompanie* 10/41 (HJ boys from Danzig) were involved in

the retreat.[11] Hitler Youth were deployed in action in the Wilhelmshaven *Volkssturm*, and on the periphery of Hamburg, where they particularly distinguished themselves by their bravery.[12]

Often Hitler Youth units were mixed with Wehrmacht units. From3–4 April 1945 a HJ battalion fought with LXVI Army Corps. Some 100 boys aged between twelve and sixteen, without any equipment, some in short trousers, used their own *Panzerfäuste* and small arms. No rations were provided for them. The boys were freezing in their "uniforms", but nevertheless played an enthusiastic part in the action. The general headquarters always directed these boys far to the rear. But on the evening of 8 April 1945, in the forest of Gillersheim, five kilometres from Göttingen, these Hitler Youth shot up the leading tank of an American armoured column with a *Panzerfaust*. The Americans immediately pulled back. The HJ battalion was housed in the cellar of the Buchenwald colliery, and on 18 April was handed over to the Americans.[13]

Under the leadership of reserve officers, the town of Soltau raised two companies of Hitler Youth combat troops aged between fifteen and eighteen. They were turned into soldiers as quickly as possible, and received training, especially with the *Panzerfaust*. Of the 220 Hitler Youth in one of these companies, the company leader, a *Leutnant*, sent home the 30 weakest from the camp at Munster. The other company was raised in Soltau itself. Their deployment in combat was only to be as a *Jagdkommando* against enemy armour; action against British infantry was expressly forbidden. Both companies were under the command of the commanding officer of Soltau. Posted as liaison officer to the latter was the *Bannführer* of the Soltau district, Pape. The Hitler Youth took part in the defence of the outskirts of the town against the British. In the town itself, Hitler Youth were also deployed. For the defence of the Soltau riding school, one HJ received the Iron Cross First Class, personally awarded by the commanding officer, Colonel Grossan.[14]

HJ units were also involved in limited actions against the American Ninth and First armies, in the area of the Teutoburger Wald, Weser and Leine. In Kirchborchen about 200 Hitler Youth and SS put up a desperate defence against the superior forces of the Americans. The Americans had their own name for this village, "bazooka town". Young SS soldiers, HJ in SS uniforms, put up a dogged defence in the villages round Paderborn. Without relief and with no heavy weapons, the individual units bled to death.[15]

2
On the Rhine and in the Ruhr

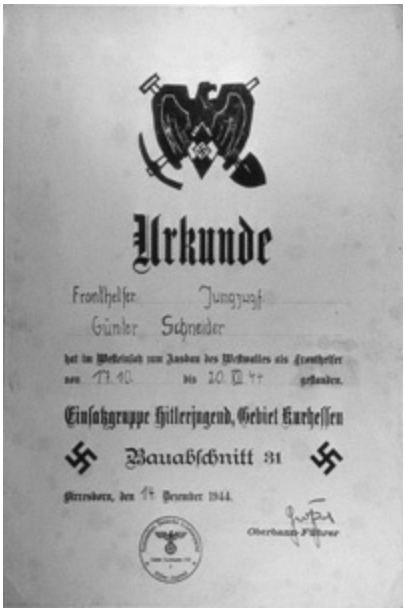


A Hitler Youth, his small size exaggerated by his steel helmet, drinks cordial and takes a break from assisting teams clearing away debris following an Allied bombing raid on Cologne, 7 July 1943. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag / Scherl)

In spite of resistance stalling their advance, the Allies approached the Reich border. On 12 September 1944, American armour succeeded in pushing through as far as the Aachen town woods. After this advance, enemy soldiers stood on German soil for the first time. However, with this penetration into German territory the resistance also increased. The German troops had succeeded in occupying the orchard slopes of the Hürtgenwald. The Aachen garrison held out against strong enemy pressure until 21 October

1944. Only 300 men surrendered. German *Volkssturm* battalions, too, were thrown in on the Reich border. The Hürtgenwald was defended at all points against far superior units of the US Ninth Army, which launched a major offensive on 16 November, with the intention of breaking through the front and advancing on Düsseldorf and Cologne.

After the failed Ardennes offensive the German units no longer had the strength to stop the Allies. Driven by necessity, *Volkssturm*, RAD and Hitler Youth units were thrown into the battle to the west of the Rhine. Up to 11 March, as many as 38,000 troops of the Army, the Luftwaffe, the *Volkssturm* and the Hitler Youth were killed during the fighting on the Lower Rhine. Little information can be discovered concerning frontline deployment of the HJ in the Hürtgenwald.[1] However, 4 Aachen boys fired on American troops with rifles. They were three brothers aged fourteen, ten and eight, together with their ten-year-old friend. These four boys had got hold of a German and an American rifle, to use against the Americans. They built a stand out of wood on which they rested the weapons. Eventually they were taken prisoner by the Americans.[2] In the Geldern area, too, the HJ was active. But in a bombing raid on the HJ military training camp in Herzbach, near Wankum, on the night of 21–22 May 1944, 15 Hitler Youth and 3 instructors lost their lives.[3]


Urkunde

Einsatzgruppe Hitlerjugend, Gebiet Kurhessen

Bauabschnitt 31

Certificate awarded to *HJ-Jungzugführer* Günter Schneider for assisting in the building of the West Wall, from 17 October to 20 December 1944. The

certificate also identifies him as a *Fronthelfer*, a loosely-applied term which could mean anything from a HJ carrying messages in the rear areas to a member of a frontline combat unit. (Philip Baker)

At the beginning of January 1945, in the Hitler Youth military training camp at the "new barracks" in Krefeld, several companies of HJ were given preliminary military training. In February this military training camp was dispersed. The majority of the Hitler Youth marched into the Ruhr. Another section, some 60 Hitler Youth in HJ uniform, led by their instructors, defended a bridgehead at Krefeld-Merdingen. They were armed with Danish rifles and *Panzerfäuste*. They are later said to have defended a position between Krefeld-Oppum and Krefeld-Fichteln, together with the Wehrmacht. The defence soon crumbled. The HJ sought cover from artillery fire in shell craters and cellars. Nevertheless, several were wounded, some were killed, although the majority were taken prisoner by the Americans. They were driven to the Namur prisoner-of-war camp and, at the beginning of May, before the war had ended, were released and sent home.[4] Many places, located between Cologne and Koblenz, were doggedly defended, mostly by fifteen-and sixteen-yearold Hitler Youth.[5]



Collection of documents and insignia belonging to R. Erich Kauth. The card on the left records Kauth's attendance at a military training camp, November-December 1944; the certificate on the right records that as of 18 December 1944 Kauth was classed as a *Kriegsfreiwilliger*, and was therefore entitled to wear their distinctive red cord on his shoulder straps. (Philip Baker)

Pupils from the Adolf Hitler School were sent into action, with the intention of retaking the strategically-important Rhine bridge at Remagen. But, even with their help, the bridge could not be retaken.[6] The German units had to give way before American pressure and, after the American Ninth

Army had crossed the Rhine in several places and linked up with the American First Army from the south, the Germans were forced to retreat into the Ruhr area. It is true that the civilian population had food for four weeks, and ammunition and fuel was available in sufficient quantity, but the exhausted German units fought without enthusiasm. When the “fortress” was encircled, its diameter was 120– 140 kilometres.



Generalfeldmarschall Model, commander of Army Group B, congratulates three Hitler Youth who were awarded the Iron Cross Second Class after distinguishing themselves during fighting in the Ruhr area, February 1945. This is one of the last photographs of Model taken; when defeat became inevitable, he committed suicide in a wood. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag)



Hitler Youth belonging to an Army unit surrender to US troops in the Remagen area, March 1945 (Emil Nagel)

Hitler categorically refused to allow a breakout to the east. The battle lasted from 29 March to 17 April 1945. In several sectors Hitler Youth were deployed in action, i.e. in the Bielefeld district, and in the area of Meschede, where the Hitler Youth fanatically risked their lives. They also defended Castrop-Rauxel.[7] HJ units fought bravely when drafted into the 62nd Volksgrenadier Division in the area Marienheide – Meinerzhagen – Wermelskirchen, Burg – Solingen – Cronenberg, from 12–16 April. The Cologne HJ *Bann* formed the 164th Regiment, the Düsseldorf HJ *Bann* the 183rd. HJ anti-tank units destroyed 10 US tanks in the area Burg-Cronenberg. Twelve Iron Crosses were awarded to Hitler Youth members. But since the HJ had no service record books, they were soon released from the units of the LVIII Panzer Corps.[8]

In Essen, several hundred Hitler Youth were assigned to the Army, in this case to the 7th Fallschirmjäger Regiment, of 2nd Fallschirmjäger Division.[9] In the Meschede area, especially in the gaps in the frontline, men of the *Volkssturm*, among them also Hitler Youth from Cologne, Düsseldorf, München-Gladbach and others, were ordered in. They came on bicycles, on foot and by rail. Thus, for example, the workforces of destroyed factories were mobilised and thrown into the fighting, although badly equipped and armed. In the Ruhr area there was no shortage of weapons and ammunition,

but only about half of the *Volkssturm* men had rifles. Transport communications had totally collapsed at this time, due to the overwhelming Allied air superiority. Scarcely any weapons and ammunition could be brought in. In the Meschede area, the *Volkssturm* bore the brunt of the fighting and the cost in blood. The Americans had no lack of ammunition. In front of the defensive positions the empty cartridge cases piled up in mountains; at Küstelberg an American firestorm began. Seldom has an offensive been carried out with such expenditure in ammunition. It was the Americans' method not to allow an action to come down to hand-to-hand fighting. Only a few German soldiers, men of the *Volkssturm* and Hitler Youth, survived this firestorm.[10]



This Hitler Youth, belonging to a Volksgrenadier Division, has already been awarded the Iron Cross Second Class, and promoted to the rank of *Gefreiter*, equivalent to Lance-Corporal. Photo taken on the Western Front, February 1945. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)

3
In the Harz

In April 1945 many shattered and splintered units of German troops seeking protection from the Allied advance, retreated into the Harz, which had been declared a "fortress". In any case, it had been planned by the military and the Party, to build this richly forested area into a fortress, and to defend it. But in the whirlpool of Germany's collapse there was a shortage of everything needed for this – weapons, ammunition, and troops.

High school pupils from Kassel, just confirmed, who had been evacuated to Gemünden/Wohra, marched into *Festung* Harz on the Wednesday of Holy Week. They soon saw action, and during one firefight one of the four teen-year-olds lost his life after being shot in the stomach.[1]

> "A crazy school headmaster set off with 70 pupils, to lead them into battle as Werewolves. The boys never returned. I saw another unit of twelve-year-old boys, about 60, equipped with carbines and *Panzerfäuste*, marching into the Harz mountains and who straight away met retreating soldiers. The soldiers went home, the lads to their deaths."[2]

Sections of a Viennese Panzer Division[3] which had fought their way out of the Ruhr Pocket set up combat units in Bad Grund, haphazardly thrown together, along with several Hitler Youth groups. Right up into the Upper Harz, resistance was offered to the advancing Americans. The Hitler Youth took part loyally, tenaciously, and doggedly. Even at the very end one Hitler Youth blew his hand to shreds with an improperly-fired *Panzerfaust* in Torfhaus.

> "A Hitler Youth group from Einbeck who were trying to reach the Harz on bicycles, surprised the crew of an American Jeep in a quarry near Langelsheim, where they had thought to spend the night, and took three Americans prisoner."[4]

> "On 8 April 1945, an HJ group of some 20–30 boys, mainly sixteen-year-olds, moved out of Goslar into *Festung* Harz. They saw combat against infantry in the western Harz, in the area Wolfshagen – Lautenthal – Wildmann.[5]

Heinrich Bosch recalled …

Following the Allies successful crossing of the Rhine, and their subsequent advance into northern Germany at the beginning of April, those boys with dates of birth in 1929, fifteen- and sixteen-yearolds, were called into the area capital Peine on the orders of the *Bannführer*. No reason had been given. The form entitled "Voluntary Report into the Waffen-SS" was handed to each of them. According to the leader of the *Jung-Bann*, they wanted to give a special birthday present to the Führer by volunteering. Accordingly, the volunteer rate was 100%! It is true that one boy was unwilling to sign up. The reason: his father and his brother had already been killed. But the *Bannführer* did not recognise such a reason, began to rage and cried: 'If you don't report voluntarily, I'll see to it that tomorrow you'll have calling-up papers!' But the boy remained obstinate, and was kicked out!



Hitler Youth receive *Panzerfaust* training from an officer who must have been skilled in close-quarters anti-tank combat judging from the five tank destruction badges on his right sleeve, November 1944 (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

They had no plan for training the group. So, no military training was given. As the front came nearer and nearer, a large number of the boys, among them even leading HJ and DJ members, cleared off. The authorities did not know what to do with the remaining boys, until the *Bannführer* finally gave the answer: 'You will be taken as a blood reserve into the centre of Germany!' When the German troops advanced victoriously, these boys were to carry through the reconstruction of the German people. Fine words!

In several night marches of 30–40 kilometres, with full packs, during which yet more of them set off homewards, the remainder – some 300 boys – reached Bad Blankenburg, at the edge of the Harz. They were directed into the barracks. The very next morning officers appeared and told the boys that a unit called the *Panzer-Jagd Division West* was being raised. The 300 Hitler Youth were to be the nucleus of this division. There quickly followed a division into companies and platoons. In place of a pay book, each one of them received a slip of paper on which it said that he was a member of the German Wehrmacht. New Wehrmacht uniforms

were allocated. Training began immediately. The instructors were very human, the "barracks tone" was not used. Certainly it did not seem right to the officers selected for this division that they had a group here which lacked both military training and weapons. In daily marches they went ever further and higher into the Harz. There was no shelter, they slept in the open, close to the Brocken, in deep snow. Finally the weapons caught up with them; for one company these consisted of an MP44 with two magazines, and a *Panzerfaust*.

In mid-April, the companies in Rübeland were given a hotel as quarters. No one was informed about the situation at the front. And so, as if out of the blue, suddenly firing began. First they all thought it was fighter-bombers. But as the firing lasted far too long, it became clear that it was American tanks. They fired without pause on fleeing soldiers who were not yet ready to give themselves up as prisoners of war. A senior officer burst with a pistol in his hand into their quarters and cried, 'The enemy is here! Everybody outside and attack! Anyone who doesn't go outside, I'll shoot down like a dog!'

Then the company officer leapt between them and told the excited senior officer that the companies had had no training and had no weapons. To send them into action would, he said, be irresponsible. Eventually it was agreed that all those who did have weapons, that was the officers and NCOs and one single Hitler Youth, should attack. Immediately all those with weapons dashed out into the street. In no time, the American tanks and the infantry accompanying them opened fire upon this little group. The few magazines of the pistols and machine-pistols were quickly exhausted. It only remained to flee up a steep slope. A sergeant and the one Hitler Youth with a weapon reached the cover of the forest. And the others? Both the "fighters" set off for Thale, only here the Americans were waiting, too. There was no organised resistance here, either. They all wanted to break through the ring around Thale on their own. And so both of them withdrew into the Harz forests and, in full uniform, set off for Hildesheim. As long as they were marching in the cover of the Harz, everything went well. But later, in the area in front of the Harz, they had to march by night. That, too, was possible, because no watch was kept on either roads or bridges. They begged for food in the villages. The reactions of the farmers were very varied. Some shouted 'Hurray, the Germans are back!'. The others moaned, 'If the Americans find you with us, we'll be shot!'.



An eager *Flakhelfer* demonstrates his prowess with a hand grenade to an officer visiting his flak battery, 1945. (Bundesarchiv / *Kriegsberichter* Stempka, 146/78/63/30A)

At Salzgitter, the sergeant and the Hitler Youth, having managed to get so far, were spotted by Poles in civilian clothes. Immediately, the Americans were called. Suddenly they were surrounded by some 30 Americans. They were led in front of a wall and they had to stand there with their hands up. Several times the rifles were reloaded. An American officer who had just arrived prevented his subordinates from acting. He had the papers checked, but the pay book of the Hitler Youth had been lost, since it was only a slip of paper. But they found on him an HJ membership card. But this in turn so irritated the American sergeant that he kept bellowing "You are a Werewolf!" He supplemented his words with several kicks. They threw both of them into a jeep. On the way, the American sergeant kept waving his pistol. The sergeant and a farmer accompanying the Germans both went into a Wehrmacht prisoner-of-war camp, the Hitler Youth into one for the Waffen-SS. Over 20 men sat in a room without getting any food or water. The first, and at the same time the last, hearing went surprisingly well for the Hitler Youth. Apparently, the officer had soon found out that he did not belong to the Werewolves. So the officer said that he was free to go; that he should report to the mayor of Salzgitter. Civilian clothes were found for him, and by hidden paths the boy managed to get back to his mother in Hohenhameln near Peine.[6]



Two Hitler Youth, the youngest recipients awarded the Iron Cross at the time this photo was taken, pose with Goebbels and *Reichsjugendführer* Artur Axmann in Berlin, 14 October 1942. Due to desperate manpower shortages, Germany would have cause to rely on the courage, even fanaticism, of boys such as these in 1945. (Ullstein Bilderdienst)

From other areas of Hannover the Hitler Youth were also called upon to retreat into the Harz:

"The enemy, with armour and infantry units, is in the immediate vicinity of the south-western and western borders of our *Gau*. Our homeland is thus in the greatest danger. The *Gau* and Reich defence region of South Hannover-Brunswick has therefore, some days ago, been put at the highest degree of defence readiness. We intend and are determined, in order to defend our soil of Lower Saxony, our women, and the greatest treasure, our children, from the clutches of the Anglo-Americans and the Jews, negroes, criminals and gangsters that come with them, to deploy without pity all the means and possibilities at our disposal. The facts in the western regions of our Reich, now under the yoke, speak unambiguously. Our women are being taken into brothels. The Party will, true to its oath and its promise, carry on this battle with weapons and all other means. No political leader, no member of the Party will flinch. Germany lives on in us and in our Führer. With heartfelt belief in its eternal destiny we go in to battle".[7]

But only a few believed in a victory, among them, exceptionally, the Hitler Youth. They still trusted the Führer and the leadership. It was they above all who, through their withdrawal into *Festung* Harz, hoped to make some contribution to the final victory. Many appeals were drawn up and published

at that time. They all contain the idea that "Only battle can bring victory!" So, for the Hitler Youth, this meant withdrawing into the Harz, reforming, arming and then advancing and destroying the enemy. The task of keeping the Harz from the clutches of the Americans fell to the 11th Army. This unit was assembled in mid-March 1945 in great haste, in the Kassel area, from units of the reserves and units which had been scattered. At the same time the boys with dates of birth in 1929 were called to arms. The fifteen-to seventeen-year-olds, wearing HJ uniforms, together with Army units and the *Volkssturm*, were tasked with defending the Harz.[8]

As early as 8 April 1945 the Wehrmacht High Command declared the Harz to be a "fortress", but only one day later the Americans were at the gates of *Festung* Harz. The Ruhr was still holding out against enemy attacks. Hitler dreamed that the newly-raised 12th Army (Wenck), would advance into the Ruhr and liberate it as soon as it had been formed. A good 100,000 Germans, Wehrmacht, Volkssturm and Hitler Youth, had withdrawn into the Harz. But their armament was scanty, far inferior to that of the Americans. But the Americans, in attempting to break into the Harz at Herzberg, Lautenthal, Osterode and Bad Lauterberg, got involved in heavy fighting. This fighting cost the lives of several thousand Americans and Germans. By 23 April 1945, which was the date that the battle ended, 73,400 Germans had been taken prisoner in the Harz.

Brutalities occurred. In Osterode the Americans killed 5 German tank men, by shooting them in the back of the neck; the crew of a tank which had been halted by damage to its tracks. In Helbra the Americans took two children as hostages, put them on the leading tank and in this way got into the lower village. Some curious Hitler Youth who wanted to watch the enemy marching in were shot by American snipers. In the fighting round Altenau, 90 Americans and 30 Germans are said to have been killed, the Germans mostly Hitler Youth. The boys came from the Lautenthal military training camp. In Ballenstedt 8 German soldiers and 6 Hitler Youth of the *Napola* School were killed.[9]

Festung Harz was naturally unable to fulfil the strategic significance which had been attributed to it as the collection point for an advance into the Ruhr which would influence the outcome of the war, i.e. prevent the total surrender of the German Reich. But it did mean that the Americans were halted, and their advance over the Elbe could not at first be assured. The

fighting in the Harz had the effect of prolonging the war, but not of deciding its outcome.

