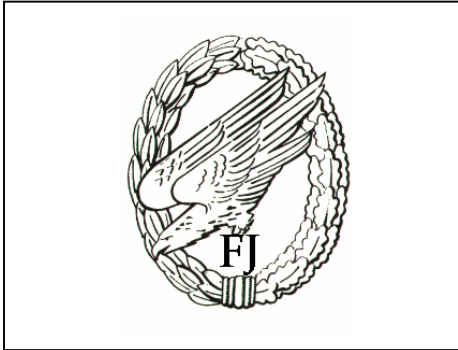


Doug Olds



2.Fallschirm-Jäger-Division *"die Feuerwehr"(The Fire Brigade)*

In December 1943, after being formed only about 10 months earlier, the 2.Fallschirmjäger Division was sent into action on the Eastern front as one of Hitler's famous "Fire Brigades" to stem the tide of Russian offensives. The Russians had their eyes on

the capitulation of Czechoslovakia and Romania and had committed two whole army groups to make that happen. On November 27, 1943 the division came under the command of the German 42nd Corps, west of Kiev. The division fought a succession of intense battles before the advance was finally halted. In the first month on the Eastern front the 2nd FJ Regiment relieved the 1st SS Panzer Division from a stalled assault in the region of Zhitomir under the command of Major Pietzonka.

The following is an extract of the memoirs of Wolfram von Beck (staff runner and machine gunner, FJR 2/1.Kompanie) from the engagements at Zhitomir:

"When we finally arrived in Russia, we received orders to relieve a Waffen SS unit, which almost been destroyed during the fighting. I was the staff runner for Leutnant Bickel's 1. Kompanie. He told me to go and obtain a situation report from the Waffen SS commander. In order to reach the post quickly I decided to not follow the road but the sound of the gunfire instead through a wooded area. When I finally reached the commander he reprimanded me about the absence of my unit. He then showed me which part of the line we were to occupy."

"After a day or so (after arriving in Russia) we made a dawn attack and drove the Russians from in front of our positions. Suddenly we received well aimed fire from a thicket of trees. I quickly noticed the source of fire: the Russians had removed the lowest branches of the trees for a good field of fire and view of any attackers. Myself and comrade, turned their flank and finished them off from behind, my comrade a machine gunner was hit. While he was dying he passed me his wallet and all he could say was "moma, "moma." I took the wallet and handed it into battalion. We were rolling up the whole Russian trench line until we stopped in front of a soil covered bunker. For good measure we threw in two grenades and after the detonation, three smiling unbruised Russians came out. We were surprised that anyone could survive such an attack and naturally took them prisoner."

The same regiment was involved shortly there after in the defense of the River Dniester. FJR 2 used it's MG's, mortars, and grenades (light weapons by German standards) to draw the Energy out of the 16th Red Army. By the 15th of Dec the 2nd FJ Division was withdrawn from the region and flown to Kirovograd to counter a soviet breakthrough of German Lines at Kremechug. The 2.FJD joined the 11th Panzer and the 286th SchwerePanzerbusche Brigade (heavy anti-tank guns). Bad weather initially stalled the German Counter attack but

the 18 and 19 Dec was spent clearing Russian positions. By late December the 2.FJRD was vulnerable to counter attack being depleted through repeated assaults over the past month, FJR 7 remained in Novgorodka up until the end of 1943.

Wolfram Von Beck recalls:

“Our unit continued the offensive towards the direction of Kirovograd, before Novgorodka we found ourselves alone, without friendly units on our flanks. Leutnant Bickel ordered us to build a defensive perimeter on a nearby hilltop for the night. I was now a number 2 machine gunner and the number one was my friend Gefreiter Fritz. As we dug a pit for our machine gun the Russians suddenly fire several shells from anti-tank guns. We joked that the Russians certainly needed some target practice when after one detonation I found an arm and half of my comrades’ chest in my lap. I lifted him to see if I could help my friend but he was already dead. I now dug faster and deeper in order to get my machine gun in place”

“I was made machine gunner one and found myself having to hump the MG around during the assault. When Leutnant Bickel needed me again to be a staff runner, I was only glad to give the Adolf-Hitler-saw to someone else. When storming Kirovograd I was wounded by a round from a Russian AT gun. I was sent to the field dressing station and on 25th of December 1943 I was sent to the Reserve-Lazarett at Meinigenand away from the horrors of Russia only to return again in 1944.”

The attack on Kirovograd opened January 5th, General Rotmistrov (commander of the 5th Guards Tank Army) commented after the war:

“The Chilly Morning of 5 January came. Dense Mist covered the ground. From my observation post the trench lines and the white painted tanks were hardly visible. The fog both made us delighted and concerned. It delighted us because it would prevent the enemy from aiming accurate fire at longer distance. It caused concern that our air force would not be able to conduct its’ missions and thereby deprive us of air support.”

