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OFFICER PROCUREMENT IN THE WAFFEN-SS

(Reception, Processing, and Training)

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I. Preface

In this study of "Officer Procurement in the Waffen-SS" the subjects of recruiting and political orientation have been omitted, because they lay in the sphere of the SS Central Office (Terminology for Waffen SS based on TM-E 30-451, Chapter III, pp. 11-19). Reception, processing, guidance and military training, however, belonged within the province of the Officer Procurement Office. Up to 20 February 1945 this department, as Amt XI (Officer Training Department), was part of the SS Main Operational Department, Group B; from then, until the end of April 1945 when it was dissolved, it became Department II of the SS Main Department for Personnel. The reason for this reorganization is unknown.

This study deals primarily with conditions during the last year of the war, from April 1944 to April 1945.

II. Historical Data Prior to World War II

The Waffen SS had its origin in the SS Verfuegungstruppen (troops held at the disposition of Hitler for any purposes whatsoever. Ref.: TM-E 30-451, Chapter III, p. 11) which had been activated in 1934. Soon after its creation the organization was faced with the problem of officer procurement.

While former officers of the German Army, the Reichswehr (the German National Defense Establishment under the Versailles Treaty), or police (partly also non-commissioned officers with long service), could fill the positions of regimental, battalion, and company commanders, no young officers who had been trained at an officer candidate school were available.

This fact prompted action toward the establishment of a Department for Officer Procurement in the SS Verfuegungstruppen. The schools organized for this purpose were patterned almost exactly after the German Army's officer candidate schools, with the German Army Service Regulations Manual "D 20" as their guide.

The SS officer candidate school founded in 1934 at Bad Toelz was the first institution of its kind. One hundred officer candidates enrolled for the first course in April 1934. The instructors were qualified former officers who patterned the new school after the German Army's officer candidate school at Munich. To what extent the Wehrmacht participated in organizing the school can be seen from the fact that the commandant of the German Army's officer candidate school at Munich was given permission by a leading SS officer to be present at the examinations, and to offer criticism and advice in training matters. Moreover, the German Army's officer candidate school at Munich assigned instructors to the SS officer candidate school at Bad Toelz.

By the end of 1934 it became evident that the school at Bad Toelz could no longer meet the increasing demand. As a result, a second officer candidate school was established at Braunschweig. In April 1935, at the beginning of the course, both schools enrolled between 100 to 120 candidates each.

The completion of new school buildings at Bad Toelz in October 1937 resulted in an increase in the number of candidates who enrolled during the following years. In part this increase was also due to the activation of new regiments in the SS Verfuegungstruppen. The schools also trained young police officers for whom there was an increased demand. Young SS officers who were slated for administrative assignments also were trained at the officer candidate schools of the SS.

Due to the war and the constant expansion of the Waffen SS, additional officer candidate- and other specialist schools had to be opened; they will be discussed in Section IV.

Training of reserve officers for the Waffen SS began in the fall of 1940.

III. Procurement Methods

The SS units had to list all recruits as potential officer candidates, either active or reserve, if they had the following qualifications: graduates of secondary schools (the German secondary school system is not entirely comparable to the U.S. system), all college students and graduates, officers of the General SS (Allgemeine SS) and all those who were qualified by virtue of their education, position in life, and character. The SS units had to observe and recommend those men, who showed either during their basic training or later that they were officer material, either active or reserve, although they did not fall into any of the above categories.

The Department for Officer Procurement made the final selections on the basis of reports by the SS units and appointed the men in question to officer candidates by issuing a simple certificate. Thereafter, the young men remained in the officer procurement group until the Department for Officer Procurement promoted them to officers. Rejection from the list of officer candidates was made only if circumstances demanded and justified this action on the strength of valid and thoroughly established reports.

IV. Processing of Candidates

1. From then on the Department for Officer Procurement kept an eye on the officer candidate, closely observing his progress, the length of the different training phases, his accomplishments, and his development in general.