4
Central Germany

After the Americans had dealt with the Ruhr Pocket, their further advance was no longer preventable. The American Ninth Army were given the goal of advancing on the Elbe, between Stendal and Magdeburg. The American First Army's target was the area Halle-Leipzig, whilst the American Third Army's assignment was to reach Saxony, to the south of Leipzig and the Bavarian forest.

With the rapid advance from the Rhine via Frankfurt and Aschaffenburg, the German front had been split in two. Through a gap 250 kilometres wide, motorised American infantry units and armoured divisions advanced to their specified goals without being seriously hindered by the Germans. The Teutoburger Wald, the Harz and the Thüringer Wald should have slowed down this advance slightly. By 26 April 1945 Germany was split in two. The Russians and the Americans met each other at Torgau.

Two days before the Americans marched in to Schlüchtern, in Hesse, several hundred Hitler Youth were marched off on foot in the direction of Thüringen. Via Thüringen they went further into the Fichtelgebirge and towards Asch and Eger. Here the boys were allocated *Sturmgewehr* 44 and MG42s, and were ordered to defend the Eger airfield against the Americans. But the Wehrmacht leadership in the area did not allow it. The Hitler Youth were taken prisoner by the Americans. They were spared much in the way of suffering, wounds and death.[1] Unfortunately in this sector of the fighting some Hitler Youth members were hanged for "cowardice in the face of the enemy".[2]

In Camburg-an-der-Saale, Hitler Youth were led into action against advancing American armour. 17 boys lost their lives in this unequal battle.[3] In the same way, towards the end of the war, Hitler Youth from the military training camp on the Nachtigallinsel in Halle-Saale were thrown straight into the fighting. On their march to the front they sang a variation of the well-

known Landsknecht song: *Ich habe Lust in Weißenfels zu streiten mit dem Feind*, meaning 'I'm in the mood in Weissenfels to fight the enemy'. They were mown down in ranks.[4] Magdeburg had become a city of ruins after an American bombing raid. On 20 April, as the American troops advanced on the city, the population dug in, in the ruins of their city, to pay back the Americans with *Panzerfaust* and rifle for their "wicked deeds". The citizens of Magdeburg entrenched themselves behind barricades, among them lads and old men. Their determined and dogged defence held up the American advance for some time.[5]



Hitler Youth, including some diminutive *Pimpfe*, collecting furs and skis in Hesse, late 1941. Note the eye patch worn by the boy second from left. (Philip Baker)



A German propaganda postcard from 1945. The legend reads " 'Germany will resist all its misfortunes, and create a new world' said Maria Schultz on 12 February 1945, in expectation of a death sentence." The card is referring to an incident in which US troops arrested *BDM-Führerin* Maria Schultz, and accused her of acts of sabotage. Schultz was then put on trial by the Allied authorities; her fate is unknown. (Philip Baker)



Officers discuss the finer points of target practise with some very young members of the Hitler Youth. The photograph was taken at the "Hainwalde" military training camp, in Saxony. (AGK-Verlag)

Eventually, fighting even occurred around the Battle of the Nations Memorial at Leipzig. Here, too, Hitler Youth were involved. But the fate of

the Third Reich had long since been sealed.



A grainy though very interesting photo of two Hitler Youth in conversation with an elderly member of the *Volkssturm*, in a Hessian village, April 1945.(Emil Nagel)

5
Southern Germany

On 16 December 1944, with the Ardennes offensive, also known to the Allies as the "Rundstedt Offensive" or the "Battle of the Bulge", the German leadership made their last attempt to gain the initiative in the West. The offensive, carried out by three German armies, aimed to bypass Brussels, and reach Antwerp. If the plan had succeeded, between 25 and 30 Allied divisions would have been destroyed and Eisenhower's plans delayed by months.[1]

However, the Ardennes offensive had failed. The English military commentator J.F.C. Fuller wrote, "In a reasonable war, Rundstedt's defeat would have meant the end of hostilities. But because of the demand for 'unconditional surrender' the war was anything but reasonable. So it came about that Hitler, a second Samson, pulled down with him into the abyss the structure of Central Europe, his own people and their enemies."[2]

Following the crossing of the Rhine, the Western Allies continued to advance towards southern Germany. But the war went on because there was nobody who could or would end it as long as the man who was pressing it was still alive. The German troops carried on this battle according to their respective conditions, some with growing hopelessness, some with dogged rebellion against fate, but a considerable, if not overwhelming number out of convinced devotion to the Fatherland or even in an unshakeable belief in Hitler's genius. All of them, apart from a tiny minority, were bound together by a discipline which would have been able to set aside any serious setback.[3]

In and around Frankfurt-am-Main, Hitler Youth fired on the Americans.[4] Stuttgart was surrendered without a fight. At the end of the autobahn, at the Stuttgart-Munich entry, Hitler Youth were again involved in combat. In the meantime, on the Bergstrasse, Sauer, the Director of Studies at the Tilemann Grammar School in Limburg, saw how Hitler Youth members had been hanged. On a placard which hung on their chests it said "Cowardice in the

face of the enemy".[5] As the Americans advanced, the boys of the Hitler Youth and the *Jungvolk*, had been marched off in many thousands in the direction of Thüringia, Saxony, the Bavarian Forest and the Sudetenland.[6]



Hitler Youth quench fires started by Anglo-American bombers, August 1943. (Ullstein Bilderdienst / Hanns Hubmann)



A group of HJ firefighters in Ludwigstrasse, Munich, following an Allied bomber raid. The church in the background is the Ludwigkirche. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag / Scherl)

At the end of March 1945 the heaviest fighting in southern Germany occurred in Aschaffenburg. A combat report of the US 45th Infantry Division tried to express in numerical form the resistance met in Germany. Aschaffenburg is shown as 100%, Nuremburg as 75% and Bamberg as 25%. An American army newspaper reported that women were also involved in the defence of Aschaffenburg. In a report to the United Press press agency dated 3 April, the *Völkische Beobachter* described how the population of Schweinheim, in the vicinity of Aschaffenburg, including women and sixteen-year-old girls, threw hand grenades from the windows at the Americans advancing into the town. However, the former *Bannführer* of Aschaffenburg does not confirm this.



A dramatic photograph showing three Hitler Youth *Flakhelfer* from Munich, who had all received severe wounds during bombing raids, attending a ceremony in the city as guests of honour, 9 November 1943. All three were awarded the War Service Cross with Swords. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag)

The divisional history of the US 157th Infantry Division, which was in action in Aschaffenburg, reports that sixteen-to seventeen-year-old Hitler Youth members did not want to surrender and were shot in their foxholes.[7] Heavy fighting lasting several days also occurred around Heilbronn. Officially there is no mention of the involvement of Hitler Youth, only "many soldiers of a young age".[8] But two reports do state that Hitler Youth, too, certainly took part in the fighting in and around Heilbronn.[9] In northern Württemberg, the Hohenloher Land, Hitler Youth inflicted over 800 casualties on the Americans in the battle for the town of Waldenburg. Boys born in 1928, 1929 and 1930 are buried in the Waldenburg cemetery.[10] Fourteen-and fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth, pupils of a Duisburg grammar school, who were quartered in Bad Mergentheim, put up heavy resistance to the Americans, together with members of the 17th Waffen-SS Panzergrenadier Division *Götz von Berlichingen*.[11] In the fighting around Stuppach, 67 German soldiers were killed, among them 9 members of the

Hitler Youth, the youngest fourteenand-a-half years old. Three to four SS companies, for the most part sixteen-to seventeen-year-olds, who had been forced to enlist in the SS, formed a defensive ring around Ellwangen, but were short of weapons.[12]

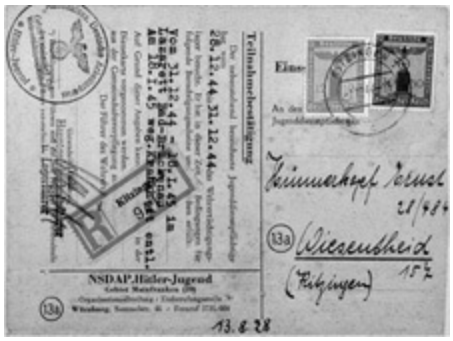
An account from the Reutlingen district reports that six *Volkssturm* battalions from the first draft were deployed in combat not in the 19th Army sector, but in Heilbronn. Volunteer members of the Hitler Youth formed *HJ-Panzerzerstörer* battalions. From November 1944 these Hitler Youth received eight-week training courses. They were boys born in 1928, 1929 and 1930. They received solid training in fieldcraft and weapons training with small-calibre rifles, carbines, hand grenades and *Panzerfäuste*. Again and again, with regard to the armament of the Hitler Youth and the *Volkssturm*, the matter of shortage of weapons, ammunition and equipment comes up. In 1944 the German armaments industry was still producing enough equipment for 250 divisions of infantry and 40 Panzer divisions.[13]

The volunteers from the Hitler Youth in Pfullingen were brought before a recruiting commission. In the Reutlingen district, three HJ volunteer companies were raised and included in the *1. Panzer-Nahkampfbataillon*. The companies were under the military command of officers and NCOs from the Wehrmacht. In addition they still practised with loaded weapons, including firing with light machine guns. Each morning there was a lesson in political instruction. Then, the order of the day was toughness, standing by one's post and resistance to the last. The reason for the catastrophic situation in 1945 and in the previous months was said to be treachery and softness at the highest levels. The mood and spirit of the young volunteers was good.



Heranziehung von Lehrlingen usw.
zum Kriegshilfseinsatz der deutschen Jugend
in der Luftwaffe

Card calling up schoolboy Hans Schneider to become a Luftwaffe *Flakhelfer* (Philip Baker)



HJ training card from winter 1944–45, which records that HJ Ernst Hümmerkopf spent eighteen of the twenty days he was in service ill in hospital! This card became his temporary medical discharge document thereafter. (Philip Baker)



Volkssturm call-up postcard sent to HJ Ernst Hümmerkopf. The card requests that the recipient should attend the Werberg military training camp between 28 December 1944 and 25 January 1945; the nearest railway station was Brückenau-Stadt; the recipient must have arrived in camp by 14.00 hours, 28 December 1944. (Philip Baker)

As the 1st French Army approached Rottenburg/ Neckar, a *HJ-Nahkampfbrigade* was formed in the Hitler Youth district under the command of *Oberbannführer* Hauff. The boys were deployed in reconnaissance duties, and in securing bridges. They were dressed in stocks of desert uniforms from Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS stores. About 40 boys drove into the Kempten-Sonthofen area in two lorries. General Merker tried to collect the Hitler Youth for the battles occurring in the Alpine passes. But of the three companies, only a handful remained in uniform, the others had made off home. The *Oberbannführer*, who realised that the war was lost, supported his boys in this. It was only with some difficulty that General Merker was convinced that this action had been right. There were even mass desertions among the regular soldiers by mid-April 1945.

On 18 April 1945 strong motorised forces from the French II Army Corps

advanced on Reutlingen. Only weak Hitler Youth units remained ready to hold the Albrand position.[14] Whole companies of the 405th *Ausbildungsdivision* disappeared wearing civilian clothes. Nevertheless, the *HJ-Panzerzerstörer* troops from the St Johann *Bann* training camp, drove in wood-burning lorries to Tübingen, to inflict the highest possible casualties on the enemy. Somewhere en-route they had to change onto bicycles. 5 Hitler Youth cycled as far as Burgholz, near Tübingen, a reconnaissance patrol, each with a carbine and two *Panzerfäuste*. In Unterjesingen the first came in contact with the civilian population. Shouts such as "Get away! The French are setting fire to our houses", threw the boys into confusion. As a result of this they withdrew into the woods. From there they watched the road to Tübingen, and saw enemy jeeps and armoured reconnaissance vehicles. Conversations with scattered German soldiers, such as "Are you crazy? Take your junk away" – meaning the rifles and *Panzerfäuste* – "and get off home!" quickly sobered them.



Paper pass granting leave to *Panzer Hitlerjunge* Hubert Scholtye during March 1945. The rank is most unusual, and probably indicates the boy's membership of a HJ anti-tank unit (Philip Baker)



Kreisleiter Eibes inspects the Saarburg Volkssturm battalion, 1945 (Archiv Dr Gustav Wrangel)

The Hitler Youth had lived in the Bann training camp in complete isolation, kept informed of only one side of the picture, given daily ideological instruction and had thus lost all contact with reality. To them, the world of the civilian population, and the soldiers' feelings and thoughts was completely alien. They felt that they had been totally betrayed. Incoming enemy fire wounded one of them in the upper thigh. They bound up their comrade's wound and went back to Burgholz, via Tübingen. Because of the fighter-bombers the five set off towards Eningen. Before Eningen a boy aged about fifteen was keeping watch at the anti-tank barrier. They instructed him how to work a carbine, they, the fifteen-year-olds![15]

12 young Werewolves, sixteen-and seventeen-year-old school pupils, wanted to defend Degerschlacht with 4 hand grenades and a single *Panzerfaust* each. The local inhabitants made them go away. Outside the village, during the evening and in the night of 22 April, there was a wild firefight. In a counter-attack on 23 April the Werewolves shot a French sentry and set fire to a barn in which three French wounded were burned to death.

Fifteen-and sixteen-year-old Hitler Youth also did not want to retreat from Betzingen. In order to take this village, the French fired 1,500 shells, and

deployed 20 fighter-bombers and 16 heavy tanks. Motorised infantry attacked. “Bullets and grenades howled through the air. From far off you could hear the rattling of the tanks and the fighter-bombers whistled at low level over the village. This ‘din of explosions’ was not without an effect on the nerves of most of the Hitler Youth, who were barely fifteen years old. With deadly fear on their faces, bathed in sweat, some of them crying, their eyes protruding, they were chased panic-stricken by the tanks. After an unequal fight of just two hours, the sound of fighting was only to be heard in the distance”.[16]

During the night of 21–22 April Hitler Youth advanced into French-occupied Reutlingen, a firefight resulting. On the German side there were several dead.[17] The heaviest fighting with the greatest casualties for the Hitler Youth occurred in southern Germany around the city of Nuremberg, home of the Reich Party rallies, from 17 to 20 April.

The three divisions of the US 15th Corps competed in getting as quickly as possible to Nuremberg. The *Gauleiter* of Franconia, Holz, the successor of Julius Streicher, and the officials of the Party, wished to defend the city unconditionally. In the city were some Hungarian SS units, a regiment from the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division, local SS, Flak, badly-armed *Volkssturm* and one battalion of Hitler Youth. To make it difficult for the American armour to advance, anti-tank barriers, of ruins and cobblestones, were built everywhere.

Apprentices and pupils born in 1929 and 1930, recently returned from entrenchment work on the Westwall, were brought together into two HJ military training camps in Altdorf and Rummelsburg in the middle of January, and given from six to eight weeks’ training. These recalls into the military training camps took place repeatedly, until the beginning of the battles of 20 April in and around Nuremberg. Target practice with air-rifles was carried out on “cardboard comrades”, as well as hand grenade practice on wooden dummies. Shockingly there were only two or three *Panzerfäuste* for every 100–150 boys.

Towards the middle of April 1945 the transfer to Nuremberg of the trainees took place, where they were quartered, almost without exception, in the underground bunkers round the Nuremberg fortress. Until then dressed in canvas trousers and ordinary jackets, on 15 and 16 April the boys were kitted out in normal battledress, jackboots, together with military passes, first-aid

dressing material and iron rations. The rifles which were handed out were, for the most part, old French and Italian carbines, some of which did not work. A German infantry rifle had rarity value. The Hitler Youth from the military training camps in the Nuremberg underground bunkers formed a *HJ-Panzernahkampf* Brigade. Officers and NCOs were identical to the instructors in the HJ military training camp. The boys had even been sworn in. They took their soldier's oath very seriously. Of over 300 German and Hungarian soldiers killed in Nuremberg, about 80 were Hitler Youth and *Volkssturm*. A large number went into American captivity on 20 April and were held for six to eight weeks in the Bad Kreuznach prisoner-of-war collection camp.

During the fighting one company of the HJ was attached to the 38th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment and thus became a regular military unit, no longer remaining part of the third draft of the *Volkssturm*. The Americans, accounts repeatedly say, sent the Hitler Youth "home to mother", fourteen-and fifteen-year-olds often being captured.[18] That the casualties of the Hitler Youth in Nuremberg were considerable can be gleaned from another account: "Three *Panzervernichtungs* battalions of the Hitler Youth from the Franconia region, 1,200 strong, are in action in the Nuremberg area. We must reckon with their total loss".[19] A good many mothers tried to stop their sixteen-year-old boy from responding to the appeal to join the *Volkssturm*.[20]

Werner Haupt described what happened during these days in Nuremberg:

"The representative *Gauleiter* Haberkern gave an inflammatory speech to the suffering population on the radio, in which, among other things, he said 'Nuremberg will be defended! If we have no weapons, then we'll leap at the Americans and tear their throats out!'

Slowly the Americans advanced into the inner city. The old town moat formed a nearly impassable obstacle for the attackers. In particular the sectors between Laufer-Tor and Maxtor were hard fought for. The Americans took the inner city in which the German defenders were digging in on 20 April, by heavy continuous fire from their artillery and armour. In a few hours those remains which were still standing after more than thirty bombing raids had become ruins, ashes and dust. SS *Kampfgruppen* risked some counter-attacks. *Gauleiter* Holz and General of Police Kuschow did not give up. Although the railway station was lost, some SS and HJ groups were still holding the position at the opera house with machine guns and *Panzerfäuste*.

From the main railway station the Americans advanced in concentric circles into the inner city. The combat commander thereupon withdrew with the last defenders remaining to him into the police bunker in the Palmenhof. Although there was no chance of escaping from there, they refused to surrender. *Gauleiter* Holz forbade any communication with the enemy.

> He, too, went with his general staff from the Sebald parsonage cellar over the Karlsbrücke into the police bunker.
>
> Here the final battle for the "City of the Reich Party Rallies" ended in an orgy of alcohol and poison. *Gauleiter* Holz and *Oberbürgermeister* Liebel took poison, General of Police Kuschow met his end through a shot in the back of the neck, the others, blind drunk, died under the collapsing rubble."[21]

The Americans showed magnanimity. As soon as the Hitler Youth at the opera house had surrendered, they cut off the uniform trousers which were much too big for them and, laughing, let them go with the instructions "go home to your mother".[22]

It was with deadly seriousness, one could say even with the most extreme fanaticism, that the National Socialist leaders in Nuremberg behaved, particularly *Gauleiter* Holz.

> "Nuremberg, 2pm, 16 April 1945: Americans 10km from Nuremberg. The population is calm. Party members continue to greet each other with the Hitler salute. In Nuremberg there is a very great shortage of heavy weapons. We shall stand and shall fight to the finish. Long live the Führer, long live Germany! Passed on by representative *Gauleiter* Holz."[23]

This is how, on 17 April at 6.30pm, *Gauleiter* Holz saw the situation in Nuremberg:

> "At the moment fighting at the new Kongresshalle and at the zoo. In the city centre, particularly on the Ringstrasse, there was heavy artillery fire all day. We must assume that the enemy has another three days to fight. They have moved up with extraordinarily strong armoured forces around Nuremberg. Their strength can be estimated at 400–500. Some of the troops are fighting very bravely, especially the former fighter and other pilots. Paratroops are similarly good fighters. Just as brave is the Waffen-SS. Other troops which were gathered together are fighting badly. Up to now the *Volkssturm* has proved its worth. The extraordinary shortage of heavy weapons is becoming more and more apparent. The troops are feeling more and more powerless against the heavy artillery, mortars and rockets."[24]

A few hours later, at 11.30pm, Holz made the following report by telegram to the Munich Party Chancellery in a "*Gau* Franconia situation report":

> "The enemy has advanced in the north over the Ahaushof and has occupied the ground north of the northern railway line. The Nuremberg airfield is in German hands. The positions to the east of this are in enemy hands. Part of Wögeldorf is in enemy hands. Part of Zerzabelshof is held by the enemy. There was fighting around the Dutzendteich railway station. The Reich rally field was today the arena for a great parade of armour. In the woods to the south-east of this area over a hundred camouflaged tanks and armoured scout cars are waiting. They advanced this afternoon over the Märzfeld and the great parade ground as far as the Luitpoldarena.

