

REZUMATUL LUCRĂRII DOCTORALE: THE 12TH SS-PANZERDIVISION “HITLERJUGEND”

INTRODUCERE

Tema lucrării de doctorat o constituie istoria Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend” de la formarea acesteia în august 1943, continuând cu formarea tactico-militară și ideologică a soldaților și culminând cu implicarea directă a Diviziei pe câmpurile de luptă din Normandia, în Ofensiva din Ardeni și în cadrul Contra-ofensivei din primăvara anului 1945 în Europa de Est și Centrală. Divizia 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” și-a recrutat resursa umană aproape exclusiv din rândurile Organizației Tineretului Hitlerist – organizația de tineret a Partidului Național-Socialist din cel de-al Treilea Reich. În momentul încorporării în rândurile unităților Diviziei, recruții frecventaseră deja o serie de cursuri și programe dedicate formării ideologice, fizice și tactico-militare în cadrul unor structuri bine organizate din aparatul politico-militarist al Germaniei naziste, între care, un rol aparte l-au jucat taberele de instruire anuală pre-militară (derulate de-a lungul unei perioade de șase săptămâni) denumite *Wehrrerüchtigungslager*. Pentru a accelera procesul de recrutare și încorporare în cadrul forțelor Waffen-SS, contingentele născute în 1926 au fost scutite de efectuarea stagiului obligatoriu în cadrul serviciului de muncă al celui de-al Treilea Reich – *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, prescurtat RAD.

Pentru formarea și pregătirea noii divizii, corpul ofițeresc a fost recrutat din rândurile celor mai titrate formațiuni operative din Waffen-SS, și anume Diviziile 1 („Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler”), 2 („Das Reich”) și 3 („Totenkopf”). Cei mai mulți ofițeri veterani au provenit din cadrul Diviziei 1 SS Blindată „Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler”, denumită și *divizia-mamă*. Acești ofițeri dispuneau de o pregătire strategică și experiență de front excepționale, fiind percepuți de către noii recruți drept autorități incontestabile în ce privește arta războiului. Prezența veteranilor de pe Frontul de Est în cadrul Diviziei 12 SS „Hitlerjugend” a generat formarea unei anumite stări de spirit în rândul recruților, aceștia beneficiind de cele mai eficiente metodici de instruire tactico-militară, incluzând cursuri de îndoctrinare ideologică și de specializare în diferite strategii de front. Generația de băieți născută în 1926 a fost educată într-un anumit spirit definit printr-o serie de specificități economice, politice și sociale ale Germaniei din timpul Republicii de Weimar și ascensiunii la putere a Partidului Nazist. De aici nevoia studiului de a analiza și defini „spiritul hitlerist” imprimat tinerilor recruți care aveau să formeze noua Divizie purtând numele dictatorului german. De asemenea, sunt creionate o serie de întrebări fundamentale pe care studiul le abordează: sunt acești tineri recruți, viitorii soldați ai Diviziei 12 SS, un exemplu grăitor al unei generații crescute și educate în „spiritul hitlerist”? Implementarea ideologiei național-socialiste de la o vârstă fragedă a reușit crearea unui etos militar diferit față de cel existent în celelalte unități ale Wehrmacht-ului sau chiar Waffen-SS-ului? Se poate vorbi, prin urmare, de existența unui „etos Hitlerjugend” care ar putea, eventual, explica ferocitatea specifică demonstrată de acești soldați atât pe câmpul de luptă, cât și în afara lui, prin comportamentul neconform față de prizonierii de război? Se poate vorbi despre eroism în dreptul luptătorilor din Divizia 12 SS, sau calitățile lor militare trebuie atribuite exclusiv programului de ideologizare concretizat prin fanatizarea acestora? Cum se pot armoniza anumite dovezi incontestabile de comportament fanatic cu relațiile de camaraderie dintre soldați, dar și între corpul ofițeresc și subordonați?

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Cum se poate defini fanatismul în acest context, astfel încât acesta să nu devină o simplă metodă de catalogare ideologică privată de recursul la un aparat socio-psihologic adecvat, în măsură să explice mecanismele care au generat comportamentele respective?