Only the Department for Officer Procurement had the authority to assign officer candidates to the appropriate schools and courses at stated times. To a certain degree, it also directed officer candidates to one or the other branch of the SS, or to technical and other special courses.

2. To clarify the training course and its phases, which are summarized in Section V, the following table has been prepared, explaining the advancement of an officer candidate to a commissioned officer, with names of the training establishments:

A. Regular SS rank and school titles of officer candidates

<u>Status prior to entrance and during attendance at SS Officer Candidate School</u>	<u>School Title</u>	<u>Regular SS Rank</u>
With replacement or combat unit	Officer Applicant	Rank required during prior service
Assigned to preliminary course	Accepted Officer Candidate	Same as above
Assigned to officer candidate school (for active officers) or to reserve officer candidate school	SS Officer Candidate	Sergeant
After passing the intermediate examination at the officer candidate school (active reserve)	SS Officer Candidate (Advanced Standing)	Staff Sergeant
After passing the final examination at the officer candidate school (active or reserve)	Graduate of the SS officer candidate school prior to being commissioned	Master Sergeant

B. Training Establishments of the Department for Officer Procurement

1. Replacement units
2. Combat units
3. Preliminary Courses (these were conducted at first at the replacement units, subsequently also at the reserve officer candidate schools)
4. Schools

Schools exclusively for active career officers:

Officer Candidate Schools

SS O.C.S. at Bad Toelz	Established in April 1934
SS O.C.S. at Braunschweig	" " " 1935
SS O.C.S. at Klagenfurt	" " Nov. 1943
SS O.C.S. at Prague	" " July 1944

For careers of active and reserve officers, technicians and specialists:

Service Schools

Panzergrenadier (usually motorized occasionally mechanized infantry) School	Proseschnitz
Artillery School	Beneschau
Engineer School	Hradischko
Antitank and Assault-Gun School	Jannowitz
Signal School	Nuernberg

A school for horse-drawn infantry units was also established.

Schools for Specialists

Motor Transportation School	Vienna
Ordnance School	Dachau
SS Medical Academy	Graz
Administrative School	Arolsen

Since schools for training officers for the Waffen SS did not have the facilities for tank and mortar training, SS officer candidates for these arms attended appropriate schools of the German Army.

The Office for Officer Procurement had only the four officer candidate schools under its immediate control, while its inspection rights extended to all other training establishments and all phases of the training courses.

V. Training Course and Phases of Training

A. For future troop officers:

	<u>Active</u>	<u>Reserve</u>
1. Replacement unit (non-commissioned officer training)	4	4 months
2. Combat duty (depending on combat activity of troop unit)	2	2 "
3. Preliminary course at the service schools	2	2 "
4. Officer candidate school	6	- "
5. Special service school	3	4 "

While officer candidates for active troop duty were commissioned upon completion of the training course as described above, the candidates for reserve officer were commissioned only after additional combat duty of 2 months. Thus, in calculating the time spent in training and on journeys to and from the different training centers, the training of active officers required 18 months, in

contrast to the 15 month course for reserve officers.

B. For potential technical, administrative, medical, veterinary officers, and judge advocates (specialist careers):

All active officer specialists were required to take the same training course in the SS candidate school that was required of the troop officers. The reserve officer specialists were required to take only the training of the reserve officers, unless brief courses could be arranged to complement their knowledge. Such courses were offered at the special service schools or at the technical schools. Where the courses were held depended on the number of personnel enrolled for this training.

VI. Training Objectives

1. Education:

The training was designed to build character by emphasizing integrity, fearlessness, chivalry, honor, obedience, helpfulness, and good fellowship. Moreover, irreproachable conduct in public, and the development of a family spirit were further requirements.