Very heavy fighting raged in this area, which was defended by the Waffen-SS and the *Allgemeine SS* with a great spirit of self-sacrifice. Our own casualties are very high, those of the enemy higher. Four tanks were destroyed. Unfortunately, in this fighting, the anti-aircraft fire partially failed. Three tanks were destroyed by *Panzerfaust*. 40 men from the *Allgemeine SS* had such heavy losses that only two men came back.

The line now runs from the Waldluistrasse past the Luitpoldarena, which is still held by us, to the Bayernstrasse. Part of the Rangier railway station is in enemy hands. The Fürth side is still free. As I have already reported today, the morale of soldiers from units which have been scattered has suffered a very heavy blow. Here and there can be found ammunition belts which have been thrown away; it is assumed that the soldier had the idea of ridding himself of his ammunition in order to be able to use the excuse that he had to pull out because of shortage of ammunition.

The material superiority of the enemy is having an enormously depressing effect on the German troops. Fighter-bombers are flying over Nuremberg and firing on the streets. The soldier in his foxhole is scarcely able to show his face any more. There is an extraordinary number of tanks, also accompanied by armoured scout cars and personnel carriers.

The enemy also has many so-called "E-Mann" tanks which are spraying the whole district with their machine-gun fire. In addition, the enemy has great numbers of light and heavy mortars. Artillery is maintaining an uninterrupted fire and is having a great fragmentation effect. So the enemy is unfairly superior in terms of materiel, compared to the troops which in Nuremberg consist of cobbled-together units without heavy weapons. It is clear that the superiority of the enemy must, in time, crush even the best spirits. I have visited units at the front which in spirit and fighting ability are quite exceptional, but they must experience destruction and will suffer the heaviest casualties. From one railway pioneer company a 'herd' of thirty men went over to the enemy under a white flag. They were for the most part shot down by our own machine-gun fire. The population are sitting in the cellars and bunkers and sitting out the fighting.

For the most part they are behaving well and have a good attitude. I have sent out some of my political leaders with the task of organising Werewolves.

I must point out again that the enemy is fighting with an extraordinary superiority of forces against troops, some of whom are poorly-trained, and who above all are exhausted. The Hitler Youth is in the best of spirits. The *Gau* of Franconia has, within six weeks, raised a regiment of *Panzervernichtungstruppe* from the ranks of the Hitler Youth. Up till now they have fought exceptionally well on various fronts. But it is a pity about this young and valuable blood, when it has to be shed in such fighting. One battalion has already been almost entirely wiped out".[25]

But with the surrender of Nuremberg the fighting in Bavaria was not yet at an end. Five Hitler Youth battalions, with a strength of 2,750 boys, were in the process of being raised and trained in the Bavarian Ostmark by 22 April. They were quartered in Cham, Reichenbach and Roding. This *Panzervernichtungsbrigade* consisted of members of the Hitler Youth districts of Bayreuth and Middle Franconia.

Four battalions of Hitler Youth from Hessen-Nassau, with over 1,600 boys, were waiting for their combat orders in the area of Waldmünchen, and a further four battalions of *Panzervernichtungsbrigade* Westmark, with 2,000 Hitler Youth, were in their quarters in Dingolfing.

Panzervernichtungsbataillon Moselland, with a strength of 600 Hitler Youth, found itself marching from the Fichtelgebirge into the Cham area. HJ anti-tank units from the HJ districts of Mittelland and Düsseldorf were also arriving. Armament was guaranteed for half of the Hitler Youth units, although supply and equipment proved to be very difficult to procure. These HJ units were under the direct command of the Wehrmacht.[26]

Several times, boys from Panzervernichtungsbataillon Moselland, aged from twelve to sixteen, saw action in the Bavarian forest. The battalion was overrun three times. Again and again the remnants re-formed. In their last action in the Schönsee area they defended an anti-tank barrier and destroyed three American tanks with the *Pänzerfauste*. When Wehrmacht units told the boys they were forbidden to fight any more, they nevertheless tried to get new combat assignments.[27]

Boys from the Hessen-Nassau *Panzervernichtungsbrigade* fired out of the houses, with *Panzerfäuste*, on enemy tanks in the frontier area of Bavaria-Sudetenland.[28] Even when the Party leadership in many places no longer had the will to fight, the oldest boys from the Adolf Hitler School in Iglau, put up a fight against the Americans in the Lenggries area, and to the east of Rosenheim. The *Kreisleiter* of Straubing was found without uniform and Party insignia; he had destroyed the service seals of the Party, the *Volkssturm*,[29] SS and HJ units.[30]

In South Württemberg, too, the Hitler Youth fought, in the area Schwäbisch-Gmünd. In Alfdorf 30 Hitler Youth put up resistance to the advancing Americans, 3 of the boys being killed. For a long time their graves could be seen.[31] A firefight also occurred in Degenfeld, when HJ "Werewolves" from the Eichhalde and Winterhalbe fired on the Americans. The Americans took up the chase and took some Hitler Youth prisoner. Heubach was to have been defended by the inhabitants of the military training camp itself. It did not come to that. The boys were allowed to go beforehand, some of them being driven away in cars to Bavaria. Generally the HJ "Werewolves" prepared some villages for defence, such as Beuern, Waldstetten, and Weiler.

The kind of "fighting spirit" developed by the Hitler Youth in those weeks is illustrated by an example from Villingen, in the Black Forest. As French tanks drove firing through the town on the evening of 20 April, a fourteen-year-old Hitler Youth wanted to run out into the street with his carbine to face the tanks. He was, and this saved his life, forcibly disarmed by a police official.[32]

In Horb, Hitler Youth were present when counter-attacks were launched against over 400 French troops supported by 40–50 tanks. The French lost several tanks.[33] On 4 May a RAD soldier met a company of *Jungvolk*, twelve to fourteen-year-olds, between Kiefersfelden and Marquartstein. The boys were in uniform and were under the command of a lieutenant and an HJ liaison officer. They were carrying *Panzerfäuste*. They were, if possible, to secure an anti-tank barrier. The boys displayed marvellous courage.[34]

Fourth-form secondary school pupils, trained and quartered in several military training camps, were supposed to bring the Americans to a standstill in the Bohemian Forest at Prachatitz, Eleonorenhütte, Kuschwarda, Kebohütte, and generally in the southern Bohemian Forest. It is thanks to the sensible behaviour of their instructors that they were spared deployment in combat. The instructors dissolved the military training camp and sent the boys home to their parents.[35]

We know a lot today about what went on in the *Bann* training camps which, from September 1944, trained hundreds of thousands of Hitler Youth during five-day courses in the use of the carbine, the *Panzerfaust* and hand grenades, such as the *Bann* training camp 602 (*Bann* 602) in AussigSchönpriesen.[36] Here, fourteen and fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth were trained, as well as older boys. One course involved between 100–120 participants.

Hermann Much recalled …

> "What I can still remember today, is that, even in 1945, the majority of course participants showed great idealism. They could hardly wait to get to the front. Today, I can say that the idealism of these young people was irresponsibly misused. This was shown at the end of April 1945 when, because of the war situation, without orders, I dissolved the camp and sent the last course participants home. *Bannführer* 'Heini W.', now resident in the GDR (the name is known to the author), wanted to send the Hitler Youth armed into the fighting for the "final victory". I refused to allow this, as I considered it a crime against youth".[37]



Some very youthful but happy-looking German soldiers taken prisoner by US troops near Frankfurt-am-Main, 29 March 1945 (Emil Nagel)

Hermann Much himself was a member of the 3rd Waffen-SS Panzer Division *Totenkopf*, with the rank of *SS-Hauptscharführer*, and had been badly wounded at Kharkhov in 1943. In April 1945, after he, in his capacity as camp leader, had dissolved *Bann* training camp 602, he reported his actions to the nearest SS unit, in fact to the commandant of the SS intelligence school in Aussig-Schreckenstein. In the meantime the HJ and *Volkssturm* leadership were threatening Much with a court-martial. Ultimately, the SS commandant of Aussig-Schreckenstein found the behaviour of the *SS-Hauptscharführer* to have been correct and protected him.

> "As I later heard, *Bannführer* 'W.' had in fact armed the former course participants, sent them against the advancing Soviets and had himself absconded in civilian dress with the HJ *Bann* funds and his girlfriend. The Hitler Youth had to pay for this with their lives. The majority of them were killed by the Soviet troops and above all by the Czechs. You could call it a drama".[38]

Something has become known of such "dramas", but not much. Where similar dramas were played out everywhere in the German Reich and in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia will certainly never now be established.

What could have happened during the combat deployment of the HJ in Nienburg, Pressburg, and during the deployment of the Werewolves in the

Harz, as well as in the Sudetenland and in the Protectorate?

6
Vorarlberg and the Tyrol

In complete contrast to the front in Eastern Austria, where the struggle with the Soviets was often hard and pitiless, Western Austria was occupied by the Americans and French almost without a fight. Only here and there were there individual instances of close-quarters fighting. The Salzburg area was cleared without a fight.

It is true that originally the Party leadership in Upper Austria (at that time the region was known as "Upper Danube"), led by *Gauleiter* Eigruber intended to conduct a dogged defence using troops and total combat deployment of the civil population. It did not come to that, because the morale of the troops in the last two weeks of the war had already been undermined and there was, besides, a shortage of matériel. The inability of the Party to solve military tasks was also a factor. Consequently, the Americans and French advanced quickly. There was no talk of an "Alpine Fortress".

From the area of the Swabian Alb, the US Third and Seventh armies continued to advance in the direction of the Alps, whilst the French First Army moved forward from Baden-Württemberg. These Allied units no longer encountered a coherent defensive front anywhere, because the German 1st and 19th armies, as well as the 24th Army, newly-raised in Württemberg, were not in a position to offer any resistance. Thirty fully motorised Allied divisions, including some armoured divisions, progressed forward easily against nine weakened German divisions which lacked ammunition, weapons and above all fighting spirit. At this time the German Luftwaffe was almost non-existent, most aircraft had been destroyed on the ground. The majority of the military were despondent. In the confusion of the unplanned retreat, the leadership had lost its overall strategic view of the situation. Only small combat units reached the Alps.



Propaganda postcard emphasising the war duties of the Hitler Youth, c.1943 (Philip Baker)



Another postcard of the 1943–44 period. (Philip Baker)



A *Jungschützenkompanie* created from HJ members during a parade by the *Volkssturm* through the streets of Innsbruck, late 1944. (Museum of Modern History, Ljubljana, Slovenia)

And in the Alpine district itself? It is true that there were some fortifications in Vorarlberg, but there was a shortage of heavy weapons and troops, especially troops who were still willing to fight. The *Volkssturm* dissolved as soon as the enemy approached. Even the numerically weak troops of the Waffen-SS could not change this situation. Nevertheless, a few small engagements did occur in the Vorarlberg area, causing a few dozen dead and wounded. Hitler Youth were involved in some of these actions. Among the few troops who had set off from the Lake Constance district towards Vorarlberg, were some groups of Hitler Youth. On 26 April 1945 a Wehrmacht officer saw some 15 boys in the uniform of the Hitler Youth, led by a sergeant. The boys were scarcely fourteen years old. The sergeant told the officer that the boys were being deployed with two small 2cm anti-aircraft guns in defence against Allied armour. When they had used up all their ammunition, and the guns had thus became useless, his superior officer had sent him with the Hitler Youth to Radolfzell, from where they were to be transferred during the night across Lake Constance to Bregenz.

> "I asked the boys, 'Have you had anything to eat today? Have you got anything to eat?' They said no to both questions. Then I said, 'If there is anything left to eat from your company rations, you should have it. Go to the landing stage, to the right of it is a little swimming pool with benches, have a rest there till evening and I'll have something brought to you there'. So I hurried as fast as I could across country in the direction of our kitchen. 'So, warm it up quickly, then follow me with the big pot and the big ladle!' Each got a big dollop straight away and there began an enthusiastic spooning and slurping, every mother's joy. I enjoyed

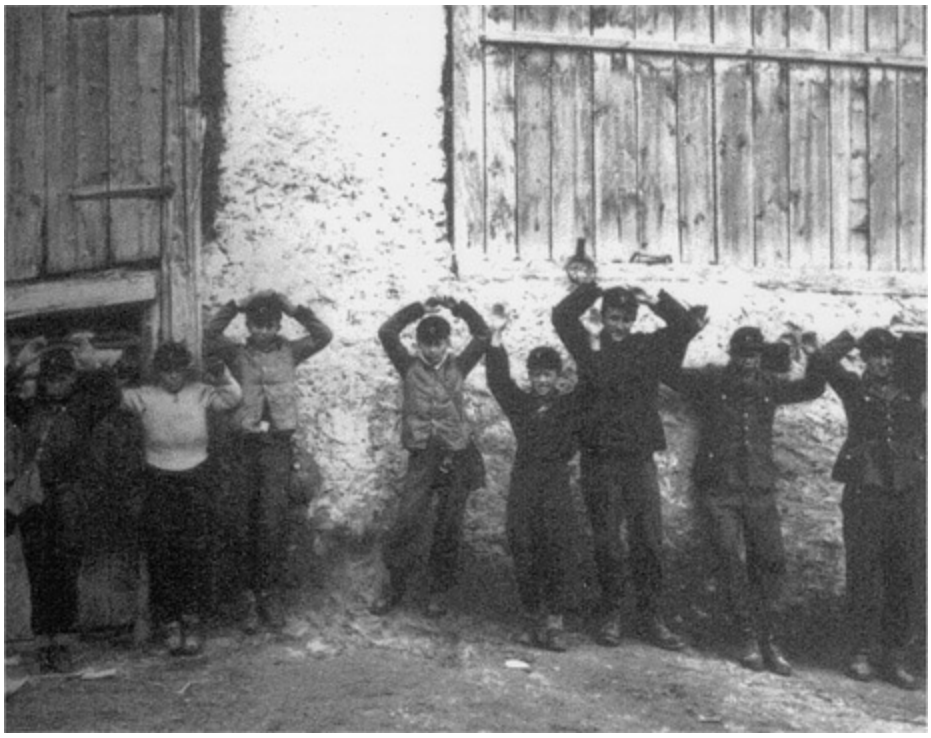
this in their mothers' place, and walked along the whole row of them. But in their midst a lad was leaning quite wearily to one side and eating nothing, he also had nothing in his mess tin. Well, what's the matter? Why haven't you got anything?' 'I don't want anything', said the little man. 'But why not? Bring the pot and the ladle over here.' The cook was there straight away. Then the boy said, 'No, no I don't want anything' and held his hand over his mess tin and said quite anxiously, 'No, I can't.' The fear of what he had experienced had not yet left the poor chap's mind. Of course I couldn't help him, only time must heal that".[1]

It was planned to send the Hitler Youth into action in Vorarlberg …

"A unit from Lindau arrived in Bregenz, led by SS NCOs, all young lads. The most precious treasure torn away from the nursery, from fathers and mothers, now helpless, dragged off submissively to an unknown fate, cannon-fodder".[2]

In Dornbirn, two subordinates of the *HJ-Bannführer* were given the task of destroying, as soon as the first sound of tanks was heard, the Soviet camp, together with the 120 Soviet prisoners-of-war, by using two *Panzerfäuste*! Fortunately, nothing happened because a gendarme who was in the Austrian freedom movement set off the detonators of the two *Panzerfäuste*.[3]

The same *HJ-Bannführer* had ordered some 100 bottles to be filled with petrol and provided with Wehrmacht fuses so that they could be thrown at the vehicles of the French as they marched in. The Hitler Youth was selected for this task. The bottles were filled. When the Austrian resistance movement heard of this plan, they got hold of a duplicate key to the petrol store, emptied the petrol and filled the bottles with water. The next day the *Bannführer* loaded the cases of water bottles onto a car and took a fanatical group of Hitler Youth with him, intending to send them into action at Lochau and Bregenz. On the way there the *Bannführer* organised a trial 'throw' at the Stieglbach. He himself swung the first bottle, with its supposed contents of petrol. But there was no fire! A few Hitler Youth from Dorbirn did turn up at Lochau. Some boys picked up *Panzerfäuste* and bagged a French tank at the Wellenhof. Most of them, however, lost their taste for waging war and fled.[4]



HJ *Fronthelfer* captured by US troops at Schönwies, in the Tyrol, 1945. (Emil Nagel)

Hittisau was defended by Hitler Youth. In Egg, Marine Hitler Youth arrived on two big lorries. These were portrayed as being especially fanatical. At the Lingau bridge they dug in. 45 Hitler Youth, who were particularly well-equipped, were disarmed in the Andelsbuch Führer School by men of the Austrian resistance movement.[5]

In the Tirol, too, Hitler Youth *Panzernahkampfgruppen* were trained and partially-armed, but there was generally a shortage of rifles and *Panzerfäuste*, especially for the boys of the HJ. Of these, some groups saw action on 1 and 2 May 1945, such as that commanded by *Bannführer* Hermann Pepeunig from Innsbruck. With 10 Hitler Youth dressed in the uniform of the Tyrolean *Standschützen*, they fired on and destroyed two American armoured cars with *Panzerfäuste*, and took a black American soldier prisoner. None of the boys were killed, and none were wounded.[6]

7
Upper Austria

In contrast to the Vorarlberg and Tyrol, there were many actions fought between the Americans and the Hitler Youth in Upper Austria. In Peilstein, 5 Hitler Youth with no combat experience tried to defend an anti-tank barrier against the Americans with their *Panzerfäuste*. All 5 met their deaths.[1]



Hitler Youth born in 1928 report for service as *Kriegsfreiwilliger*, 3 September 1944. In recognition of their status, they are attaching the distinctive red cord, denoting the wearer as a *Kriegsfreiwilliger*, to their shoulder straps. HJ were still

fighting on as late as 5 May 1945 at Schärding, in Upper Austria. (Bundesarchiv, 183/730/464)

A one-armed German sergeant together with Hitler Youth are said to have knocked out several American tanks in Upper Austria.[2] In Braunau am Inn, the town where Hitler was born, a "stormtroop" from the Hitler Youth tried to blow up the house where the Führer was born. The Americans fired on it, killing 2 Hitler Youth. The HJ commander, Hans Hellwanger, from Ried i. Innkr., was shot in the stomach and committed suicide.

On the afternoon of 4 May 1945, between Timmelkam and Vöcklabruck, the US 80th Division fought off an attack launched by the 25th Waffen-SS Grenadier Division *Hunyadi* and a reinforced HJ *Kampfgruppe*. The HJ bagged an American tank with a *Panzerfaust*. 5 Hitler Youth are said to have been killed in this battle. Even on 5 May 1945, and this must be one of the last instances of combat deployment of the Hitler Youth in the Second World War, SS and HJ were defending the *Kreisstadt* (district town) of Schärding am Inn against the Americans. An SS soldier fired from the Schärding church tower on American troops as they crossed the Inn and inflicted casualties on them. The SS man could not escape in time, because a shell fired by US artillery brought the church tower down. Two US soldiers brought the perpetrator from the tower and shot him. They put his body into a sack and sank it in the Inn. At the very end only Hitler Youth were still fighting on the Brunnwiese, in Schärding. The same fate overtook them.[3]



HJ born in 1926/27 report for duty as Luftwaffe *Flakhelfer*, 16 February 1943. (Bilderdienst Süddeutscher Verlag)

Appendix I
Chronology 1944–45

1944

22 June	Beginning of the Soviet offensive against German Army Group Centre.
18 July	Rokossovski's troops enter Poland.
1 August	Beginning of the Warsaw uprising.
13 September	The 47th Army of the 1st Belorussian Front occupies the Warsaw suburb of Praga following the evacuation of the German bridgeheads over the Vistula.
13 September	Beginning of the offensive of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Baltic and Leningrad Fronts against German Army Group North. Progressive evacuation of Estonia by German troops and retreat to protective positions round Riga.
13 October	German Army Group North evacuates Riga and retreats back to Courland.
16 October	Beginning of the offensive of the 3rd Belorussian Front between Memel and Suwalki. The Soviet troops advance on to East Prussian soil and take Eydtkuhnen, Stallupöhnen and Goldap.
3 November	In Moscow the details of the Red Army's German campaign are being worked out. Stalin appoints Marshal Zhukhov supreme commander of the First Belorussian Front, tasked with taking of Berlin.
25 November	Hitler finally decides on the "Great Solution" (the taking of Antwerp) via the Ardennes offensive.
16 December	Beginning of Operation *Wacht am Rhein* ("Watch on the Rhine"), the German Ardennes offensive between Hoher Venn and the northern part of Luxembourg.
24 December	The Ardennes offensive, after initial successes, founders.