Capitolul introductiv conține o expunere schematică a interferenței dintre instruirea ideologică (compusă, printre altele de ideologia *anti-establishment* și conectarea național-socialismului la teoria evoluționistă a lui Darwin) și cea militară (de asemenea fundamentată ideologic pe naționalismul popular german – *Völkisch Nationalismus* – pe anti-semitism, misticism de sorginte ariană și în motivație construită pe educație politică și în doctrinare rasială. Capitolul continuă cu o expunere analitică a studiilor precedente asupra Diviziei 12 SS, dar și a fenomenologiei Waffen-SS în istoriografie, îndeosebi în cea occidentală. În ce privește tema studiului de față – Divizia 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” – istoriografia prezintă lacune care justifică inițierea acestui proiect; nu numai că *divizia copiilor* nu a beneficiat de o abordare sistematică din partea cercetătorilor, așa cum s-a întâmplat în cazul altor unități militare din Waffen-SS, dar uneori chiar opera unor mari autori prezintă inadvertențe sau chiar confuzii. Un exemplu notabil este oferit de lucrarea „Căderea” a lui Antony Beevor, în care autorul confundă adolescenți din Organizația Tineretului Hitlerist care luptă pe străzile Berlinului în primăvara anului 1945 cu soldații din Divizia 12 SS „Hitlerjugend”; în realitate, nicio unitate de luptă din cadrul Diviziei 12 SS nu a participat la operațiunile defensive din Berlin din aprilie-mai 1945, în acea perioadă, unitățile Diviziei acționând în Austria.

Metodologia de cercetare este explicitată într-un subcapitol al Introducerii. Aceasta constă în direcții de cercetare pornind de la examinare biografică (inclusiv biografie colectivă) și a literaturii istorice disponibile, dar în special cercetarea surselor primare nepublicate. Metoda folosită urmărește conceptul Barbarei Caine care consideră că biografia colectivă poate fi exploatată optim atunci când se realizează o continuitate firească de la studiul individual grupat laolaltă cu alte studii individuale, formând împreună o istorie colectivă. Sunt trecute în revistă o serie de curente de cercetare a perioadei naziste, cum ar fi, de pildă, istoria de zi cu zi a oamenilor (*Alltagsgeschichte*) propusă de Martin Broszat, prin care se urmărește eliminarea tendinței de eroizare și demonizare deopotrivă a participanților la evenimentele din Germania nazistă. Investigația arhivistică s-a făcut într-o manieră critică, menită să elimine, pe cât posibil, capcana „miopiei productive” generate de neconcordanța dintre adevărul istoric și anumite însemnări, chiar oficiale, care trunchiază, deliberat sau prin omisiune, acest adevăr. Chiar și cele mai atent elaborate jurnale de front conțin adesea abateri de la cursul real al evenimentelor, aspect ce trebuie avut în vedere de orice cercetător angajat în mod obiectiv în misiunea de reconstituire a faptelor istorice autentice.

Ultimul subcapitol al Introducerii expune și analizează sursele de arhivă utilizate în cercetarea și finalizarea acestui proiect:

- *National Archives and Records Service Administration (NARA)* din Washington (în limba germană);

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- *Library and Archives Canada* (LAC) sau *Bibliothèque et Archives Canada* (BAC) din Ottawa (în limba germană și parțial engleză);
- *Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv* (BMF) din Freiburg im Breisgau (în limba germană);
- *Vojenský Historický Archiv* (Arhivele de Istorie Militară) din Praga (în limba germană);

PARTEA I

Partea I intitulată „Divizia tinerilor” conține două capitole: primul abordează structura Organizației Tineretului Hitlerist în cadrul căreia generațiile de copii ale celui de-al Treilea Reich luau contact cu ideologia nazistă și cu primele forme de instruire paramilitară, menită să faciliteze cursanților trecerea ulterioară în celelalte structuri militare ale Statului, iar celălalt dedicat activității de zi cu zi a Diviziei din perioada premergătoare angajării în operațiunile tactico-militare.