The 2.FJD was part of the defense of Kirovograd, they were stationed in the town of Plavney to protect the Kirovograd Highway. An entire regiment of T-34’s were destroyed with minimal loss to the SP brigade. The lines held by the Fallschirmjagers were broken in several places as massed Russian armor broke through weak lines. The reserve SP guns were put into fill the gaps. In this attack many T-34’s were destroyed by individual acts of heroism using mines, satchel charges, and panzerfaust’s. The FJR’s were taking massive casualties and required rescue by the SP brigade. Late on the 5th the SP brigade and their passengers came across several T-34’s in a state of re-supply and they were destroyed along with their crews. On the 6th and 7th of January the regiments had been forced to pull out of the Novgorodka area due to mounting Russian pressure

The artillery opened up and 15 days later the soviets had suffered another costly battle and the Germans had been pushed back another 40 km. In the course of that two week period,

despite massive losses, the Red army surrounded the 2 FJD HQ and on Jan 8th they began to withdraw under massive fire sustaining huge losses. Several kompanies were severely depleted or destroyed. FJR5 was down to 30 men. As late as Feb 14 The 2.FJD was being considered as a possible relief force for the beleaguered 3. Panzer Division fighting to relieve the troops trapped in the Korsun Pocket, the pocket was closing quickly on the XI and XXXXII corps. The battle would last only two more days officially so there re-deployment was unfeasible. The 5th Regiment was pulled from the line on the 12th as 2.Battalion / 5th regiment had ceased to exist as a fighting formation and sent to Germany for reconstruction.

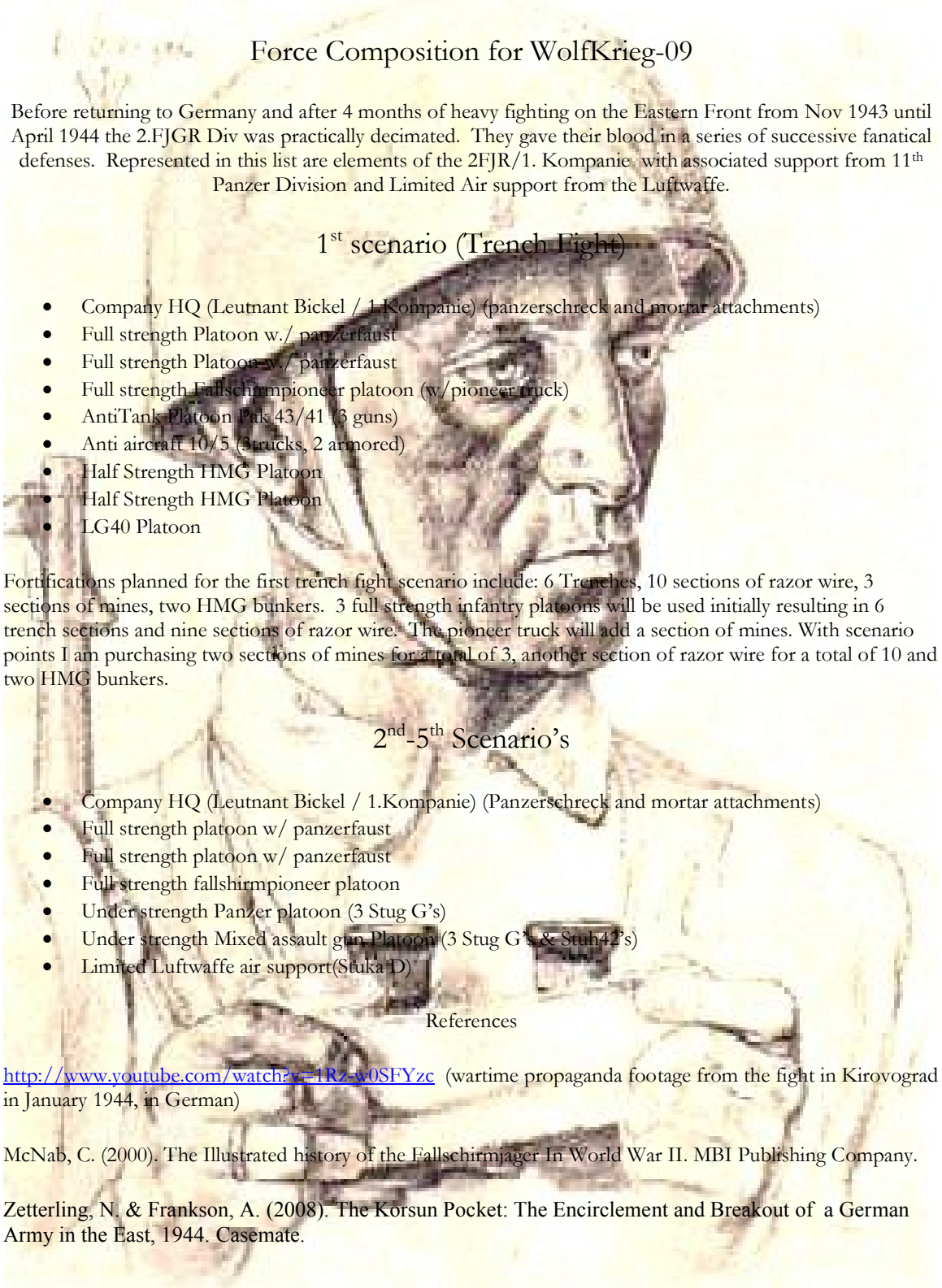
Throughout March the 2.FJD fought a string of defensive battles, typically as the rearguard to massive German withdrawals from the Region back towards Romania. During one of these actions they were called upon to defend a section of the River Dniester at Butor, this battle switched from a defensive situation to a full scale offensive capturing 10,000 Russian prisoners in the action. This was probably the last offensive action of the Division in the Ukraine.