1945

12 January	Beginning of the large-scale Soviet offensive on the Vistula.
13 January	Soviet offensive in East Prussia begins.
17 January	Warsaw occupied by Soviet troops.
20 January	Marshal Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front reaches the borders of Lower Silesia east of Breslau. The Soviets are on German soil.
24 January	A new German army group, Army Group Vistula, is formed. *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler is named as supreme commander. He is to set up a new defensive line between Silesia and East Prussia.
26 January	Renaming of Army Group Centre as Army Group North, and of Army Group North as Army Group Courland.
30 January	Hitler's last radio address. Two armies of the 1st Belorussian Front reach the Oder between Frankfurt-an-der-Oder and Küstrin. State of emergency in Berlin. German troops evacuate the industrial area of Upper Silesia.
4 February	Beginning of the Yalta Conference between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill in the Crimea.
8 February	Beginning of the offensive of 1st Ukrainian Front from the Steinau and Lebus bridgeheads. Breslau is encircled.

16 February Beginning of the counter-attack by 2nd SS Panzer Army from the area to the south-west of Stargard (Pomerania) against the 47th Soviet Army. After 2 days, and the gain of a small amount of territory, the advance is discontinued.

19 February Himmler makes contact with the President of the International Red Cross, Count Folke Bernadotte, in order to test the possibility of making a separate peace with the Western Powers.

23 February Posen is taken by the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front.

1 March Beginning of the German counter-attack in Lower Silesia, which leads to the retaking of Lauban and Striegau.

7 March The American 1st Army takes Cologne and advances at Remagen onto the eastern bank of the Rhine.

13 March Beginning of the Soviet offensive in the area of Heiligenbeil (East Prussia). Königsberg is encircled. Hitler visits the German Oder front.

15 March Commissioned by Ribbentrop, Hesse, counsellor to the legation in Stockholm, sounds out the possibility of a separate peace with the Western Powers.

19 March Hitler issues the order "Scorched Earth" (Nero-Order). He plans the destruction of all the industrial and supply areas within the borders of the Reich which could be of use to the enemy.

20 March *Generaloberst* Gotthard Heinrici becomes supreme commander of Army Group Vistula.

28 March After the Chief of the Army General Staff, *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian, is "relieved of his duties", General of Infantry Hans Krebs is charged with taking overall control. The Allied supreme commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower informs Stalin by telegraph of his intention "to advance along the line Erfurt-Leipzig towards the upper Elbe and to await the Soviets there". The Soviets take "Fortress Küstrin".

29 March Stalin telegraphs to Eisenhower that the Red Army is currently planning no operation against the German Reich capital, because, he said, "Berlin had lost its earlier strategic importance".

31 March Eisenhower orders Montgomery not to carry out the planned advance on Berlin.

1 April Stalin receives Generals Zhukhov and Konev in Moscow. He gives orders for an operational plan to be drawn up to take Berlin in the quickest possible time.

12 April The death of the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt gives cause for new hope in Hitler's entourage. Goebbels hopes that this "miracle of Providence" will cause the anti-Hitler coalition to collapse.

16 April In the morning, large-scale attack by Soviet troops on the Oder and Neisse towards Berlin.

17 April Zhukhov's troops take the Seelow Heights. Konev's troops reach the Spree Canal.

19 April Wedges of Soviet armour reach the Spree at Spremberg.

20 April Hitler's birthday. Soviet troops in the outskirts of Berlin. After Zhukhov's 1st Belorussian and Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front, Rokossovski with the 2nd Belorussian Front moves in to attack. Hitler divides the territory which is still in German hands into a "Northern Region" (under *Grossadmiral* Karl Dönitz) and a "Southern Region" (under General Field Marshal Albert Kesselring).

21 April Soviet troops advance into the Berlin suburbs of Lichtenberg, Niederschönhausen and Frohnau. Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front occupies Cottbus. Soviet field artillery shells the centre of Berlin.

22 April Against heavy resistance the Soviets advance from the north-east via the suburbs of Buchholz, Blankenburg, Heinersdorf, Malchow and Biesdorf into the city areas of Pankow, Weissensee and Lichtenberg. Konev's armoured troops take Zossen. Hitler decides to remain in Berlin. General Helmuth Reymann, until now combat commandant of Berlin, is relieved of his command. He is temporarily replaced by Colonel Kaether.

23 April The Soviet troops take Frohnau in the northern part of Berlin and the greater part of the

Pankow district, in the southeast Köpenick. The Berlin *U-Bahn* (underground railway) lines stop running. Hitler relieves Goering of all his duties. Robert Ritter von Greim, promoted to General Field Marshal, becomes the new supreme commander of the Luftwaffe.

24 April — In the south of Berlin, the Soviets, through heavy street fighting, advance into the districts of Zehlendorf, Tempelhof and Neukölln. General of Artillery Helmuth Weidling becomes the new combat commandant of Berlin. The greater part of the 9th German Army is encircled in the area to the west of Frankfurt-an-der-Oder.

25 April — Two Soviet armies which were operating to the north of Berlin meet to the west of Berlin with Konev's 4th Guard Armoured Army which is advancing from the south. With this, the ring encircling Berlin is closed. The OKW (Wehrmacht Supreme Command), which on 24 April was moved from Berlin to Rheinsberg, takes over the leadership of attempts to relieve Berlin. American and Soviet troops meet on the Elbe at Torgau.

26 April — Heavy street fighting in Steglitz, at the Tempelhof airfield, between Tegel and Siemensstadt, and in Charlottenburg. Hitler orders the 12th and 9th Army to fight to free Berlin.

27 April — Zhukhov's troops break through into Berlin city centre. At the Hallescher Tor and on the Alexanderplatz the battle for the city centre begins. The Reich Chancellery is under constant artillery fire.

28 April — Street and house-to-house fighting in the city centre of Berlin. The 12th Army (General of *Panzertruppe* Walther Wenck) breaks out from Belzig into the Ferch area, but has to discontinue its relief attempt because of shortage of forces; it joins with the garrison of Potsdam and the remains of the 9th Army, which has been virtually wiped out. After the breakthrough of the 2nd Belorussian Front at Prenzlau, *Generaloberst* Gotthard Heinrici is replaced as supreme commander of Army Group Vistula by *Generaloberst* Kurt Student.

29 April — The Soviet ring round Berlin becomes tighter. Grunewald, the Reichssportfeld, the Havel bridges, the Anhalt railway station and the Potsdamer Platz become the front. Hitler marries Eva Braun and dictates his political and his private testament. Goebbels is to be Reich Chancellor, Dönitz Reich President. Himmler is relieved of all his duties.

30 April — The Wehrmacht Supreme Command informs Hitler by radio that the 12th Army (Wenck) cannot continue its attack on Berlin. Zhukhov's troops take the greater part of the Tiergarten, the Ministry of the Interior and the Reichstag buildings. Fighting in the Friedrichstrasse, on the Potsdamer Platz and on the Weidendammer bridge. Suicide of Hitler and his wife. Goebbels establishes contact with the Soviets in order to reach a ceasefire.

1 May — General of Infantry Hans Krebs negotiates with Army General Chuikov in his headquarters. The Soviets demand unconditional surrender. Suicide of Goebbels and his wife. The inmates of the Reich Chancellery bunker plan to break out. Bormann is said to have lost his life in this attempt.

2 May — General of Artillery Helmuth Weidling signs Berlin's surrender. The new Reich President Dönitz offers partial surrender to Montgomery in the north-western region.

3 May — Hamburg surrenders to the 2nd British Army. The remains of Army Group Vistula withdraw behind the English-American lines.

4 May — The German fighting forces in Holland, north-western Germany and Denmark surrender to the Americans at Munich.

5 May — Formation of a "Reich Government Administration" under Count Schwerin von Krosigk. Uprising in Prague.

6 May — Beginning of the Soviet large-scale offensive against the German Army Group Centre (Field Marshal Ferdinand Schörner) in Bohemia. The Americans take Pilsen and halt their advance. Breslau surrenders to the Soviets.

7 May — The Americans evacuate their bridgeheads on the Elbe. The 12th German Army (Wenck) crosses the Elbe at Travemünde with some 100,000 men and surrenders to the Americans. Troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front stand along the line Wismar – Schwerin – Wittemberge.

	The 1st Belorussian Front and the 1st Ukrainian Front reach the Elbe. Overall surrender of the German Wehrmacht in General Eisenhower's headquarters (Rheims).
8 May	Soviet troops occupy Dresden.
9 May	General Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel repeats the overall surrender of the German Wehrmacht in the Soviet headquarters at Karlshorst near Berlin.
10 May	Surrender of the German troops in Courland. Konev liberates Prague.
11 May	Surrender of the German troops in the Aegean and at Dunkirk.
23 May	Arrest of the Dönitz government and the members of the Wehrmacht Supreme Command in Flensburg.
5 June	The Allied supreme commanders (Zhukhov, Eisenhower, Montgomery, de Lattre de Tassigny) sign in Berlin four declarations, in which the takeover of the government of Germany through the Allied military governors represented in the Allied Control Council is announced.

Appendix II
Supplementary Hitler Youth Combat Reports

> "The Soviets advanced into Küstrin on 30–31 January 1945. An HJ unit of the German *Volkssturm* succeeded in driving them out of the town. *Festung* Küstrin was held until 23 March 1945".[1]

> "In Berlin a unit with the name of *Heereshitlerjugendkampfverband III* was set up, wounded frontline officers training fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth as sharpshooters, using damaged German tanks as targets. In command of this enterprise was a Protestant pastor in a civilian occupation. These troops saw action on the Kurfürstendamm, the Olympic Stadium and on the Heerstrasse."

Lothar Loewe fires on and destroys a Russian tank with a *Panzerfaust* from a cellar in the Sophia-Charlottenstrasse …

> "The nights were bad; there were some terrible scenes when the women were raped by the Russians."

Lothar Loewe is taken prisoner in Brandenburg:

> "The image of 'Soviet sub-humans' which had dominated my mind collapsed. The unit had a woman doctor with them, who first took care of all the wounded. Secondly, we got something to eat from these 'Bolshevik sub-humans'. I saw Soviet prisoners during the war, and how they were treated in Germany. The very idea that a German soldier would give a Russian a mess-tin and a spoon was unimaginable to me".[2]

> "A part of a Hitler Youth *Kampfgruppe* from the Breslau fortress, which had been set up within the framework of the *Volkssturm*, was sent into action for the first time during these days. It helped to throw back the Russians at an important location in front of Breslau; during this action the Hitler Youth fought outstandingly well. Ten boys were decorated with the Iron Cross".[3]

Hitlerjunge Horst Langmann and *Hitlerjunge* Kwiatkowski each fired on and destroyed a Russian tank.[4]

> "A Hitler Youth, not yet seventeen, called Nowak, from Hindenburg in Upper Silesia, destroyed no fewer than 9 tanks with his *Panzerfaust* in the Upper Silesian industrial area within a space of two days."[5]

The front page of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Munich, 1 March 1945 reads:

> "Exemplary deeds of our Hitler Youth, Breslau, 28 February 1945. With superior forces, the Bolsheviks had succeeded in breaking through in the sector of a German unit fighting to the south of *Festung* Breslau. The village of "O." was lost. It was of vital importance to recapture the ground. To counter-attack, 120 Hitler Youth from an Adolf Hitler School and various military training camps were sent into action. Command was taken by *Oberleutnant* Kudell, who had recently left the Hitler Youth. With fanatical doggedness and determined fighting spirit the Hitler Youth advanced against the hated Bolsheviks. The Soviets had to make great sacrifices in blood. 170 dead were counted on the battlefield, in addition there were rich prizes in mortars, machine guns, small arms and ammunition. As the accounts of prisoners testify, in this action a Soviet regiment was thrown back and seriously hit by the 120 Hitler Youth.
>
> 120 Hitler Youth, who bear the honoured name of the Führer, have given a shining example. They strike the enemy where they find him. They stood firm and attacked: 'The colours mean more than death'."

The following passage shows how fanatical and successful girls from the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM) could be …

> "A bridge over the Oder was under heavy Russian anti-aircraft fire, Stuka attacks were failing. *BDM-Fürhrerin* Ursula K. tried an attack with two girls from her group. They reached the bridge with a canoe full of explosives, the girls swimming under the boat. The bridge was blown sky-high. Of the three girls no one heard anything more".[6]

On 30 April 1945 the *Schlesischer Tageszeitung* gave a report of *Hitlerjunge* Martin Bittner, who, together with another HJ comrade, in hard hand-to-hand fighting in a cemetery in the west of Breslau killed 15 Bolsheviks, took one prisoner, and captured one flame-thrower and two machine guns. On the next day Bittner saw off 20 Bolsheviks behind the main frontline and was wounded in doing so.

Hitlerjunge Walter Poyer, from the same company, broke into a house occupied by the Soviets at the head of a shock troop, and destroyed the enemy who were hiding in the cellar and ground floor, with hand grenades. Completely on his own, he put out of action a Bolshevik anti-tank gun and machine gun with rifle grenades. He continued to fire, and in this way prevented an advance of the Soviet infantry in his own and in the adjoining sector, and held out until the group could occupy the house.[7]

Postscript: Both Hitler Youth were decorated with the Iron Cross First Class. With a soldiers' song on their lips the Hitler Youth *Kampfgruppen* marched into Soviet captivity shortly before the end of the war.[8]

In his book *Hier spricht Hans Fritsche*, the author commented "The Hitler Youth was the real backbone of the defence of Berlin".[9]

BDM girls, too, did not hold back in this fighting …

> "A house was defended by three members of the BDM until their ammunition ran out. As the Soviets burst in, the machine-pistol was seized from a Red Army soldier, whereupon the one girl shot her comrades and herself".[10]

There are a whole series of such accounts which tell of the courage, bravery and self-sacrifice of the Hitler Youth. The young people, fourteen to sixteen years old, hurled themselves against the enemy as if they were marching behind drums and fanfares. Their eyes burned like a strange fire. They took every kind of risk.[11]

> "I did not have to experience this fearful children's war, the last, most meaningless sacrifice of youth, when the die for victory or defeat had long been cast, but I can see the baby faces under the steel helmet, and I know what was going on in the souls of these boys. Countless times they had sung *Germany, see us, we are offering you death as the least of our deeds, if he, death, once greets our ranks, we shall become the great seed*. I am sure that fear again and again leaped at them with its stranglehold, but within them burned the desire to show that they were soldiers. They wanted to stand by the solemn vows they made in their songs. Of course, what despair and misery broke upon them when their comrades were bleeding beside them and when their first exhilaration gave way to the cold light of day, I don't dare think.
>
> None of us who led this youth will be able to remember without horror how they were smashed on the frontline. How, in the blind enthusiasm which was stirred up in them, could they see the contradiction between those human values, love of country, loyalty, courage, and obedience, for which they thought they were sacrificing themselves and the inhumanity of their beloved Führer? In the intoxication of power he cynically allowed large numbers of young people to shed their blood.
>
> This idolisation of one's own people, the dark side of which is the despising of foreign peoples, was the central motive force in our education of youth. In this process, certainly, genuine virtues could unfold, such as those of courage and self-sacrifice. But in that very process they were devalued by the fact that the formation of that central virtue was suppressed. Nobody expected us to think for ourselves and to develop a capacity for responsible ethical judgement. Our watchword was: 'Führer, give the order, we will follow!'"[12]

One of the leading Soviet generals during the war, Chuikov, had this to say about the Hitler Youth, and the defence of Berlin:

> "How were the troops of the Berlin defence area prepared to repel our attackers? To tell the truth – badly! The German army leadership had indeed succeeded in setting up strong defences such as bunkers, fortified positions and barricades, but the most important fortification of all, people and their fighting spirit, had already fallen. The German troops in Berlin were not prepared for repelling our shock troops, they understood nothing about how

to conduct hand-to-hand fighting in a city.

In the first days of the storming of Berlin the German *Sonderkommando* armed with *Panzerfäuste* fought successfully against our tanks. They fought bravely and skilfully and inflicted noticeable casualties on our armoured units. But their success only lasted a short time. Those firing *Panzerfäuste* could only destroy the tanks because our tank commanders made tactical errors. You can't simply send columns of tanks into battle along the streets! Only when the armoured units were re-grouped and advanced together with the infantry, was the part played in the defence of Berlin by those with *Panzerfäuste* immediately reduced to zero. The troops with machine-pistols who provided covering fire for the tanks fought successfully against them. Besides, for the tanks the destructive effect of the *Panzerfäuste*, through the experience of the infantry, was no longer so great, after the individual tanks in the shock detachments had got an additional protective covering in the form of sandbags. Small sandbags were fixed with wire to the armour plating of the sides and the turret. It did look primitive, but it was all the more effective for that. The *Panzerfaust* detonated on impact against the sandbag and the armour plating remained undamaged. That 'Faust' (fist) against the Russian tanks, the *Panzerfaust*, on which Hitler had set such high hopes, was thus only half as dangerous.

Perhaps it was this that had sent the Führer into such a rage that he took a crazy decision. Imagine a group of fourteen hundred boys, none older than fifteen, and all of them in black uniform shirts. They marched down the middle of the street in the direction of the fighting, they marched against our shock detachments, *Panzerfäuste* with them, on their shoulders.

'How should we react? Let them through or open fire?' the commanders asked me over the radio. 'First, don't fire! First, don't fire! Try to disarm them!'

The yellow flares that marked our furthest line of advance did not hold the boys back. They had already approached our positions, and when they saw artillery pieces and vehicles they stormed forwards as if they were crazy. The *Panzerfäuste* flew through the air and tore people and horses to shreds. We opened fire. When they saw the front ranks falling, the survivors ran away.

That happened on 26 April, after the capture of the Tempelhof airfield. The group of boys had come out of the Tiergarten and had approached the positions of the 28th Guard Corps.

Who could send these boys to certain death? Only a madman.".[13]

Appendix III
Hitler Youth crimes during the closing stages of the Second World War

Introduction

Very early on, an anti-semitic way of thinking, fed by Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and numerous speeches and addresses, penetrated into the minds and hearts of the Hitler Youth. Hitler's youth even sang and bellowed songs of mockery and hatred of Jews such as: *When Jew-blood spurts from the knife*.

More often than not the HJ was involved in the pogrom during the night of 9 November 1938, rampaging about, destroying Jewish property and attacking Jews.

In the closing phase of the Second World War, only a few isolated Jews were still living in Germany, and the idealism of a seduced young people was turned against a militarily-superior enemy, mostly in meaningless actions. Where there were still Jews – and this was, at this time, only in Hungary and adjoining areas within the German controlled territories – attacks and even murders occurred. However, the Hitler Youth also carried out such attacks on "their own" people, and this was also the case in the rest of Germany.

Films like *Jüd Süss* ("Jew Süss"), and inflammatory hate articles in *Der Stürmer*, the *Siebenbürgisch Deutsche Zeitung* (a Transylvanian German newspaper), and *Weltanschauliche Schulungen* ("Ideological Instruction") must have made a significant contribution to these injustices.

In 1943, boys from the National Socialist Educational Institute (NAPOLA) in Budapest sent several hundred copies of a circular which they had composed, anonymously, to the Hungarian Prime Minister, his ministers, the editors of all newspapers in the country, to schools and legations, and larger organisations, amongst others.

As a postscript, here are some sentences from this pamphlet:

> "It is high time, especially for the final solution of the Jewish question, that we ruthlessly expose, with all the means at our disposal, and crush this enemy of the people who lurks among creative peoples waiting for his prey."
>
> "Because the Jew is our enemy in every situation! That is why we must force him into the ghetto. Every male and female Jew must be given a Jewish insignia on their breast which is obvious at the first glance."
>
> "So let us move against them radically and without pity. Let us never leave them in peace!"[1]

Crimes committed against Jews

Hungary

As in Bistritz and Sächsisch-Regen in Northern Transylvania, besides the *Deutsche Mannschaft* (analogous to the SA), the *Deutsche Jugend* (HJ) were employed as security and guard forces, during the arrest and ghettoisation of the Jewish population in Hungary, in May 1944, and their subsequent transportation to the Auschwitz concentration camp, as well as the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp.[2]

On the night of 7–8 October 1944, the SS carried out mass shootings of Jewish detainees in the large, mostly German-populated, municipality of Tscherwenka (Crvenka). An account of this is given by one of the few survivors, the Jew Zalman Teichmann, from the Carpatho-Ukraine.[3]

Out of 3,000 Jews, some 1,200 were shot by the SS.