Sunt prezentate școlile și instituțiile de învățământ și formare a cadrelor Organizației Tineretului Hitlerist, conținutul și durata cursurilor, dar și organismele de conducere din cadrul Direcției Generale a Tineretului (*Reichsjugendführung*). De asemenea sunt enumerate instituțiile al căror scop principal era educația național-politică. Un subcapitol este dedicat ideologiei sistematice predate în cadrul școlilor și taberelor de antrenament și instrucție ale tinerilor hitleriști, pornind de la schema Statului-SS pentru promovarea ideologiei de rasă și politice enunțată de Bernd Wegner. Prin însemințarea ideilor național-socialiste se urmărea crearea unui soldat SS dedicat complet și necondiționat cauzei naziste și Führer-ului Adolf Hitler personal. Sunt analizate paragrafe conținute în „Manualul SS” în paralel cu derularea unui program de instruire ideologică intensiv, repetitiv și aplicat, care, printre altele, urmărea eliminarea treptată a elementelor religioase creștine și înlocuirea acestora cu un model cultic inspirat din mitologia nordică, ariană.

Îndatoririle de front, pregătirea (para)militară și participarea efectivă a tinerilor hitleriști în cadrul unor formațiuni anexe care se angajau în apărarea civilă, făceau parte din obligațiile tuturor membrilor Organizației Tineretului Hitlerist. Aceste formațiuni auxiliare serveau Forțele Aeriene (*Luftwaffe*), Marina de război (*Kriegsmarine*), unitățile de vânători de munte (*Gebirgstruppen*) și alte departamente ale Wehrmacht-ului. Adiacent, toți tinerii care împliniseră vârsta de 17 ani erau obligați să participe la tabere speciale unde se predau cursuri de pregătire pre-militară, în fapt, veritabile școli de război, unde adolescenții erau familiarizați cu armele de foc, cu întreținerea și utilizarea lor, precum și cu exerciții de strategie tactică specifice pentru situațiile existente pe front. De asemenea, este prezentată o scurtă istorie a Organizației Tineretului Hitlerist, de la primele sale structuri de organizare din perioada 1922 până la reorganizările masive din anii 1933-1934.

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Formarea unei noi divizii Waffen-SS a cărei componență să provină exclusiv din rândurile Organizației Tineretului Hitlerist fusese conturată încă din februarie 1943, dar Hitler, inițial reticent, și-a dat acordul de-abia în iunie același an, luându-se decizia ca recruții să fie încorporați și instruiți la tabere speciale de antrenament de la Beverloo, Belgia. Divizia sub patronajul căreia avea să fie organizată Divizia 12 SS „Hitlerjugend” a fost aleasă să fie „Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler”. Inițial organizată ca „panzer-grenadier division”, Divizia 12 SS a devenit „blindată” în urma ordinului emis de generalul Hans Jüttner la 30 octombrie 1943. Anterior dislocării recruților în taberele militare de la Beverloo, aceștia trebuiau să participe la un curs de șase săptămâni în cadrul unui *Wehrtüchtigungslager* (tabără de pregătire pre-militară). Recruții urmau să fie selectați din rândul tinerilor născuți în 1926 și trebuiau să îndeplinească anumite condiții antropometrice (înălțime minimă 168cm, vederea bună, starea fizică corespunzătoare etc.) și de origine socio-rasială. Evoluția celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, pierderile imense ale Wehrmacht-ului pe Frontul de Est, coroborate cu victoriile tot mai evidente ale Armatei Roșii și înrăutățirea dramatică a condițiilor economice în Germania au făcut ca recrutarea să nu fie la fel de ușoară ca în primii ani după preluarea puterii în Germania de către Hitler. Deși, inițial, recrutările în Waffen-SS se făceau exclusiv pe bază de voluntariat și în urma unor procedee de selecție stricte, lipsa de entuziasm a tinerilor proveniți din Organizația de Tineret Hitlerist a determinat conducerea Waffen-SS să procedeze la recrutări forțate. Nici în ce privește situația ofițerilor și subofițerilor situația nu era mai bună; dacă în cazul primilor, aceștia erau recrutați fie din divizia-mamă („Leibstandarte”), fie din alte divizii cu un parcurs de front impresionant, în cazul subofițerilor au fost întâmpinate numeroase probleme, iar numărul acestora a fost aproape constant insuficient. Pentru diminuarea lipsei de entuziasm cu privire la voluntariat s-a făcut, din nou, apel la educația național-politică, instituindu-se „Napola” (*Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten*) – organisme de educație politică menite să asigure o ideologizare corespunzătoare și o pregătire pre-militară pentru participanți.