Despite all the losses of manpower, equipment and ground the 2.Fallschirmjäger hardly lost a local engagement with the Russian armies in the Ukraine. They took incredible punishment from soviet artillery, killed many tanks, often with improvised hand held explosives, and took many lives. The Russians paid dearly for their fight with the Fire Brigade. But it wasn't enough to hold the Red Army back. They were a drop in the bucket when compared to the massive soviet assaults. They fought with distinction and to the letter of the Fallschirmjäger code.

Zehn Gebote des Fallschirmjägers

1. You are the chosen ones of the German Army. You will seek combat and train yourselves to endure any manner of test. To you, the battle shall be fulfillment.
2. Cultivate true comradeship, for by the aid of your comrades you will conquer or die.
3. Beware of talking. Be not corruptible. Men act while women chatter. Chatter may bring you to the grave.
4. Be calm and prudent, strong and resolute. Valour and enthusiasm of an offensive spirit will cause you to prevail in the attack.
5. The most precious thing in the presence of the foe is ammunition. He who shoots uselessly, merely to comfort himself, is a man of straw who merits not the title of Parachutist.
6. Never surrender, to you death or victory must be a point of honour.
7. You can triumph only if your weapons are good. See to it that you submit yourself to this law - first my weapon and then myself.
8. You must grasp the full purpose of every enterprise, so that if your leader is killed you can fulfill it.
9. Against an open foe, fight with chivalry, but to a guerilla, extend no quarter.
10. Keep your eyes wide open. Tune yourself to the topmost pitch. Be nimble as a greyhound, as tough as leather, as hard a Krupp steel, and so you shall be the German warrior incarnate.



Force Composition for WolfKrieg-09

Before returning to Germany and after 4 months of heavy fighting on the Eastern Front from Nov 1943 until April 1944 the 2.FJGR Div was practically decimated. They gave their blood in a series of successive fanatical defenses. Represented in this list are elements of the 2FJR/1. Kompanie with associated support from 11th Panzer Division and Limited Air support from the Luftwaffe.

1st scenario (Trench Fight)

- Company HQ (Leutnant Bickel / 1.Kompanie) (panzerschreck and mortar attachments)
- Full strength Platoon w./ panzerfaust
- Full strength Platoon w./ panzerfaust
- Full strength Fallschirmpioneer platoon (w/ pioneer truck)
- AntiTank Platoon Pak 43/41 (3 guns)
- Anti aircraft 10/5 (3 trucks, 2 armored)
- Half Strength HMG Platoon
- Half Strength HMG Platoon
- LG40 Platoon

Fortifications planned for the first trench fight scenario include: 6 Trenches, 10 sections of razor wire, 3 sections of mines, two HMG bunkers. 3 full strength infantry platoons will be used initially resulting in 6 trench sections and nine sections of razor wire. The pioneer truck will add a section of mines. With scenario points I am purchasing two sections of mines for a total of 3, another section of razor wire for a total of 10 and two HMG bunkers.

2nd-5th Scenario's

- Company HQ (Leutnant Bickel / 1.Kompanie) (Panzerschreck and mortar attachments)
- Full strength platoon w/ panzerfaust
- Full strength platoon w/ panzerfaust
- Full strength fallshirmpioneer platoon
- Under strength Panzer platoon (3 Stug G's)
- Under strength Mixed assault gun Platoon (3 Stug G's & Stuh42's)
- Limited Luftwaffe air support (Stuka D)

References

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1R2-v0SFYzc> (wartime propaganda footage from the fight in Kirovograd in January 1944, in German)

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