> "The pit was some forty to fifty metres long, eight to ten metres wide and one and a half metres deep. It had been dug long before, because earth was wanted for the manufacture of bricks".

Hungarians and Serbs helped the badly-wounded Zalman Teichmann, who, following the massacre, had freed himself from the heap of those who had been shot.

> "My bandages were completely soaked through with blood, and I had no new ones. A car with two men and two women drove past us. Immediately, we [author's note – two or three Jewish detainees had also survived] went back into the field because we were afraid. But one of them called after us in Hungarian, 'You can hide there. I am a German, but not like those in Crvenka'. He took pity on us. When he saw we were afraid he almost broke down in tears and swore that he was a good person and against Hitler. He gave us white bread and grapes. I saw how the German woman was looking at me and how her eyes were filling with tears. The woman took off a silk scarf and gave it to me because my bandages were soaked through with blood."

Dr Roland Vetter, Protestant pastor and dean in Mainz, born in 1928, has also discussed this criminal event which occurred in Crvenka during October 1944.[4]

On 4 October 1944, a fourth recruitment "raid" took place in Tscherwenka, which was not guaranteed by any further agreement with the Hungarian Government. The local commandant, an SS officer, had the fifteen-and sixteen-year-old local young people called up; the seventeen-year-olds were already in the ranks of the Waffen-SS. A good 40 responded to the appeal, let themselves be kitted out, and in this way, without call-up papers and mustering, became Tscherwenka's "last draft".

On the Sunday of the church fair, 7 October 1944, an endless procession, coming from Kula, moved into the centre of the town. They were Jews who had been enlisted for forced labour. These Jewish detainees were to be taken over the Danube, to build fortifications there. The Waffen-SS led the column eastwards to the brickworks. There the shootings alluded to above, took place. The next morning there was further transport to Sombor.

> Roland Vetter commented:
>
> "For us there remain two questions of great importance: (1) What significance does this sad event have for Tscherwenka and its history; (2) What did the small platoon of young people [author's note – 40 boys of the HJ] have to do with these events?
>
> In reply to (1): No fault attaches to the local population.
>
> In reply to (2): The youth platoon of our home community was only once directly involved with the transport of Jews, that is, on the way from Tscherwenka to Sombor. This route was taken on 8 October, after the night of horror in the brickworks. So the young soldiers did not take part in the shootings! Their contribution to guard duties during the march to Sombor similarly can have had only subordinate significance, since they were poorly equipped and inexperienced. Guilt and expiation are categories which are not appropriate to the solving of the question of these events and the questions that result from this. Certainly, forgetting and indifference would be irresponsible and inappropriate."[5]

Nevertheless, the story of the Tscherwenka youth platoon as a "contributor to guard duties during the march to Sombor" needs to be supplemented and completed by those who know something more about it.

In March 1948, Roland Vetter and I (Hans Holzträger) were studying Protestant theology in our first term at the University of Vienna. As "stateless persons", we were travelling with false papers, and were, in all seriousness, in some danger from the Soviet occupying authorities during the railway journey from Upper Austria to Vienna. Roland, too, did not feel very secure,

since he, as he told me, was shown on wanted posters in Yugoslavia as a "war criminal". One of his earlier friends who was allowed to leave Yugoslavia said that he had seen his photograph on a wanted persons poster.

What Roland Vetter told me about it then, casts doubt upon his account. I wish to examine his explanation relating to his second question.

According to his, Roland Vetter's, account, it is correct that the group of 40 young people hardly knew how to fire their rifles. Despite this, they had the strict order to shoot any Jewish detainee who could not go any further or even remained lying down. This criminal SS order must have had some consequences. Some boys carried out this order. Roland Vetter did not know how many there were. All this weighed very heavily on him personally. It was not desire to kill, nor high spirits, which led to this crime, but a misunderstood idea of obedience. The boys were insulted and laughed at by the accompanying SS party, according to Roland's account, because they had been slow to act.

"Where the actual people responsible for giving the orders for that night of horror from 7 to 8 October are to be found is unknown", Roland Vetter writes.[6] Would it not also have been his duty to look for them and, if at all possible, to find them? Dr R. Vetter died in 1993.

Austria

On 30 March 1945, the Hitler Youth became involved in the shootings of Jews. On the orders of *Bannführer* Alfred Weber, seven HJ NCOs had been ordered to escort a group of 80 Hungarian Jews, at Deutsch-Schützen in the Burgenland, to a clearing in the forest and block off the access to this clearing. Two SS men are said to have carried out the shootings themselves, but they could not be apprehended in the post-war period, because they had disappeared.

So, the HJ boys were brought to trial. Five were sentenced to periods of imprisonment of between 15 months and 3 years.[7]A similar episode also occurred in the market town of Reichenau an der Rax (Lower Austria).[8]

Crimes committed against Germans

After the Americans had marched into Wetterfeld, near Giessen, the former

National Socialist mayor felt himself threatened by an alleged informant, a completely peaceful man, Heinrich Becker. The mayor feared his political leanings would be denounced to the Americans by Becker. The ex-mayor ordered HJ members "R.", born in 1928, and "Z.H.", born in 1929, to shoot Becker. "Z.H." missed, "R." killed Becker with a shot in the back of the neck. He was subsequently sentenced to seven years in prison, "Z.H." escaped with four years of youth arrest.[9]

On 23 March 1945, "M.", a high-ranking Luftwaffe officer, received orders to organise the defence of Ansbach. On 18 April "R.H.", a student, born in 1925, and discharged from the Wehrmacht because of a severe heart complaint, went to the mayor of Ansbach and asked him to surrender the town to the Americans. On the way to the mayor, the student heard that the "M." wanted to defend Ansbach to the last round, whereupon "R.H." cut the telephone line to the commander's command post, and was seen doing this by two Hitler Youth, who reported it. "M." called a drumhead court martial which sentenced "R.H." to death. "R.H." was immediately hanged.[10]

Oskar Bordt, HJ platoon leader in the Heilbronn *Volkssturm*, shot senior civil servant "K." and his wife because they had hung out the white flag to the advancing Americans. Bordt also shot at other people who had raised the white flag, and in doing so shot Frau "D." Sentence: 15 years imprisonment.[11]

In Regensburg, on 23 April 1945, a street demonstration took place. A chorus of voices demanded the surrender of the town to the Americans. *Kreisleiter* Weigert assigned to the *Volkssturm*, in particular to its HJ members, the task of clearing the streets of demonstrators, which they ruthlessly carried out.[12]

"P.", wounded in 1943, was appointed as leader of a military training camp, thereafter to the post of commissarial *Bannführer* in Alfeld, and at the beginning of April 1945 as a HJ lieutenant in the *Volkssturm*.As early as 7 April 1945 his *Jagdkommando* was in contact with the enemy. Shortly afterwards this HJ unit was dissolved against "P.'s" will. Only 10–15 HJ boys remained behind, and for days waited patiently for "P." in Everode, Lower Saxony. In the meantime, the mayor of Everode, Strattmann, tried to send away these HJ boys. When "P." returned to Everode and took the mayor to task, the mayor raised his hand against "P." and shouted: "You loudmouthed shit!" The moment the mayor raised his hand to hit him, "P." drew his pistol and shot the attacker. The latter collapsed, got up again and

went towards his house. “P.” fired several more times. Then he ordered HJ boy “S.” to “Give him another shot!”[13]

On the morning of 28 April 1945, members of *Freiheitsaktion Bayern* (Bavarian Action for Freedom) in Grünwald, locked National Socialist *Ortsleiter* Müller in the town hall. “E.” went along with two members of the HJ to the town hall to free the Ortsleiter. In the exchange of fire a guard was shot in the chest. “E.” was hit in the right hand. The person who fired the shot was Dr Max, the leader of *Freiheitsaktion Bayern* in Grünwald. Dr Max escaped, although both HJ lads fired after him.[14]

An anti-tank *Jagdkommando* consisting of members of the HJ, which was stationed in the youth hostel in Soltau, received the order to hunt down escaped concentration camp prisoners and recapture them. As a result of bombing raids along stretches of railway, the prisoners were able to escape en masse. During this action a member of the HJ shot a concentration camp prisoner. The court freed the Hitler Youth.[15]

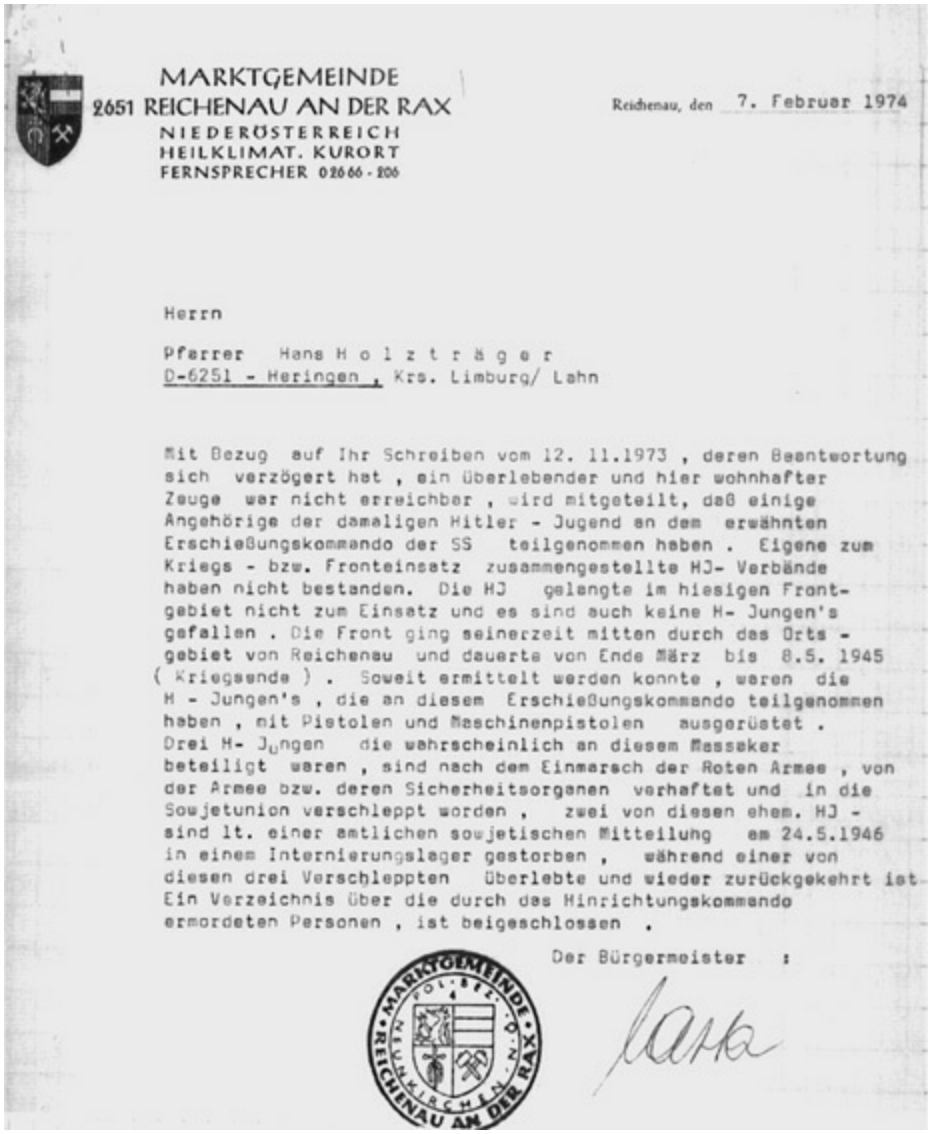
Shortly before the Americans arrived in Quedlinburg, the *Bannführer* shot Dr Schäder, a doctor who worked in a Wehrmacht field hospital. Following a remark about the hospital, Dr Schäder became afraid that he would encounter difficulties and fled, without telling the hospital authorities, on a bicycle to his family in Bernburg, serving in a field hospital there. Verdict: the *Bannführer* received 5 years imprisonment.[16]

At the beginning of April 1945, a young Flak gunner, Roman Kneissl, only sixteen years old, took “leave” and left his position without his superior officers’ knowledge. Kneissl was apprehended by an SS patrol and brought into a barracks camp in Ternitz, in which a *Volkssturm* battalion was also quartered. A HJ company belonged to this battalion, command by *HJ-Bannführer* Johann Wallner. A drumhead court martial, which consisted of *Kreisleiter* Braun and *Bannführer* Wallner, sentenced Kneissl to death. Kneissl loudly begged for mercy, cried for his mother and tried to run away. Wallner gave him the *coup de grâce* with his pistol. The execution squad, consisting of 14 to 17-year-old boys, fired a volley at Kneissl, who was lying on the ground. This HJ execution squad also had to carry out several other shootings. Braun and Wallner were sentenced to death and hanged.[17]

At the beginning of May 1945, armed HJ groups marched through the streets of Ried i. Inkr., Upper Austria, singing … f*or today Germany belongs to us and tomorrow the whole world!* Boys of the Hitler Youth wanted to

shoot down the white flag from the church tower. The chemist Kienel asked them to stop. An HJ fighter turned his carbine on him and fired. Kienel died of his wounds.[18]

Appendix IV
Additional report relating to the executions carried out by the Hitler Youth in Reichenau, April–May 1945



MARKTGEMEINDE
2651 REICHENAU AN DER RAX
NIEDERÖSTERREICH
HEILKLIMAT. KURORT
FERNSPRECHER 02666 - 206

Reichenau, den 7. Februar 1974

Herrn

Pfarrer Hans H o l z t r ä g e r
D-6251 - Heringen , Krs. Limburg/ Lahn

Mit Bezug auf Ihr Schreiben vom 12. 11.1973 , deren Beantwortung sich verzögert hat , ein überlebender und hier wohnhafter Zeuge war nicht erreichbar , wird mitgeteilt, daß einige Angehörige der damaligen Hitler - Jugend an dem erwähnten Erschießungskommando der SS teilgenommen haben . Eigene zum Kriegs - bzw. Fronteinsatz zusammengestellte HJ- Verbände haben nicht bestanden. Die HJ gelangte im hiesigen Frontgebiet nicht zum Einsatz und es sind auch keine H- Jungen's gefallen . Die Front ging seinerzeit mitten durch das Orts - gebiet von Reichenau und dauerte von Ende März bis 8.5. 1945 (Kriegsende) . Soweit ermittelt werden konnte , waren die H - Jungen's , die an diesem Erschießungskommando teilgenommen haben , mit Pistolen und Maschinenpistolen ausgerüstet . Drei H- Jungen die wahrscheinlich an diesem Massaker beteiligt waren , sind nach dem Einmarsch der Roten Armee , von der Armee bzw. deren Sicherheitsorganen verhaftet und in die Sowjetunion verschleppt worden , zwei von diesen ehem. HJ - sind lt. einer amtlichen sowjetischen Mitteilung am 24.5.1946 in einem Internierungslager gestorben , während einer von diesen drei Verschleppten überlebte und wieder zurückgekehrt ist. Ein Verzeichnis über die durch das Hinrichtungskommando ermordeten Personen , ist beigeschlossen .

Der Bürgermeister :

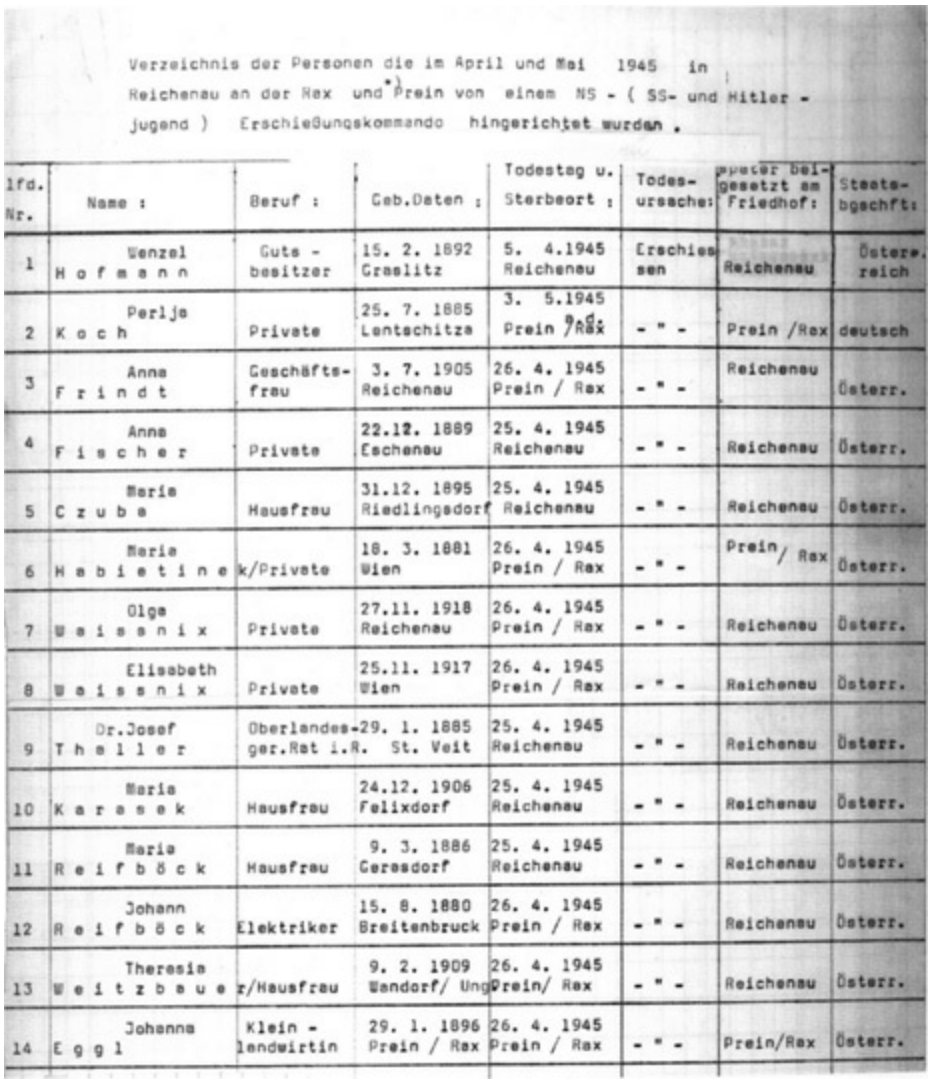
MARKTGEMEINDE REICHENAU AN DER RAX

Reichenau, 7 February 1974

Pastor Hans Holzträger,

With reference to your letter of 12.11.1973, a reply to which has been delayed, a surviving witness who lives here could not be found. I would inform you that some members of the former Hitler Youth did take part in the firing squad you mentioned. Some HJ units set up for deployment in war, that is to say on the frontline, did not survive. In the area of the front here, the HJ did not go into action and no Hitler Youth were killed. At the time, the front passed through the middle of the Reichenau area, from the end of March until 8 May 1945, the end of the war. As far as could be ascertained, the Hitler Youth who took part in this firing squad were equipped with pistols and machine-pistols. Three Hitler Youth members who probably took part in this massacre were, after the Red Army marched in, arrested by the army, that is to say by its security organisations, and were taken off to the Soviet Union. According to an official Soviet announcement, two of these former HJ died in an internment camp on 24 May 1946, while one of those who was taken away survived and returned. A list detailing the persons murdered by the execution squad is enclosed.

The Mayor (Reichenau an der Rax)



Verzeichnis der Personen die im April und Mai 1945 in Reichenau an der Rax und Prein von einem NS - (SS- und Hitler - jugend) Erschießungskommando hingerichtet wurden .