Organigrama și structura operativă a Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend” sunt expuse și comentate în cadrul unui întreg subcapitol. Schema operativă se constituie într-un exemplu elocvent de organizare militară germană, incluzând cartierul general al Diviziei, regimente de infanterie motorizată, regiment de motociclete, regiment de artilerie, regiment de tancuri, batalioane de recunoaștere și geniu, detașamente logistice etc.

În perioada august 1943 – iunie 1944, trupele Diviziei 12 SS au petrecut un timp de acalmie relativă, participând la un program intensiv de pregătire tactico-militară atât la cazărțile din Belgia, cât și la așezăminte ale armatei franceze în nordul Franței. În baza studierii unui material arhivistic vast au fost reconstituite episoade relevante din viața de zi cu zi a soldaților din unitățile „Hitlerjugend”: instrucție militară complexă constând în exerciții de tragere cu arme de foc de toate calibrele existente în dotarea armatei, curățarea, întreținerea și repararea echipamentului tehnic și de tragere, exerciții practice care imitau situații de luptă precum asalturi, mișcare de evaziune, învăluire și retragere tactică, cursuri teoretice pentru însușirea tehnicii de luptă și exploatarea optimă a echipamentelor, exerciții de noapte, exerciții de front și diverse evaluări ale forțelor inamice. Îngrijirea

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corporală și menținerea unei igiene corespunzătoare erau de asemenea constituenți ale programului zilnic de activitate al soldatului „Hitlerjugend”. Un subcapitol consistent este alocat pedepselor în caz de încălcare a disciplinei și regulamentelor militare, precum și evaluărilor în vederea propunerii de înaintare în grad sau a selecției pentru școlile de subofițeri și ofițeri ai Waffen-SS-ului. Cu ocazia cercetării documentelor de arhivă ale diferitelor unități ale Diviziei 12 SS nu s-a constatat niciun caz de gravitate excepțională de încălcare a disciplinei militare, însă au fost consemnate o serie de evenimente neconforme cu normele de conduită ale armatei germane, care alcătuiesc un tablou pe cât de inedit, pe atât de ilustrativ asupra stării de spirit din rândul militarilor și al ofițerilor, inclusiv cei din eșalonul superior de comandă. Un tabel cu meniul alimentar săptămânal completează tabloul administrativ din cadrul Diviziei.

Următorul subcapitol abordează tema de evaluare psiho-socială a soldatului Hitlerjugend reprezentativ, prin stabilirea unor analize de comportament specific și a unor direcții de investigație: trebuie, astfel, stabilit dacă luptătorii din Divizia 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” erau specimene dotate cu o malignitate carateriologică nativă sau doar simpli respondenți la forțe situaționale menite să genereze o dezangajare morală de proporții. Varietatea de epitete și caracterizări a acestor soldați impune această abordare, pentru exemplificare numai câteva „evaluări” metaforice ilustrative: „mase umane docile asemenea hunilor”, „soldați fanatici” (sau, după caz, „fanatizați”), militari cu „reputație sordidă” etc. Ca model de analiză pentru acest studiu au fost propuse teoriile lui Ervin Staub și Zygmunt Bauman, potrivit cărora „cruzimea și inumanitatea trebuie atribuite mai degrabă factorilor sociali determinanți decât celor caracteriali”. Studiile de caz utilizate pentru formularea acestei metodologii aparțin lui Philip Zimbardo, Hannah Arendt și altor sociologi și psihologi renumiți. Pentru aplicarea acestor metode de investigare socio-comportamentală și psihologică la situații concrete ce se regăsesc în activitatea Diviziei au fost utilizate o serie de exemple concludente din arhivele militare care expun abateri de disciplină, penalitățile aplicate, atitudinea ofițerilor îndrituiți să aplice legislația militară, precum și tipologia de infracțiuni luată în calcul.