Selection was made according to the applicant's general appearance and background. A certificate of conduct by the police and a detailed account of any outstanding debts were required. Treachery, dishonesty, offenses against his fellow comrades (theft), were severely punished, often by expulsion. Candidates were not permitted to put their belongings under lock and key. Excessive drinking and smoking were prohibited, as was secretive conduct. Homosexuality was severely punished, and toward the end could result in capital punishment. Only a man of integrity was able to stay in the Waffen SS for any

length of time; on the other hand, efficient, intelligent and gifted men could advance to the highest positions.

2. SS officer candidates were to study tactics so that at some future time they could assume the duties of administrative officers, or infantry platoon leaders. The practical training of the latter was left to the special service schools.

VII. Organization of an SS Officer Candidate School

The organization of an SS officer candidate school greatly resembled that of the service schools.

1. Staff: Commandant

- I A (Training)
- II A Adjutant (Officer Personnel Records and Regulations)
- II B Adjutant (Enlisted Personnel Records)
- III Judge Advocate
- IV A Administration
- IV B Medical Service
- IV C Veterinary Service
- V Motor Pool
- VI A Political Indoctrination
- VI B Special Services and Library
 - O 1 School Program
 - O 2 Welfare

2. Two or three training regiments, each divided into three or four inspectorates (battalions), each consisting of three or four training companies.

The training groups (regiments) were headed by an officer (regimental commander) responsible for the general military training. The heads of inspectorates (battalions) had battalion commander status; commanders of the training companies were company commanders.

3. Cadre Battalion

This section, composed of non-commissioned officers and personnel of the Waffen SS, supplied the guards, drivers, mounted section, clerical, administrative, and ordnance personnel. The commander of the cadre battalion was a battalion commander.

Disciplinary action rested solely with the commandant of the school and the officers mentioned above, but not with the instructors listed below.

VIII. Instructors

In the beginning, officers of the German Army, the Reichswehr, and the police were assigned as instructors provided their background, education, as well as their personal characteristics assured their capability of properly training the officer candidates.

Later, young officers of the Waffen SS became instructors in ever growing numbers. They were almost without exception graduates of the SS officer candidate schools, or Army officers who had transferred to the SS. All were selected and appointed by the Department for Officer Procurement. Only the instructors for political indoctrination were trained and assigned by the SS Main Operational Department.

The intervals between courses were utilized to further the education of

instructors and to improve co-ordination. This was accomplished by sending teams of instructors to officer candidate schools of the Army, and Luftwaffe. Field trips into various parts of Germany, mostly to points of historical interest, were conducted; they were combined with lectures on tactics and lasted for several weeks. In this manner the knowledge and creative faculties of the instructors were broadened to a considerable extent.

IX. Subjects and Principles of Instruction

1. Tactics
2. Political Indoctrination
3. Organization of the German Army, SS, and Police
4. Military Science (Tactics and employment of weapons)
5. Terrain Orientation
6. Troop Duty
7. Signal Communication
8. Engineer Service
9. Aviation
10. Motor Transportation
11. Gymnastics
12. Mounted Drill

Principles of Instruction

Tactics, terrain orientation, and aviation (Luftwaffe course) were taught by the tactics instructor; map exercises, maneuvers, and sand tables were extensively used as training aids. Great importance was attached to lectures in the field which took place near the school and lasted half a day or the entire day.

The SS candidates had to participate for several days in Wehrmacht maneuvers (special exercises of reconnaissance battalions, antitank units, etc.), as well as in the German Army's fall maneuvers (regiments and up), to become familiar with the practical application of tactics. Visits to Luftwaffe air fields and other installations supplemented this training.

Each year the SS officer candidates spent several weeks at a troop training center; this not only improved their marksmanship but also advanced their tactical and other military knowledge.

Especially well-qualified officers and well-known scientists lectured regularly on military science, military history, and world history.

X. Breakdown of Curriculum

In early 1944 the curriculum was approximately as follows:

1. Tactics	8
2. Political Indoctrination	8
3. Organization of the German Army	5
4. Special Service Courses	3
5. Terrain Orientation	3
6. Troop Duty	5
7. Signal Communication	3
8. Engineering	2
9. Aviation	1

8. (Tr. note: The figures in this table show the relative amount of time spent on each subject; for instance, 8 times as much time was spent on tactics as compared with the time spent on motor transportation, etc.)