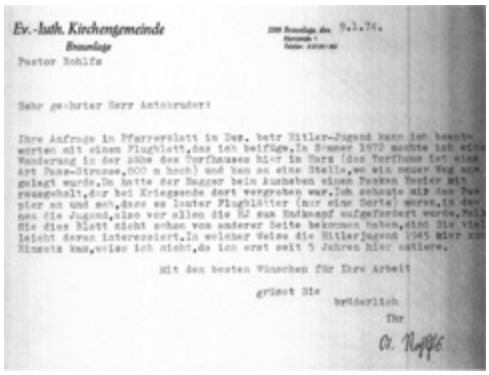
lfd. Nr.	Name :	Beruf :	Geb.Daten :	Todestag u. Sterbeort :	Todes- ursache:	später beigesetzt am Friedhof:	Staats- bgehft:
1	Wenzel Hofmann	Guts - besitzer	15. 2. 1892 Graslitz	5. 4.1945 Reichenau	Erschies sen	Reichenau	Österr. reich
2	Perlja Koch	Private	25. 7. 1885 Lentschitze	3. 5.1945 Prein /Rax	- " -	Prein /Rax	deutsch
3	Anna Frindt	Geschäfts- frau	3. 7. 1905 Reichenau	26. 4. 1945 Prein / Rax	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
4	Anna Fischer	Private	22.12. 1889 Eschenau	25. 4. 1945 Reichenau	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
5	Maria Czube	Hausfrau	31.12. 1895 Riedlingsdorf	25. 4. 1945 Reichenau	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
6	Maria Habietinek	/Private	18. 3. 1881 Wien	26. 4. 1945 Prein / Rax	- " -	Prein / Rax	Österr.
7	Olga Weissnix	Private	27.11. 1918 Reichenau	26. 4. 1945 Prein / Rax	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
8	Elisabeth Weissnix	Private	25.11. 1917 Wien	26. 4. 1945 Prein / Rax	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
9	Dr.Josef Theller	Oberlandes- ger.Rat i.R.	29. 1. 1885 St. Veit	25. 4. 1945 Reichenau	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
10	Maria Karasek	Hausfrau	24.12. 1906 Felixdorf	25. 4. 1945 Reichenau	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
11	Maria Reifböck	Hausfrau	9. 3. 1886 Geresdorf	25. 4. 1945 Reichenau	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
12	Johann Reifböck	Elektriker	15. 8. 1880 Breitenbruck	26. 4. 1945 Prein / Rax	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
13	Theresia Weitzbauer	/Hausfrau	9. 2. 1909 Wandorf/ Ung	26. 4. 1945 Prein/ Rax	- " -	Reichenau	Österr.
14	Johanna Eggl	Klein - landwirtin	29. 1. 1896 Prein / Rax	26. 4. 1945 Prein / Rax	- " -	Prein/Rax	Österr.

List of the Persons who in April and May 1945 were executed by a National Socialist (SS and Hitler Youth) firing squad in Reichenau an der Rax and Prein.

No.	*Name*	*Occupation*	*Date / Place of Birth*	*Date / Place of Death*	*Cause of Death*	*Burial Place*	*Nationality*
1	Wenzel Hoffmann	Landowner	15/02/1892 Graslitz	05/04/1945 Reichenau	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
2	Perlja Koch	–	25/07/1885 Lentschitze	03/05/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Prein / Rax	German
3	Anna Frindt	Businesswoman	03/07/1905 Reichenau	26/04/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
4	Anna Fischer	–	22/12/1889	25/04/1945	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian

			Eschenau	Reichenau			
5	Maria Czuba	Housewife	31/12/1895 Riedlingsdorf	25/04/1945 Reichenau	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
6	Maria Habietinek	–	18/03/1881 Vienna	26/04/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Prein / Rax	Austrian
7	Olga Waissnix	–	27/11/1918 Reichenau	26/04/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
8	Elisabeth Waissnix	–	25/11/1917 Reichenau	26/04/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
9	Dr. Josef Thaller	Judge, Provincial High Court	29/01/1885 St. Veit	25/04/1945 Reichenau	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
10	Maria Karasek	Housewife	24/12/1906 Felixdorf	25/04/1945 Reichenau	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
11	Maria Reifböck	Housewife	09/03/1886 Gerasdorf	25/04/1945 Reichenau	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
12	Johann Reifböck	Electrician	15/08/1880 Breitenbruck	26/04/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
13	Theresia Weitzbauer	Housewife	09/02/1909 Wandorf, Hungary	26/04/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Reichenau	Austrian
14	Johanna Eggl	Smallholder	29/01/1896 Prein / Rax	26/04/1945 Prein / Rax	Shot	Prein / Rax	Austrian

Appendix V
Lower Saxon Hitler Youth propaganda leaflet



Ev.-luth. Kirchengemeinde
Braunlage
Pastor Rohlfs

9.1.74.

Sehr geehrter Herr Antonruder!

Ihre Anfrage im Pfarrerblatt in Dez. betr Hitler-Jugend kann ich beantworten mit einem Flugblatt,das ich beifüge.In Sommer 1972 machte ich eine Wanderung in der nähe des Torfhauses Nr.7 in Harz (das Torfhaus ist eine Art Pass-Strasse,800 m hoch) und kam an eine Stelle,wo ein neuer Weg angelegt wurde.In hatte der Bagger beim Ausheben einen Bunker unter mit Gasschalt,der bei Kriegsende dort vergraben war.Ich schaute mir das Papier an und sah,dass es lauter Flugblätter (nur eine Sorte) waren,in denen die Jugend,also vor allen die HJ zum Endkampf aufgefordert wurde.Falls Sie dies Blatt nicht schon von anderer Seite bekommen haben,sind Sie vielleicht daran interessiert.In welcher Weise die Hitlerjugend 1945 hier zum Einsatz kam,weiss ich nicht,da ich erst seit 5 Jahren hier wirke.

Mit den besten Wünschen für Ihre Arbeit

grüsst Sie

herzlich

Ihr

A. Rohlfs



Niedersächsische Hitler-Jugend!

Überall - von an den Feind!

Der Gegner meint, er hate schon den Sieg in der Tasche — weil seine Truppen in Ost und West auf deutschem Boden kämpfen.

Immer wieder versucht er, uns mit seinen Bombenteppichen und Tiefflieger-angriffen mürbe zu machen.

Auch der feindliche Nachrichtendienst läuft auf vollen Touren, um die Siegesgewißheit und das Vertrauen des deutschen Volkes auf seine Führung zu zerstören.

Wieder werden ins Feindlager Termine für unsere endgültige Vernichtung hineingetragt und wieder muß der Gegner Tag für Tag erleben, daß er die Rechnung ohne den Wirt gemacht hat.

Das deutsche Volk kämpft und arbeitet wie nie zuvor, weil es weiß, daß es um die Existenz ung und um unser aller Leben geht.

Unsere zerstörten Städte, unsere gemordeten Mütter und Geschwister machen uns noch fanatischer und entschlossener im Widerstand und im Haß gegen die Kriegsverbrecher und ihre Söldlinge!

Unseren Glauben an den Führer und an den Sieg können auch die schwärzesten Nachrichten der Feindsender nicht erschüttern.

Gegen ihre Propagandaparolen sind wir gefeit — weil wir wissen, daß unsere Stunde im Kommen ist.

Dieser Krieg ist der totale Krieg des ganzen Volkes!

Auch die Heimat ist zur Front geworden. Neben der Wehrmacht kämpfen die Männer und Jungen des Deutschen Volkssturmes.

Frauen und Mädel helfen in den rückwärtigen Diensten der Wehrmacht.

Die niedersächsische Hitler-Jugend steht in diesem Ringen an vorderster Stelle!

Täglich spürt der Gegner, daß unsere Jungen ihre „Panzerfaust" zu gebrauchen wissen. Täglich lernt er die Härte der deutschen Jugend im Geben und Nehmen kennen und die Kraft ihres Glaubens, den niemand nehmen kann. Nicht nur die Älteren Hitlerjungen, nein auch die Mädel und Pimpfe stehen auf ihrem Platz in der Abwehrfront! Wer keine Waffe führt, kämpft auf seine Weise!

Es gilt, den Feind zu schlagen, wo man ihn auch trifft!

Jede Waffe und jedes Mittel ist dazu recht. Jeder Schaden, der dem Gegner auf deutschem Boden zugefügt wird, hilft zum Sieg! Keine große Ausbildung, keine Technik, keine Waffen sind dazu notwendig.

Nur Mut, Einsatzbereitschaft, Schnelligkeit, Umsicht und fanatischer Haß tun Not,

um die Waffen unseres Widerstandes zu handhaben:

Mit Hammer, Zange, Messer, Schraubenschlüssel und Geschick kann die feindliche Kriegsmaschine ehrlich gestört werden. Sie werden sich an uns die Zähne ausbeißen, die Söldlinge der Plutokratie und des jüdischen Kapitalismus!

Jeder Pimpf im feindbesetzten Raum hat seinen Auftrag — und der heißt:

dem Gegner schaden, wo man ihn trifft!

Wenden!

Braunlage, 9 January 1974

Dear brother in the clergy,

I can answer your query in the pastoral letter of December with a circular, which I enclose. In the summer of 1972 I was hiking near to the Torfhaus, here in the Harz (the Torfhaus is a kind of road through a pass 800 metres high) and came to a place where a new path was being built. There the excavator, in excavating the area, had lifted out a paper package which had been buried there at the end of the war. I looked at the papers and saw that they were all circulars (only one sort), in which the youth, particularly the Hitler Youth, were being urged on to the final battle. If you have not received this circular from anywhere else, you will be very interested. How the Hitler Youth was deployed here in 1945 I do not know, because I have only been pastor here for 5 years.

With best wishes for your work.
Greetings from your brother,
Pastor Rohlfs

Hitler Youth of Lower Saxony!

Everywhere – up and at the enemy!

The enemy thinks that he already has victory in the bag, because his troops are fighting in East and West on German soil.

Again and again he is trying to wear us down with his carpet bombing and hedgehopping attacks.

The enemy news service too is running at full speed to destroy the confidence and belief of the German people in their leadership.

Again, in the enemy camp, deadlines are being set for our final annihilation, and again the enemy must realise day-by-day that he has worked out the bill without asking the landlord.

The German people are fighting and working as never before because they know that it is a matter of decisive importance and all our lives are at stake.

Our destroyed towns, our murdered mothers, brothers and sisters, are making us even more fanatical and more determined in our resistance and in our hatred of the war criminals and their hirelings!

Our belief in the Führer and in victory cannot be shaken even by the blackest news of the enemy's broadcasts.

We are immune to their propaganda, because we know that our hour is coming.

Our war is the total war of the whole people!

Even our homeland has become the frontline. Beside the Wehrmacht are fighting the men and boys of the German *Volkssturm*.

Women and girls are helping the Wehrmacht behind the lines.

The Hitler Youth of Lower Saxony is on the frontline in this struggle!

Every day the enemy is finding out that our lads know how to use their *Panzerfäuste*. Every day he is getting to know the hardness of German youth in give-and-take, and the force of their belief which no-one can take away. Not only the older Hitler Youth, no, girls and little boys, too, are taking their place on the defensive front! Anyone who has no weapons is fighting as best he can!

Any weapon and any means is right for this. Any damage which can be inflicted on the enemy on German soil helps us to victory! No great training, no technology, no weapons are needed for this.

Only courage, readiness for action, speed, care and fanatical hatred are needed,

to work the weapons of our resistance:

With hammer, pliers, knives, spanners and skill the enemy war machine can be significantly damaged. They are going to have a tough time of it with us,

those hirelings of plutocracy and Jewish capitalism!

Every little lad in enemy-held territory has his job to do, and that is to … damage the enemy wherever we find him!



Wie stört man Kraftfahrzeuge?

1. Durch die Einführung von Zucker in den Benzintank.
Folge: Düsenverstopfung, Kolben brennen fest, Kraftfahrzeuge werden nachhaltigst betriebsunfähig.
2. Indem man beim Montieren von Reifen feine Metallspäne zwischen Decke und Schlauch bringt.
Folge: Schläuche zerreißen, Decken werden unbrauchbar, die entstehenden Reifenpannen sind nicht einmalig, sondern entstehen immer wieder, bis die vollkommene Unbrauchbarkeit der Reifen sich herausstellt.
3. Dadurch, daß man Nagelbretter auf die Straßen eingräbt.
Folge: Reifen platzen, bei größerer Geschwindigkeit gerät der Wagen ins Schleudern und Überschlägt sich. Bei geschickter Eingrabung sind die Folgen nicht einmalig, sondern werden sich in den meisten Fällen bis zur Entdeckung mehrmalig wiederholen.
4. Drahtseile hinter Kurven spannt, und zwar so, daß sie sich nicht vom Hintergrund abheben. Angerosteten Draht benutzen!
Folge: Schwere Kraftfahrzeugs, insbesondere Kraftradunfälle.
5. Telefonleitungen kurz schließen durch Verbinden der Drähte miteinander, ein Erdungsgründen dünne Drähte zum Zusammenschließen benutzen.
Folge: Verständigung nicht mehr möglich und Störungsstellen schwer auffindbar.
6. Verbindung der Telefonleitung mit Starkstromleitung durch Überwerfen eines einem Stein beschwerten Drahtes.
Folge: In allen angeschlossenen Ämtern schmoren die Apparate durch, bei Benutzung Apparate in den meisten Fällen Verletzungen und Ausfälle.

Wie stört man Bahnen?

1. Man verklemmt auf Eisenbahnstrecken die Weichen mit Steinen oder hebt das Zugseil der Weichen aus bzw. zerschneidet es.
Folge: Zugentgleisung.
2. Man legt auf freier Strecke einen Hemmschuh. (Diesen rechtzeitig sicherstellen!)
Folge: Zugentgleisung.
3. Man zerschneidet die Zugdrähte für die Signaleinrichtung der Eisenbahn.
Folge: Zusammenstöße.
4. Man läßt das Schmieröl ab aus den Schmierbüchsen der Achsenlager von Eisenbahnwaggons und preßt möglichst Sand oder aus Tarnungsgründen eine Sand-Fett-Mischung ein.
Folge: Lager laufen heiß, Waggons fangen unter Umständen an zu brennen, dies führt bei Munitions- oder Kraftstoffzügen zu Explosionen und macht im allgemeinen unbrauchbar. Im letzteren Fall sogar mehr nachhaltig Eisenbahnstrecken unbrauchbar.
5. Zerschlagen von Kontrolleinrichtungen aller Art.
Folge: Maschinenausfall.

Das Wichtigste - - - -

Nicht dabei erwischen lassen. Dumm stellen, findig sein, immer neue Schliche und Wege gehen, dann ist der Erfolg sicher.

Wo der Gegner auch einbrechen mag, überall trifft er auf unsere Front in der Heimat. Wir kämpfen unseren Kampf so lange, bis die Stunde den deutschen Soldaten wieder schlägt, bis unsere Wehrmacht endgültig den deutschen Raum von seinen Feinden säubert.

Für diese Stunde kämpfen wir, unser Krieg ist unser Sieg!

Werwölfe packen zu!

Lesen und an die Kameraden weitergeben!

We must hit the enemy hard wherever we find him!

Now it's a question of how, what, and where. So pay attention: transport is a vital artery. To interfere with it can have a decisive effect on the course of the war.

How do you damage vehicles?

- By putting sugar in the petrol tank. Result: the carburettor becomes blocked, pistons jam, vehicles become permanently unusable.
- In fitting tyres, if fine metal shavings are placed between the tyre and the innertube. Result: Tyres burst, at higher speed the vehicle skids and turns

over. If the job is done skilfully, this will not only happen once, but in most cases happen several times until the cause is discovered.

- Stretch wire on curves in the road, and in such a way that they can't be seen against the background. Use rusty wire! Result: Serious accidents with vehicles, particularly motorbikes.
- Short-circuit telephone lines by twisting wires together, use thin wires for connections. Result: Communications no longer possible and damage difficult to trace.
- Connection of telephone lines with high-voltage cables by throwing over them a wire weighted with a stone. Result: In all connected lines the telephones burn out. If touched, the telephone lines in most cases cause injury and death.

How do you damage railways?

- On railway lines you jam the points with stones or remove or cut the cable which operates the points. Result: Trains are derailed.
- You place an obstacle on open stretches of railway (place it at the right time). Result: Trains are derailed.
- You cut the wires to railway signals. Result: Trains collide.
- You leave out the lubricating oil from the axles of railway wagons and, if at all possible, put in sand or, to disguise what you have done, a mixture of sand and grease. Result: Axles run hot, in some circumstances wagons begin to burn, this can lead, in the case of trains carrying fuel or ammunition, to explosions and makes stretches of railway temporarily or even permanently unusable.
- Destruction of control apparatus of any kind. Result: Breakdown of machinery.

The most important thing …

- Don’t let yourself be caught. Play stupid, be resourceful, always be using new tricks and ways, then success will be certain.

Wherever the enemy may breakthrough he’ll meet everywhere our home front. We shall fight our fight until the hour of the German soldier strikes again, until our Wehrmacht finally cleans German territory of its enemies.

We are fighting for this hour, our war is our victory!

Werewolves, attack!

Read this and pass it on to your comrades!

Appendix VI
German propaganda leaflet, 1945



Kamerad!

Die Bolschewisten haben alles auf eine Karte gesetzt: Durch einen Massenansturm ohnegleichen wollen sie jetzt die Entscheidung des Krieges und die Niederwerfung des Reiches erzwingen.

Du weißt, was ein Gelingen dieser Absicht bedeuten würde: Tierischer Haß, Plünderung, Brand, Hunger, Genickschuß, Verschleppung und Ausrottung folgen hinter den bolschewistischen Horden. Du kennst diesen unmenschlichen Feind. Willst du ihm die Heimat ausliefern? **Willst du ihm Weib und Kind, Mutter, Schwester und Braut preisgeben?**

Jeder Deutsche, der überhaupt eine Waffe führen kann, Greis oder Hitlerjunge, ob Kriegsversehrter oder Arbeitsinvalide, Rüstungsarbeiter oder Bauer, jeder, der ein Mann ist, hat nun im Grenzland die Waffe ergriffen, um die Heimat vor dem Zugriff des bolschewistischen Mordgesindels zu retten und **die deutschen Frauen und Mädchen vor der Schändung und Abschlachtung durch die bolschewistischen Bluthunde zu bewahren.**

Sie alle sind entschlossen, dafür ihr Leben in die Schanze zu schlagen. Sie alle schauen jetzt auf dich. Was wirst du tun, jetzt, wo es um Leib und Leben auch der Deinen, wo es um Sein oder Nichtsein Aller und auf jedem Fußbreit Erde um das Schicksal Deutschlands geht?

In hunderten Schlachten hast du die bolschewistischen Horden im Angriff und in der Abwehr blutig geschlagen, hast du ihnen die vernichtendsten Niederlagen zugefügt. Du weißt selbst am besten, daß sie dir als Soldat niemals auch nur das Wasser reichen können. Du bist trotz ihrer Übermacht doch immer der Herr des Schlachtfeldes geblieben und sie mußten ihre Vormärsche mit ungeheuren Opfern bezahlen.

Jetzt geht Stalin aufs Ganze: Alles, was er noch besitzt, hat er in die Schlacht geworfen, um die Entscheidung des Krieges zu erzwingen.

Jetzt, Kamerad, steh fest und schlage dich. Jetzt geht es auf biegen oder brechen, um Sein oder Nichtsein Deutschlands. **An deiner Standhaftigkeit und an deiner Härte** werden sich die verlierten Horden der bolschewistischen Frauenschänder und Mädchenmörder verbluten. An den Grenzen des Reiches, auf unserem eigenen Boden wird ihr Ansturm blutig wie nie zuvor zerschellen. Das ganze deutsche Volk steht hinter dir, fanatisch entschlossen, mit allen Mitteln sein Leben und seine Freiheit zu behaupten. In unerschütterlichem Trotze und mit rastloser Energie schmiedet die Heimat mitten im schwersten Bombenhagel dir die Waffen, setzt sie alles daran, um dir in diesem wilden Kampfe mit allen ihren Kräften zu helfen.

Deine Kameraden im Westen und im Süden stehen fest und halten dir den Rücken frei. In deine Hand ist nun die Entscheidung gelegt. Sieger in unzähligen Schlachten, wirst du auch in dieser entscheidenden Stunde, den Vernichtungswillen eines haßerfüllten und verlierten Feindes gegen deine Frau und deine Kinder, gegen deine Mutter, Schwester und Braut, gegen deine und ihre Zukunft zu schanden machen.

Es lebe Deutschland!

Es lebe der Führer!

Reiss & Comp., Treppau - 18 500 I. 45 - 1568

Comrade!

The Bolsheviks have gambled everything on one card: by a mass-attack

without equal they now want to force the outcome of the war and the downfall of the Reich.