Chestiunea spirituală a soldaților din Waffen-SS în general și a militarilor din Divizia 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” în special este analizată în cadrul unui întreg subcapitol. Punctul de plecare îl constituie conceptul de *ethnotheism* elaborat de Samuel Koehne și dezvoltat ulterior de alți cercetători ai fenomenului religios în cel de-al Treilea Reich: Erik Kurlander, Carlton Hayes, Liah Greenfeld, Rogers Bubacker, Jay Baird și mulți alții. Sunt expuse și analizate tentativele de construcție a unei noi religii „ariene” germanice, începând cu proiectele ideologilor Franz Schröngamer-Heimdal și continuând cu Albert Leo Schlageter, ale căror teorii au fost completate de Alfred Rosenberg și Gottfried Feder. Pentru analiza punctuală a fenomenului religios din cadrul Diviziei 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” au fost utilizate surse primare nepublicate sub forma unui jurnal de regiment în care este descrisă în lux de amănunte ceremonia prilejuită de noaptea Crăciunului din anul 1943. Celebrarea conține numeroase elemente creștine amestecate cu practici și ritualuri păgâne preluate din religia străveche a triburilor nordice. În cadrul ceremoniei religioase sunt redată imnuri, colinde, scrisori ale unor

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soldați de pe front adresate mamei, caracterizate prin fatalism devotat Führer-ului și cauzei Germaniei; întregul ceremonial sacru este un exemplu relevant de aplicație ideologică ariosofică, unde elemente păgâne nordice alcătuiesc un ritual *esoterisch – völkisch*. Rolul învățăturilor creștine în cadrul mișcării fasciste este abordat și în legătură cu Legiunea „Arhanghelul Mihail” din România, aliată Germaniei naziste până în august 1944. În același subcapitol sunt trecute în revistă și formalitățile oficiale de înștiințare a familiei în cazul unui deces, ceremonialul militar de înmormântare și alte proceduri specifice.

Chestiunea presupusului elitism al trupelor din Waffen-SS este abordată într-un subcapitol, avându-se în vedere atât contestarea cât și hiperbolizarea acestei teme. Analiza este prefăcută de o serie de evaluări pro și contra în ce privește elitismul pretins de militarii din Waffen-SS. Pentru înțelegerea fenomenului militar caracteristic școlii de război germane s-a făcut recurs la prezentarea conceptuală a culturii de comandă, precum *Auftragstaktik*, îndelung predată în cadrul școlilor de cadeți ai armatei germane. Studiile comparative între aparatul de comandă al armatei Statelor Unite și al Germaniei efectuate de Jörg Muth sunt de o utilitate salutară în acest caz și explică, între altele, motivul pentru care pierderile înregistrate în rândul ofițerilor de rang superior din Wehrmacht și Waffen-SS depășesc net pe cele din cadrul Armatelor Aliate. Analiza încearcă să stabilească în ce măsură militarii din Divizia 12 SS pot fi încadrați în categoria „trupe de elită” în comparație sau spre deosebire cu alte unități ale Forțelor Armate Germane. Impactul ideologiei asupra motivației de luptă este de asemenea luat în calcul, utilizându-se un material istoriografic considerabil.

Partea I se încheie cu dislocarea tuturor unităților Diviziei 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” în Normandia, în vederea iminentei invazii a armatelor aliate menite să deschidă Frontul de Vest și să pună capăt celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial.

PARTEA II

Partea a II-a este intitulată „Divizia în război” și este alcătuită din două capitole: primul dedicat în totalitate Campaniei din Normandia și dezastrului din Falaise, iar celălalt consacrat operațiunilor militare ale unităților Hitlerjugend din Belgia în iarna 1944-1945, Ungaria și Austria, în primăvara 1945, până la capitularea necondiționată a Diviziei 12 SS în mâinile Armatei Americane.