10. Motor Transport	1
11. Gymnastics	5
12. Mounted Drill	1

Examinations were given in accordance with the German Army Service Regulations "D 20".

It can be seen from the above that the opinion of the instructor of tactics carried special weight since this course consisted of four subjects.

XI. Examinations

1. Preliminary Course

The officer candidates who had been selected and examined while still serving in a line unit were almost invariably assigned to a preliminary course before being transferred to an officer candidate school (active) or to a service school (reserve). The aim of this program was to increase the candidates' knowledge and to train them in leadership.

2. Entrance Examination

Upon completion of the preliminary course, the candidate was tested once more at the officer candidate or special service school for mental flexibility and general knowledge.

3. Mid-Term Examination

This examination was held after approximately half of the course had been completed. Its results were as follows:

a. Candidates who passed the examination continued at school and were promoted to SS Officer Candidate, Advanced Standing (Staff Sergeant).

b. Those who had passed conditionally, i.e., who had to fill in some established gaps (such as bearing, theoretical or practical knowledge), also stayed on at school but were not promoted.

c. Those who failed the mid-term examination were returned to their unit. Judgment was extremely severe. Failures at the mid-term examinations averaged 30 percent.

4. Final Examination

Since such strong emphasis was placed on the mid-term examinations, almost all passing candidates continued until the final examinations. As a result, only a small number of candidates failed the final examinations. Upon passing the final examination, the candidates became a graduate of the SS officer candidate school with the equivalent rank of Master Sergeant, prior to being commissioned. Failures occurred only in a few instances and these were for "educational reasons." Upon graduation the officer candidates were transferred from the SS officer candidate school to an appropriate special-service school.

XII. Disabled Officer Candidates

Already at an early time special courses were conducted for officer candidates who had been wounded or who had incurred other service-connected disabilities which incapacitated them for further line duty. By the end of the war the eighth consecutive course for this personnel was already in progress. The course stressed military and administrative knowledge which prepared the disabled candidates for administrative and related positions where fitness for field duty was not required. As a result, officers in administrative positions who were fit for general service were made available for combat duty.

It is important to mention that this training had such a sound psychological effect on the disabled candidates that it resulted in exceptional performance on their part. This was true not only for the administrative work, but essentially also for the field of sports. The physical exercises for the men were conducted by outstanding instructors who were specialists in teaching sports to the disabled.

XIII. Officer Candidates from Foreign Nations

The Department for Officer Procurement of the Waffen SS also conducted courses for officer candidates from foreign units which were attached to the Waffen SS. These units consisted mainly of Norwegians, Danes, Dutch, Flemish, Walloons and French, as well as Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians, not to mention individuals of various other nationalities. Additional courses were occasionally held for the officers of these nationalities in order to adapt their concept of general and mobile tactics to that of the German Army.

XIV. Recreational Facilities

For stimulation and encouragement, opportunities for recreation were offered in all fields. In addition to contests with selected members of various civilian sports societies, great emphasis was also placed on various water-, winter, and mountain sports. Arrangements were also made for dancing instruction, social gatherings, evening entertainment, theaters, concerts by internationally known orchestras, and two motion pictures per week.

XV. Pertinent Officer Personnel Figures

In conclusion, the following figures are quoted from the records of the Department for Officer Procurement:

In 1944 the Chief of the Department for Officer Procurement promoted 7,000 men to Master Sergeant. Of these, approximately 6,000 had graduated from SS officer candidate schools, while about 1,000 had been promoted to the rank of master sergeant and were subsequently commissioned for bravery in the field. These figures show that approximately 10,000 men must have originally enrolled as officer candidates in 1944, to produce the 6,000 who finally received their commissions.

(Signed) Werner Doerffler-Schuband