You know what it would mean if they succeeded in this: bestial hatred, plundering, burning, hunger, shooting in the back of the neck, deportation and extermination follow behind the Bolshevik hordes. You know this inhuman enemy. Will you give up your homeland to him? **Will you leave women and children, mother, sister and bride to his mercy?**

Every German man who can carry a weapon, an old man or a Hitler Youth, whether war-wounded or invalid, armaments worker or farmer, every one who is a man, has now taken up arms along the frontier to rescue our homeland from the clutches of the murderous Bolshevik rabble and **to save German women and girls from violation and slaughter by the Bolshevik blood-hounds.**

They are all determined to risk their lives for this. They are all now looking to you. What will you do, when it's a matter of life and death for your nearest and dearest, when it's about the existence or destruction of everything and when on every inch of soil it's a question of the fate of Germany?

In hundreds of battles you have struck a bloody blow against the Bolshevik hordes in attacks and in defence, you have inflicted the most shattering defeats on them. You yourself know best that they couldn't hold a candle to you as a soldier. In spite of their superiority, you have always remained the master of the battlefield and they had to pay for their advances with enormous sacrifices.

Now Stalin is going for broke: Everything he still has he has thrown into the battle in order to force the end of the war.

Now, comrade, stand fast and fight. Now it's bend or break, it's about the existence or destruction of Germany. **On your steadfastness and your hardness** the bestialised hordes of the Bolshevik rapists and girl-murderers will bleed to death. At the frontiers of the Reich, on our own soil, their attack will be smashed as never before. The whole German people is standing behind you, fanatically determined to stand up for their life and freedom with every means at their disposal. In unshakeable defiance and with restless energy the homeland is, in the heaviest hail of bombs, forging the weapons

for you, she is risking everything for this, to help you with all her power in this wild battle.

Your comrades in the West and in the South are standing fast and protecting your back. The outcome is now placed in your hands. Victor in countless battles, will you now, in this hour of decision, put to shame the destructive intentions of a hate-filled and bestialised enemy against your wife and your children, against your mother, sister and bride, against your and their future.

Long live Germany! Long live the Führer!

Appendix VII
Soviet propaganda leaflet directed at Hitler Youth fighting in defence of Breslau, April 1945



Lesen und an die Kameraden weitergeben!

An die Mitglieder der Hitlerjugend!

Ihr alle habt bereits erkannt, daß Hitler den Krieg verloren hat. Die Nazipartei und ihre Führer sind vollständig bankrott. Das Naziregime bricht überall zusammen. In jenem größeren Teil Deutschlands, der nun von den Truppen der Verbündeten besetzt ist, gibt es weder Hitlerregime, noch Hitlerpartei, noch Hitlerführer.

Hitler und seine Trabanten sind dem Untergang geweiht!

Bald erwartet sie eine strenge Bestrafung. Sie versuchen jedoch, ihre Galgenfrist zu verlängern und zwingen Euch deshalb zu weiterem sinnlosen Widerstand. Dadurch geben sie Euch dem Untergang preis. Zu diesem Zweck schüchtern Euch die Hitleristen damit ein, die Russen würden angeblich die Mitglieder der Hitlerjugend vernichten.

Glaubt nicht diesen gemeinen Lügen!

In Wirklichkeit wird **weder einfachen Mitgliedern der Nazipartei noch den Mitgliedern der Hitlerjugend etwas geschehen falls sie sich loyal zu den Sowjettruppen verhalten werden.**

Zehntausende Jugendliche sind in den von der Roten Armee besetzten Gauen geblieben. Keiner von ihnen wurde verfolgt. Hunderttausende Gefangene aus den Reihen der Hitlerjugend befinden sich in Rußland. Sie alle sind heil und gesund.

DAS IST DIE WAHRHEIT!

Hitlerjungen!

Hitler zwingt Euch, bis zum Letzten für ein kleines Häuflein dem Untergang geweihter Verbrecher zu kämpfen. **Dadurch beraubt er Euch Eurer Zukunft und gibt Euch dem unvermeidlichen Tode preis.**

Wir aber fordern Euch auf, den Widerstand einzustellen, die Front zu verlassen und nach Hause zu gehen oder Euch in Gefangenschaft zu begeben.

DAMIT WEISEN WIR EUCH DEN WEG ZUR RETTUNG!
Das ist der einzig richtige Weg für Euch! HANDELT!

838 24.4.45

Read and pass on to your comrades!

To the members of the Hitler Youth!

You have all already realised that Hitler has lost the war. The Nazi Party and its leaders are completely bankrupt. The Nazi régime is collapsing everywhere. In that greater part of Germany which is now occupied by Allied troops there is neither Hitler régime, nor Hitler Party, nor Hitler Führer.

Hitler and his satellites are doomed!

A heavy punishment awaits them very soon. But they are still trying to prolong their stay of execution and for this are forcing you to put up more senseless resistance. For this they are giving you up to destruction. To this end, the Hitlerists are frightening you with the rumour that the Russians are supposed to exterminate the members of the Hitler Youth.

Don't believe these filthy lies!

In reality **nothing will happen either to ordinary members of the Nazi Party or to the members of the Hitler Youth if they behave loyally to the Soviet troops.**Tens of thousands of young people have stayed in the *Gaue* occupied by the Red Army. None of them was persecuted. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners from the ranks of the Hitler Youth are now in Russia. They are all safe and sound.

This is the truth!

Hitler Youth!

Hitler is forcing you to fight to the finish for a little clique of doomed criminals. **In doing so, he is robbing you of your future and giving you up to inevitable death.**

But we are asking you give up your resistance, leave the front and go home or give yourselves up as prisoners.

WE ARE SHOWING YOU HOW TO SAVE YOURSELVES!
This is the only right way for you! Do it now!

Appendix VIII
German propaganda leaflet, Breslau, 1945



Männer von Breslau!

Unsere Gauhauptstadt Breslau ist zur Festung erklärt worden. Die Evakuierung der Stadt von Frauen und Kindern läuft und wird in Kürze abgeschlossen sein. Ich habe den Gauamtsleiter für Volkswohlfahrt mit der Durchführung dieser Aktion beauftragt. Für die Betreuung der Frauen und Kinder wird geschehen, was möglich ist.

Unsere Aufgabe als Männer ist es, alles zu tun, was die Unterstützung der kämpfenden Truppe erfordert.

Ich rufe die Männer Breslaus auf, sich in die Verteidigungsfront unserer Festung Breslau einzureihen! Die Festung wird bis zum Äußersten verteidigt.

Wer die Waffe nicht führen kann, hat in den Versorgungsbetrieben, im Nachschub, bei der Aufrechterhaltung der Ordnung mit allen Kräften zu helfen. Niederschlesische Volkssturmmänner, die an der Grenze unseres Gaues bolschewistische Panzer mit Erfolg bereits bekämpften, haben bewiesen, daß sie unsere Heimat bis zum Letzten zu verteidigen bereit sind. Wir werden ihnen nicht nachstehen.

Breslau, den 21 Januar 1945

Hanke

Men of Breslau!

Our *Gau* capital Breslau has been declared a fortress. The evacuation of women and children from the town is under way and will shortly be completed. I have entrusted to the *Gau* Administrator for Welfare the implementation of this measure. Everything possible will be done to look after the women and children.

Our task as men is to do everything required to support the fighting troops.

I call upon the men of Breslau to join the defensive front of our Fortress Breslau! The fortress will be defended to the last ounce of our strength.

Whoever cannot carry a weapon can help with all their power in provision, in supplies, in maintaining order. The men of the Lower Saxony *Volkssturm* who have already been successfully fighting Soviet tanks on the borders of our *Gau* have proved that they are prepared to defend our homeland to the last. We shall not fail to live up to their example.

Breslau, 21 January 1945

Hanke

Gauleiter and [illegible]

Appendix IX
A view of the “other side”

The author extracted the following from a Soviet publication produced in 1971

In the schoolyard of Moscow School No.110, on a low concrete base are five bronze sculptures. They show boys in uniform, no symbolic heroes but my fellow-pupils, my contemporaries who never got to grow old. I still remember their names exactly: Grischa Rodin, Igor Kupzow, Gabor Raab, Jura Diwilkowski and Igor Boguschewski.

Together with Gabor I went to school in the lower forms. We lived in the same street and I knew his father Izo Gabor well, the brother of the Hungarian writer and revolutionary Maté Zalka.

Gabor wanted to be a physicist. When he came into the sixth form he began to take a course in mathematics and physics at Moscow University. He always excelled, perhaps because he used to be such a dazzlingly quick learner and had a sunny Hungarian disposition.

Igor Kupzow was nominated the “most reliable boy in the class”. His mother worked in the school as a cloakroom lady. She had brought up three children and was, as the pupils used to say, “everyone’s comforter and advocate”.

Igor wanted to be a historian, Jura Diwilkowski a poet and both Grischa Rodin and Igor Boguschewski travelling researchers.

In 1941 they all became soldiers. They put on their soldiers’ overcoats and never took them off again. Wrapped in their soldier’s overcoats they were also buried. Grischa Rodin fell at Moscow, Igor Kupzow and Gabor Raab at Berlin, Juri Diwilkowski in the Ukraine, and Igor Boguschewski in Poland.



The pictures above show four of the schoolboys on old photographs (from left): Grigori Rodin, favourite subject geography, dreamed of research trips into far countries; Igor Kupzow, whom his fellow-pupils remember as "very serious and level-headed", wanted to become a historian; Gabor Raab, favourite subject physics, was particularly interested in scientific discoveries; Juri Dawilkowski wrote poems, some of which had already been published; there is no photograph of Igor Buguschewski, the fifth pupil from this class who was killed. (AGK-Verlag)



To hold them in honour, a memorial with the title "They are not forgotten" was erected. (AGK-Verlag)

Their memorial was made by their fellow-pupil, the sculptor Daniel Mitjanksi. He, too, had worn a soldier's overcoat and he could not come to terms with the fact that five of his friends had gone away for ever, that they would never again meet in Moscow, the Suvorov Boulevard and the school near the Nikitski Gate.

Very many people came to the unveiling of the memorial in 1971. On the inscription at the foot of the monument another 100 names are inscribed: '2 teachers and 98 pupils of Moscow School No. 110 who never came home from the war.'

NOTES

Foreword

1. Führer Headquarters, 4 September 1943, NS 26/v.358.
2. Dr Jutta Rüdiger *Die Hitlerjugend und ihr Selbstverständnis* (Lindhorst 1983).

Introduction

1. Order 36/45.

PART I
Chapter 1

1. Kurt von Tippelskirch *Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges* Band 2 (Bonn, 1956, new ed., pp.486–487).
2. *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa* Band III: *Das Schicksal der Deutschen in Rumänien* (Bonn, 1957, pp.63–66).
3. Ibid., pp.74–78.
4. Rumanian: Tirgu Mures.
5. Report of O.F. to the author, 2 pages.
6. Report of F. Sch. to the author, 10 typed pages.
7. Rumanian: Sf. Gheorge.
8. Report of F. Sch. to the author, 10 typed pages.
9. Report of G.H. to the author, 4 handwritten pages.
10. Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 19 V, Kriegstagebuch Heeresgruppe Südukraine, 20 August–15 September 1944.
11. Report from Dr R.S. in Schw., H.H. in N., and Werner Bonfert in W. to the author.

Chapter 2

1. Josef Schmidt, *Die Donauschwaben 1944– 1964*, Munich 1966.
2. Ibid., p.6.
3. Johann Wüscht, *Beitrag zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Jugoslawien für den Zeitraum von 1934–1944*, Keh./Rh. 1966, p 63ff.
4. Josef Schmidt, op.cit., p 39.
5. Ibid., p 40.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid, p 41.
8. Franz Germann, letter to the author, 2 typed pages.
9. Walter Neuner's account of his experience, 28 typed pages in the author's archives.

Chapter 3

1. Hans Christ, "Der 8 Mai 1945 im Selbsterlebnis" in *Süddeutsche Vierteljahresblätter*, 2/85, pp. 86–91.
2. Letter from "G.P." dated 17 January 1994, 8 pages, in the author's archives.
3. The full name is given in G.P.'s written account.
4. After the fall of Budapest on 11 February 1945, the Soviet troops stood poised to conquer the rest of Hungary. But Hitler was trying to save the oilfields in the vicinity of the Plattensee. On 6 March 1945, the 6th SS Panzer Army broke out to the north of the Plattensee and mounted a counter-attack, in order to push forward in a southerly direction to Baja. From Army Group E (Löhr) in Croatia, German units struck at Mohács. Operation *Frühlingserwachen* ("Spring Awakening"), however, failed because of the bad weather conditions, lack of fuel and the fierce opposition of the Soviets.By 16 March they were advancing against Army Group South ; by 4 April they were already standing at the gates of Vienna. See *Atlas zum II Weltkrieg*, Köln 1973, p.2.
5. From the written account of "A.R.", dated 13 November 1994, in the author's archives.

PART II

Chapter 1

1. Hellmuth Günther Dahms, *Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, Tübingen, 1965, p.766.
2. Dr Udo Kollatz, verbally to the author. At the age of 12 Udo Kollatz was severely wounded in the course of his service as a *Jungvolk* boy in Königsberg. Together with other boys, they were commissioned by their *Jungbannführer* to take charge of a frontline cinema, among other duties.
3. Ost-Dokumentation. 10 Nr. Opr. XI. C/4, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.
4. Hanna Reisch, resident in Staffel, *Kreis* Limburg/Lahn, verbally in a conversation with the author.
5. Letter from Hans Stroh, clergyman, in the author's archives.
6. *Neue Revue*, 24/1967.
7. Letter from B. Funk, in the author's archives.
8. K. Dieckert & H. Grossman, *Der Kampf um Ostpreußen*, Munich 1960.
9. Ibid.
10. Hans Graf von Lehndorf, *Ostpreußisches Tagebuch*, Munich 1961, pp. 43–44.

Chapter 2

1. Wilhelm Tieke, *Das Ende zwischen Oder und Elbe*, Stuttgart 1981.
2. *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten*, Heidelberg 1951.
3. *Das Heer*, Vol. III, Frankfurt/M. In November 1944 997,000, in December 1,253,000, and in January 1945 1,200,00 *Panzerfäuste* were produced. In this connection cf. also Albert Speer, *Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, p.579, and Ploetz, *Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, Würzburg, 1960, p.126.
4. 'N.N.' in a written account sent to the author, in the author's archives.
5. Georg Galla, in a written account sent to the author, in the author's archives.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

8. *Volkischer Beobachter* no.30, 1945, p.3, and Gerhard von Seemen, *Die Ritterkreuzträger 1939–1945*, Bad Neuheim 1955, p.192. However, see also Appendix II, footnote 5, below.
9. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 10 February 1945, p.3.
10. *Tauber-Zeitung*, Bad Mergentheim, 20 March 1945.
11. Wolfgang Paul, *Der Endkampf in Deutschland*, Munich 1976, pp.250–252.
12. Ibid, p.256.
13. Günther Fraschka, *Das letzte Aufgebot*, Rastatt 1960.
14. Wolfgang Paul, *Der Heimatkrieg 1939–1945*, p.380.
15. Hans von Ahlfen, *Der Kampf um Schlesien*, Stuttgart 1976 ; cf. also von Ahlfen & Niehoff, *So kämpfte Breslau*, Munich 1959, p.126.
16. Werner Klose, *Generation im Gleichschritt*, Oldenburg 1964, p.264.
17. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Erlebnisberichte, Ost-Dokumentation 2, no. 182, pp. 1–8, *Kreis* Görlitz.
18. Hans von Ahlfen, op.cit., p.120.
19. Harald Scholz, *Nationalsozialistische Ausleseschulen*, Göttingen 1973. When referring to a "second Langemarck" the author is recalling the mass slaughter of young German volunteers during the campaign of 1914/15 during actions which centred on the town of Langemarck.
20. Soldatenbrief no.16 from the Thüringen Adolf Hitler School, 28 February 1945, p.4.
21. Horst Weinbrenner, Nassau/L., verbally to the author, 25 September 1973.
22. Ibid.
23. Red Army leaflet, TO THE MEMBERS OF THE HITLER YOUTH! dated 24 April 1945, Bundesarchiv Koblenz. See Appendix VII.
24. Horst Weinbrenner, verbally to the author, 25 September 1973.
25. R. Hackenberg, letter to the author, in the author's archives.
26. Günther Fraschka, *Das letzte Aufgebot*, Rastatt 1960.

Chapter 3

1. Erich Murawski, *Die Eroberung Pommerns durch die Rote Armee*, Boppard 1969.
2. Militärarchiv Freiburg/ Brsg. RH 19 XV/16k.

3. Erich Murawski, op.cit., p.37.
4. Ibid, p.37.
5. Ibid., p.359/60.
6. Ibid., p.37.
7. Ibid., p.38.
8. Letters from Heinrich Müller and J. Klopp, both in the author's archives.
9. Saint-Loup, *Legion der Aufrechten*, Leoni am Starnberger See, n.d., p.219.
10. Verbally to the author.
11. Herbert Reinecker, *Kinder, Mütter und ein General*, Darmstadt 1953.

Chapter 4

1. Letter from Horst Voigt, in the author's archives.
2. Wolfgang Paul, *Der Heimatkrieg 1939–1945*, Esslingen 1980, p.380.
3. Letter from R. Richter, in the author's archives.
4. Letter from Werner Mund, in the author's archives.
5. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS-Führung, Amt. VI and VIa.
6. W.D. Benndorf, Search service of the German Red Cross, Munich, report of 15 May 1962.
7. Search service of the German Red Cross Munich, Report of Dr Franz Christ, 18 June 1962.
8. Letter from J. Kocker, in the author's archives.
9. Paul-Gerhardt Gleininger, clergyman in Raben, *Kreis* Belzig, account in the author's archives and in those of the Superintendant of Belzig.
10. Letter from H. Orth, in the author's archives.
11. Letter from Willi Pieper, in the author's archives.
12. Horst Voigt, account, in the author's archives.

Chapter 5

1. Peter Gosztony, *Der Kampf um Berlin 1945*, Düsseldorf 1970, p.240; cf. also Werner Haupt, *Berlin 1945*, Rastatt 1962, p.59.
2. Ibid, p.225.
3. Grigorii Konstantinovic Schukov, Erinnerungen und Gedanken, Stuttgart 1969, p.577; cf. also W. Tschuikow, *Das Ende des dritten Reiches*,

Munich 1966, p.172.

4. Erich Kuby, *Die Russen in Berlin*, Munich 1965, pp.147/8.
5. Schukow, p.583/84. In contrast, see Haupt, p.60 and Gosztony, p.219.
6. *Verteidigungsabschnitt in Berlin, Frühjahr 1945*. Cf. Gosztony, *Der Kampf um Berlin 1945 in Augenzeugenberichten*, Düsseldorf 1970, p.226.
7. Jean Mabire, *Berlin im Todeskampf*, Munich 1977, p.387; cf. also *Deutsches Soldatenjahrbuch*, ed. Helmut Damerau, Munich 1965, p.73.
8. *Völkischer Beobachter*, Berlin edition of 26 April 1945, p.2.
9. Schukow, p.583, 596–7 and 601; cf. also Tschuikow, p.173.
10. Letter from Horst Häcker, in the author's archives.
11. Letter from Franz Liehr, in the author's archives.
12. Letter from Dr Scherrinsky, in the author's archives.
13. Willi Fey, *Panzer im Brennpunkt der Fronten*, Munich 1959.
14. Tschuikow, p.173.
15. Theodor Plivier, *Berlin 1945*, 1954, p.606.
16. Ibid, pp.123–126.
17. Werner Haupt, op.cit., p.109.
18. Letter from Dr Ernst Schlünder, in the author's archives.
19. Letter from Gerd Gnewuch, in the author's archives.
20. Gerhard Boldt, *Die letzten Tage der Reichskanzlei*, Hamburg 1964, p.86. Boldt is also cited by Erich Kuby, *Die Russen in Berlin*, Munich 1965, p.117. His assertion that at the Pichelsdorf bridges only 500 out of 5,000 Hitler Youth remained alive, is certainly mistaken. He must have misheard Dr E. Schlünder in his conversation with him.
21. Ruth-Andreas Friedrich, *Schauplatz Berlin 1938–45*, Berlin 1972; cf. also: Karl Koller, *Der letzte Monat*, Maanheim 1949; Paul David, *Am Königsplatz*, Zurich 1948.
22. Haupt, op.cit., p.109.
23. Ibid.
24. Eine Frau in Berlin, *Tagebuchaufzeichnungen*, Geneva and Frankfurt 1959, p.32.
25. Dieter Meischner, *Versuchs noch mal mit uns*, Hamburg 1948, pp.15f. and 34f.
26. *Wiking-Ruf*, vol. 2, 1953, no. 16, pp.2–5.
27. Hellmuth Bergk, *Der Bunker am Zoo*, Rastatt, n.d., p.41.