Pentru reconstituirea luptelor din Normandia am făcut recurs la o metodologie rar uzitată și inedită, prin aceea că evenimentele au fost recompuse aproape exclusiv pe baza mărturiilor germane consemnate în Jurnalele de front (*Kriegstagebücher*), Rapoarte de activitate (*Tätigkeitsberichte*) și Ordinele (*Befehle*) păstrate în arhivele militare americane, canadiene, cehe și germane. Această metodă aplicată în detrimentul utilizării istoriografiei dedicate Invaziei din Normandia reprezintă o întreprindere idiosincrasică menită să releve deopotrivă succesele

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și eșecurile unităților Hitlerjugend, dar relevând, în același timp, o serie de „omisiuni” justificate prin gravitatea faptelor. În primul rând, cu excepția lui Hubert Meyer, considerat drept „istoricul” Diviziei „Hitlerjugend” – el însuși ofițer de rang înalt în cadrul Diviziei și fost Șef de Stat Major – cele mai multe lucrări ale unor istorici de marcă dedicate bătăliei din Normandia nu ating decât tangențial activitatea unităților Diviziei 12 SS și numai în legătură cu acțiunea concertată și operațiunile la care au participat alte unități germane sau Aliate. În al doilea rând, inconsistența, inacuratețea sau completa omisiune a unor acțiuni ale Diviziei 12 SS sunt în sine relevante prin faptul că acestea s-au manifestat numai în situații care ar fi adus prejudicii persoanelor implicate în evenimente controversate. De pildă, în pofida numeroaselor episoade în care prizonieri de război canadieni au fost împușcați, negându-li-se drepturile derivate din convențiile internaționale la care Germania era semnatară, nu există nicio mențiune în legătură cu aceste crime de război în arhivele germane, în fapt, documente redactate „la cald”, pe câmpul de bătălie, fapt care infirmă ipoteza invocată a necunoașterii regulamentelor de război invocată post factum de către toți inculpații germani din perioada postbelică.

Bătălia din Normandia reprezintă momentul de vârf al profesionalismului militar demonstrat de soldații Diviziei 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” și dispune de cea mai completă acoperire documentară, îndeosebi în Arhivele de Istorie Militară din Praga, Cehia. Celelalte campanii la care au participat trupele Diviziei 12 SS – Ofensiva din Ardeni, Operațiunea „Trezirea de Primăvară” etc. – nu se bucură de o bază documentară comparabilă. Arhivele cehe acoperă acțiunile operative ale tuturor unităților vitale ale Diviziei: regimentele de infanterie motorizată 25 și 26, batalionul 12 de vânători, regimentul de artilerie, regimentul 12 blindat, batalionul 12 de recunoaștere etc.

Capitolul este structurat în cele cinci secvențe operative: prima bătălie pentru Caen (între 6-10 iunie 1944), a doua bătălie pentru Caen (între 11-18 iunie 1944), a treia bătălie pentru Caen (între 25-30 iunie 1944), a patra bătălie pentru Caen (între 4-10 iulie 1944), operațiunile militare dintre 11 iulie și 22 august 1944, totul culminând cu dezastrul de la Falaise și retragerea în interiorul frontierelor Reich-ului german.

Capitolul comprimă o implicare tactico-militară extrem de densă: practic, între 6 iunie și 31 august 1944, trupele Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend” au fost angajate continuu în toate situațiile de război posibile în cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial. Unitățile „Hitlerjugend” au fost atacate de pe mare, prin intermediul artileriei grele a Marinei Regale, din aer de către Forțele Aeriene Aliate și de pe uscat, prin intermediul trupelor de infanterie motorizată, unități de tancuri, artilerie grea și rachete. Divizia 12 SS a făcut parte dintr-un angrenaj imens, compus din mai multe armate germane totalizând aproximativ 640.000 soldați care au încercat să țină piept unei forțe Aliate copleșitoare alcătuită din peste 2 milioane de militari. Prețul plătit de combatanți a fost pe măsura campaniei: 300.000 în rândul armatelor germane, respectiv 230.000 în rândul Aliaților.