28. Ibid., p.42.
29. Joachim Fest, *Hitler*, Stuttgart 1976, p.1002.
30. Letters from the search service of the German Red Cross, from the German War Graves Commission, from the Deutsch Dienststelle Berlin, from the district archives of Berlin, and from Heide Böhmer, who wrote, "In east Berlin there is a quite neglected cemetery for thousands of Hitler Youth". All letters are in the author's archives. In addition I received letters from Rev. Bluhm, who told me ".. on 28 April 1945, Karl-Heinz Kyssel, born on 11.9.1930, was killed in Spandau", and from Annemarie Draeger, who commented "… a fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth boy was killed in Spandau. His father found him some days later dead in an area of allotments".
31. Werner Hoy, *Todesschwingen über Berlin*, Munich, n.d., pp.72–73.
32. Cornelius Ryan, *Der letzte Kampf*, Munich 1975, p.337.
33. Letter from Captain Hans Happacher (ret'd.), in the author's archives.
34. *Bild Zeitung*, "Die letzten fünfzig Tage", 28 April 1975.
35. Ibid, 24 April 1975.
36. Hildegard Knef, *Der geschenkte Gaul*, Frankfurt 1972, pp.67–68.
37. Jean Mabire, *Berlin im Todeskampf*, Preussisch-Ohlendorf, 1977, p.218ff.
38. Werner Haupt, op.cit.
39. Ibid, p.150.
40. Jelena Rskewskaja, "Endkampf in Berlin – Aufzeichnungen einer Militärdolmetscherin", *Mitteilungsblatt ehemaliger Offiziere (DDR)*, May 1966, p.16.
41. Helmut Altner, *Totentanz Berlin*, Offenbach 1947, p.123.
42. Ibid, p.46, 91 and 102.
43. Ibid., p.124.
44. Ibid., p.123.
45. Fritzsche, op.cit., pp.39–40.
46. Werner Haupt, op.cit., p.175.
47. Helmut Sommer, account, in the author's archives.
48. Translator's note: An approximate translation of this would be "explosive beans" (literally "beans that go bang")!
49. Helmut Sommer, account, in the author's archives.
50. Klaus Poche, *Das OKW gibt nichts mehr bekannt*, Deutscher

Militärverlag, East Berlin, 1969, p.69–70.

51. Helmut Altner, op.cit., p.160–61.
52. *Spandauer Volksblatt*, letter of 30 October 1973 from the editorial office to the author.

Chapter 6

1. Manfred Rauchsteiner, *Krieg in Österreich 1945*, Vienna 1970, p.79.
2. Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 19 V/63 and 62 from 26 February and 20 March 1945.
3. Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 19 V/63.
4. Ibid.
5. Militärarchiv Freiburg, RH 19 V/63, KTB, p.205.
6. Günther Hoy, "Die Schlußphase des Zweiten Weltkrieges auf österreichischem Boden", in *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1965, Heft 3, p.153.
7. Ibid.
8. Letter from *Oberstudienrat* Pauly, Adelsheim, in the author's archives.
9. Josef Buchinger, *Das Ende des tausendjährigen Reiches 1945*, Baden bei Wien, 1955, Vol. I, p.31.
10. *Geschichte der 3 Panzerdivision*, Berlin 1967, p.475 (Cf. also *Die Truppenzeichen der Verbände und Einheiten der deutschen Wehrmacht ... 1939–1945*, Vol. I, *Das Heer*, Osnabrück 1987, p.545.)
11. Letter from *Oberstudienrat* Pauly, in the author's archives.
12. Letter from Hans Feinweber from Bittenfeld/Württ., in the author's archives. I have received other letters on this subject from Paul Jung, clergyman in St Pölten, Lutheran Pastoral Office Amstetten, Hans Lang, in Kammer-Schörfling, all in the author's archives.
13. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Schumacher 143.
14. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Schumacher 243 and the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 19 April 1945, which stated "The regional leader of Styria, *Hauptbannführer* Eduard Danziger, has been killed as leader of a *Jagdkommando*".
15. *Tagespost Graz*, 28 April 1945, p.2.
16. Letter from Professor Kurt Frantz from Graz, in the author's archives.
17. Letter from former General Hubert Lanz, in the author's archives.

18. *Tagespost Graz*, 13 January 1945, p.4.
19. Josef Buchinger, op.cit., p.40–41. “On the southern slopes of the Teufelsstein (1,499m) on the Schanz Hitler Youth and a Flak detachment were deployed. They barred the Soviets’ way into the Mürz Valley. The Hitler Youth from Hartberg acted very bravely ; two were awarded the Iron Cross”.
20. Josef Buchinger, op.cit., 38.
21. Ibid.
22. Letter from Pastor Karl Held from Kapfenburg, in the author’s archives.
23. The head of the Fischbach Raiffeisenbank verbally to the author in the presence of Pastor Karld Held, Kapfenburg.
24. Josef Buchinger, op.cit., 90–91.
25. Letter from the Mayor of Biedermannsdorf, in the author’s archives.
26. Josef Buchinger, op.cit., p.116.
27. Ibid, p.128.
28. Ibid., p.180.
29. Verbal accounts. Present were the author and Schools Inspector Albert Howurek from Mistelbach.
30. Mannhardsbrunn parish records, extract, in the author’s archives.
31. Parish records of Groß-Ebersdorf.
32. Ibid.
33. Letter from Gerhard Litschel, in the author’s archives.
34. Ralph Roland Ringler, *Illusion einer Jugend, Hitler-Jugend in Österreich. Ein Erlebnisbericht*, St Pölten 1977.
35. Ibid., p.1.
36. Letter from Karl Schilling, clergyman and dean, in the author’s archives.
37. Letter from Albert Howurek, in the author’s archives.
38. *Neue Revue*, 1967, no.28, p.18.
39. Schirach, Baldur von, *Ich glaube an Hitler*, Hamburg 1967.
40. Ibid., p.312ff and Henriette von Schirach, *Der Preis der Herrlichkeit*, Wiesbaden 1956, p.56. Three companies of HJ battalion *Werwolf* served in Rauchensteiner.
41. General Bünau, quoted in Rauchsteiner, p.124 and 126.
42. Buchinger, op.cit., p.303, 323, 331 in Vol.I.
43. Ringler, op.cit., p.170f.
44. Ibid.

45. *Neue Revue*, 1967, no.28, p.17.

PART III

Chapter 1

1. Letter from Rudolf Dübler, in the author's archives.
2. Letter from Gerrit Warsen, in the author's archives.
3. Helmut Müller, *Fünf vor Null – Die Besetzung des Münsterlandes 1945*, 7th edition, 1974, p.62.
4. Ibid., p.50.
5. Ibid., p.91.
6. Letter from Johann Hinrichs, in the author's archives.
7. Hermann Schwarzwälder, *Bremen und Nordwestdeutschland am Kriegsende 1945*, Bremen, 1971–1974, 3 vols, Vol. II, p.226.
8. Ibid., p.66.
9. Ibid., p.78f.
10. Ibid., p.110.
11. Ibid., p.147.
12. City archives of Wilhelmshaven, letter, in the author's archives.
13. Letter from Lieutenant-General H. Flörke (ret'd.), in the author's archives.
14. Willi Klapproth, *Kriegschronik 1945 der Stadt Soltau und Umgebung,* Soltau 1955, pp.69, 72, 74, 77, 153.
15. Heinz Meyer, *Damals. Der Zweite Weltkrieg zwischen Teutoburger Wald, Weser und Leine*, Pr. Oldendorf 1980, p.103.

Chapter 2

1. Verbal information from Rudolf Kübler, from Heringen.
2. German News Bureau, Berlin, 30 November 1944.
3. Letter from Heinrich Bosch, in the author's archives.
4. Letter from F.L. Mand, in the author's archives.
5. Ibid.
6. Harald Scholz, *Nationalsozialistische Ausleseschulen*, Göttingen 1973.
7. Werner Haupt, *Das Ende im Westen 1945*, 1977, p.105. In addition, I

also received a letter from the *Oberstadtdirektor* of Castrop-Rauxel, who confirms this account.
8. Letter from Josef Bannert, in the author's archives.
9. Letter from Werner Mund, in the author's archives.
10. A. Huyskens, *Der Kreis Meschede unter der Feuerwalze des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, Bielefeld 1949, p.33, 40, and 41.

Chapter 3

1. Letter from F. Hochgrebe, retired clergyman, in the author's archives.
2. August Winnig, *Aus zwanzig Jahren*, Hamburg 1949, p.194.
3. Probably 2nd Panzer Division.
4. Letter from Dr Georg Pilikat, in the author's archives.
5. Letter from Hans Kopp, in the author's archives.
6. Letter from Heinrich Bosch, in the author's archives.
7. Manfred Bornemann, *Schicksalstage im Harz. Das Geschehen im April 1945*, Clausthal-Zellerfeld 1974, p.74. Appeal of the Gauleiter Hartmann Lauterbacher of 7 April 1945 in the *Südhannoversche Zeitung*.
8. Ibid., p.25.
9. Ibid., p.81, 92, 95, and 101.

Chapter 4

1. Letter from Ottmar Weber, in the author's archives.
2. W. Hartmann (Oberstudienrat), verbally.
3. Letter from Frau Schulz, secondary school teacher in Hanau, in the author's archives.
4. Letter from Herr Schumann, Senior Director of Studies, in the author's archives.
5. *Tuttlinger Zeitung* of 21 April 1945.

Chapter 5

1. Franz Kurowski, *Von den Ardennen zum Ruhrkessel*, Herford 1965.
2. Kurt von Tippelskirch, *Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, 2nd edition, Bonn, 1956, pp.551–552.

3. Ibid., p.554.
4. City Archives, Frankfurt/Main, letter, in the author's archives.
5. Information given verbally (16 December 1973) by Ernst Hensel, Limburg/L., Otto Schäfer Otto, Diez a.d. Lahn; letters from Wilfried Grauling and Rev. W. Handwerk, both in the author's archives.
6. Ibid.
7. Alois Stadtmüller, *Aschaffenburg im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Aschaffenburg, 1970, p.326, 330 and 329; cf. also the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 3 April 1945.
8. *Heilbronner Chronik 1944–1955*,p.13; *Zehn Jahre wie ein Jahrhundert*, a special edition of the *Heilbronner Stimme* of 31 December 1955.
9. In a letter to the author, Ernst Wurst wrote, "There were 25–40 Hitler Youth. The youngest was fourteen years old. These boys were involved in the fighting in Untergruppenbach, five kilometres from Heibronn". Rev. E. Meyer similarly wrote to the author that in Untergruppenbach a "HJ lad born in 1932 was killed". Both letters are in the author's archives.
10. Verbally from Elfi Gebert, resident in Baumerlenbach.
11. Account of the Director of Studies of the Town Scientific Grammar School in Wuppertal-Eberfeld, in the author's archives.
12. Paul Högg, *Ellwangen wird Kriegsschauplatz*, Ellwangen 1949, p.46.
13. Alan Milward, *Die deutsche Kriegswirtschaft 1939–45*, Stuttgart 1960, p.94f.
14. Gerhard Jünger, *Das Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges im Kreise Reutlingen*, Reutlingen, 1971, pp.70–73.
15. Ibid., pp.70–73.
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17. Ibid., p.212f.
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Chapter 6

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2. Georg Schelling, *Festung Vorarlberg*, Bregenz, 1947, p.34.
3. Ibid., p.87.
4. Ibid., p.88.
5. Ibid., p.192, 197, and 199.
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Chapter 7

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2. Letter from 'N.N.', in the author's archives.
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Appendix II

1. Franz Seidler, *Der Deutsche Volkssturm 1944/45*, Munich 1989, p.341.
2. Johannes Steinhof (Ed.) *Deutsche im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Zeitzeugen sprechen*, Munich 1989, pp.613–619.
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9. Hans Fritsche, *Hier spricht Hans Fritsche,* Zurich 1948, p.51.
10. Hans-Jürgen Eitner, *Hitlers Deutsche*, Gernsbach 1990, p.525.
11. See Jean Mabire, *Berlin im Todeskampf 1945. Französische Freiwillige der Waffen-SS verteidigen die Reichshauptstadt*, Preußisch Oldendorf 1977, p.218–220.
12. Melita Maschmann, *Fazit. Mein Weg in der Hitler-Jugend*, Munich 1979, p.169f.
13. Marshal Vassily Shuikov, *Das Ende des Dritten Reiches*, Munich 1966, p.173.

Appendix III

1. *Deutscher Volksbote*, Budapest, 26 May 1944, p.7. In the 1960s, the author of this article and the co-author of the pamphlet, Dr Franz Riedl, teacher at the ethnic German Jakob Bleyer Grammar School just missed receiving the *Grosse Bundesverdienstkreuz* [Great Federal Cross of

Merit]. In Stuttgart everything for the reception of honour had been prepared by the Hungarian German Guild, the sandwiches made, the champagne on ice … An even greater anti-Semite, Dr Hans Krauss, from 1942–1944 chief editor of the *Siebenbürgische Deutsche Zeitung* in Bistritz, his hatred of the Jews every bit as great as that of Julius Streicher in *Der Stürmer*, received this high honour from Federal President Gustav Heinemann – as assistant secretary in the Bavarian Ministry of Economics in Munich.

2. Hans Holzträger, "Erinnerungen an Juden in Nordsiebenbürgen", in *Zugänge*, September 1988, pp.94–109. Cf. also David Hirsch (Ed.), "Gedenkbuch der jüdischen Gemeinde aus Regen und Umgebung", in *Zugänge*, April 1989, pp.121–124.
3. "Im Massengrab", in Gerhard Schoenberner (Ed.) *Wir haben es gesehen. Augenzeugenberichte über die Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich*, Wiesbaden, 1988 (2nd ed.), pp.377–387.
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5. Ibid., p.516.
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7. Fred Barth, *Nicht zu jung zum Sterben*, Vienna 1988.
8. See Appendix II.
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12. Ibid., No.072, *Regensburg 23.4.1945.*
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15. Ibid., No.120, *Soltau* 11.4.1945.
16. Ibid., No 168, *Quedlinburg* 10/11.4.1945.
17. Fred Barth, *Nicht zu jung zum Sterben*, Vienna 1988, pp.250–253, quoting from the *Neues Österreich* of 6 April 1947.
18. Account of Adolf Matuscheck, "Die letzten Schüsse", in the *Rieder Volkszeitung* of 13 May 1965, p.19.

GLOSSARY

Allgemeine SS	lit. “General SS”
Ausbildungsdivision	Training Division
Bann	Nazi administrative area, approximately equivalent to a district. A HJ *Bann* normally consisted of approximately 3,000 boys.
Bund Deutscher Mädel	League of German Girls, female equivalent of the Hitler Youth
Ersatzbataillon	Reserve battalion
Ersatbrigade	Reserve brigade
Ersatzkommando	Reserve command
Festung	lit. “fortress”, although in 1944/45 Hitler frequently applied this term to towns which lacked any real defences
Gau	Nazi administrative district (*Gaue* = plural)
Gauleiter	High-ranking Nazi Party official responsible for a *Gau*
Generaloberst	General
Grossadmiral	Grand Admiral
Hauptmann	Captain
Heimatschutz	Home Defence Force
HJ-Bannführer	Mid-ranking HJ official in command of approx. 3,000 boys
HJ-Gebietsführer	High-ranking HJ official, responsible for approx. 100,000 boys
HJ-Gefolgschaftführer	Lower-ranking HJ official, responsible for approx. 150 boys
HJ-Hauptbannführer	High-ranking HJ official, ranking between an *HJ-Oberbannführer* and *HJ-Gebietsführer*
HJ-Oberbannführer	High-ranking HJ official, ranking below a *HJ-Hauptbannführer*
HJ-Obergebietsführer	High-ranking HJ official, responsible for approx. 500,000 boys
HJ-Obergefolgschaftführer	Lower-ranking HJ official, responsible for several hundred boys
HJ-Stammführer	Mid-ranking HJ official responsible for approx. 600 boys
Honvéd	Hungarian army
Jagdbataillon	lit. “hunting battalion”, but in this case, one of a myriad of terms used to refer to combat units during the final phase of the war
Jagdkommando	lit. “hunting commando”, mainly referring to units formed for anti-tank and other combat duties towards the end of the war
Jugendführer	Youth Leader
Jungvolk	The junior section of the Hitler Youth, for boys aged between ten and fourteen years
Kampfgruppe	Battle group

Kreis	Administrative region, approximately equivalent to a county in size
Kreisleiter	A Nazi Party official in charge of a *Kreis*
Kriegsfreiwilliger	War volunteer
Landesjugendführer	Regional Youth Leader
Lebensraum	Territory which the Germans believed was needed for their population's natural development
Nahkampfbrigade	Close-combat brigade
Napola School	Napola was the abbreviated version of *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten*, or N.P.E.A., meaning National Political Educational Institutes. In effect, these were special schools for the élite of the Hitler Youth, aged between ten and eighteen years.
Oberleutnant	Lieutenant
Organisation Todt	Nazi organisation responsible for constructing defensive and other structures, e.g. the West Wall.
Ortsgruppenleiter	A Nazi Party official usually responsible for the political and administrative affairs of a small town or district of a larger city
Panzerjagd unit	'Tank hunting' troops
Panzernahkampf units	Close-combat anti-tank troops
Panzervernichtung units	Anti-tank troops
Panzerzerstörer units	'Tank destruction' troops (n.b. - all four of the above unit types fulfilled essentially identical combat roles)
Pimpfe	lit. "squirt", in this sense referring to members of the *Deutsche Jungvolk* aged 10-14 years
Reichsarbeitsdienst	National Labour Service, also known as RAD
Rittmeister	Captain (a rank used in cavalry and transport units)
Soldbuch	Military passbook
Sonderkommando	lit. "special unit", normally refers to a unit created for a specific military purpose or action
SS-Brigadeführer	Major-General
SS-Gruppenführer	Lieutenant-General
SS-Hauptscharführer	Sergeant Major
SS-Hauptsturmführer	Captain
SS-Obergruppenführer	General
SS-Obersturmführer	Lieutenant
SS-Unterscharführer	Corporal
SS-Untersturmführer	2nd Lieutenant
Stabsleiter	Staff Leader
Sturmgewehr 44	Assault rifle, the concept of which was a forerunner of the AK 47
Volksbund	lit. "People's League", but referring in this case to an ethnic group's governing body
Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle	Ethnic German Central Office
Volksgruppe	Ethnic group, sometimes also used to refer to the officially-recognised administrative apparatus of an ethnic group
Volksgruppenführer	Officially-recognised leader of an ethnic group, e.g. of the Serbian Banat
Volkssturm	German equivalent of the Home Guard

Werwolf	Nazi guerilla movement, created with the intention of continuing the war against the allies behind the frontline through acts of sabotage and assissination, etc.

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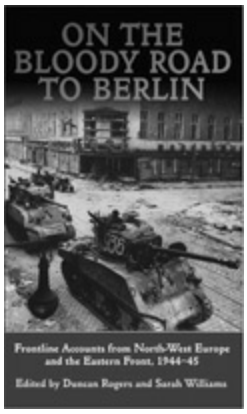
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Plate 1 Hitler Youth combat uniforms

Figure 1 (left) HJ-Junge, Berlin, April 1945

Figure 2 (right) HJ-Oberrottenführer, Pyritz, Pomerania, February 1945



Plate 2 Hitler Youth winter uniforms

Figure 1 (left) HJ-Junge, East Prussia, January 1945

Figure 2 (right) HJ-Kameradschaftführer, Goldap, East Prussia, November 1944



Plate 3 Hitler Youth serving in military units

Figure 1 (left) Schütze, RAD Kampfgruppe, Rhineland, February 1945

Figure 2 (right) Schütze serving in Army Panzerjäger unit, Breslau, Silesia, March 1945



Plate 4 Miscellaneous Hitler Youth combat uniforms

Figure 1 (left) HJ-Rottenführer as Luftwaffenhelfer, Friesland, April 1945

Figure 2 (centre) HJ-Oberscharführer, Küstrin, February 1945

Figure (right) BDM-Mädelscharführerin, Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, March 1945