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După bătălia din Normandia, unitățile decimate al Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend” au fost refăcute și înarmate, însă forța combativă a Diviziei nu a mai atins niciodată capacitatea din vara anului 1944. De asemenea, nu s-a mai înregistrat nicio crimă de război la care să fie implicați militari „Hitlerjugend”.

Capitolul 4 evocă operațiunile ofensive din regiunea Ardenilor – cunoscute sub denumirea „Operațiunea Wacht am Rhein”, ultima tentativă a lui Hitler de a destabiliza Frontul de Vest. Făcând parte din Armata 6 Blindată comandată de generalul SS Sepp Dietrich, din cadrul Grupului de Armate B aflat sub comanda feldmareșalului Walter Model, Divizia 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” a angajat operațiuni de întărire a pozițiilor câștigate de grupurile operative din avangarda ofensivei, îndeosebi de Grupul (*Kampfgruppe*) Peiper. La începutul lui ianuarie 1945, operațiunea din Ardeni se afla deja în ultima sa fază, și anume bătălia de la Bastogne, unde trupele Diviziei 12 SS au dat piept cu trupele Diviziei 6 Tancuri a Armatei Americane. Pierderile susținute ale forțelor germane, coroborate cu criza logistică (incapacitatea vehiculelor din cauza lipsei de carburant) au condus inevitabil la un dezastru prevăzut, printre alții, de feldmareșalul Gerd von Rundstedt, încă înainte de declanșarea campaniei.

Potrivit unui ordin telegrafiat de către conducerea superioară SS (*SS-Führungshauptamt* sau SS-FHA), unitățile Diviziei 12 SS aveau să fie puse la dispoziția Comandamentului Armatelor de Vest înainte de 30 ianuarie 1945, dată cu care a început relocarea trupelor Hitlerjugend de la Köln către Győr, Ungaria. Între 14 și 19 februarie 1945 trupele Diviziei 12 SS „Hitlerjugend” au avut de înfruntat avangarda Armatei Roșii în preambulul „Operațiunii Trezirea de Primăvară” (*Unternehmen Frühlingserwachen*), ultima ofensivă majoră a Forțelor Armate Germane pe Frontul de Est, menită să întârzie avansarea trupelor sovietice către frontierele orientale ale Reich-ului, prin anihilarea Armatei 27 Sovietice și a Armatei 6 Gardă Tancuri. Între 6 și 31 martie 1945 au fost purtate lupte grele împotriva trupelor sovietice pe teritoriul Ungariei, iar în noaptea 31 martie-1 aprilie 1945, unitățile Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend” au traversat frontiera Reich-ului, în Austria, în sectorul Ödenburg-Sopron. După 1 aprilie 1945, acțiunile militare al Diviziei 12 SS au putut fi, numai în parte, reconstituite pe baza însemnărilor olografe ale aghiotantului personal al generalului de brigadă, comandantul diviziei Hugo Kraas: jurnalul de front, scris de mână, cu creionul, acoperă perioada 8 aprilie-8 mai 1945, data la care trupele Diviziei s-au predat Armatei Americane.

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PARTEA III

Partea a III-a, intitulată „Soldatul Hitlerjugend” este compusă din două capitole de analiză. Capitolul 5 examinează etosul „Hitlerjugend”, impactul și influența ideologiei naziste în formatarea caracterială a soldaților Diviziei 12 SS. Recruții care au format Divizia „Hitlerjugend” constituie eșantionul tipic al unei generații crescute și educate în spiritul național-socialist, iar cercetarea efectuată în scopul elaborării tezei de doctorat a relevat un număr de șapte factori contextuali care au modelat caracterele într-un construct socio-psihologic unic.

Primul factor de specificitate este oferit de mediul social, politic și economic în care s-a derulat copilăria luptătorilor „Hitlerjugend”: relațiile interumane dezvoltate au fost private de promovarea valorilor cognitive, sociale și academice din cauza *establishment*-ului politic din Germania Republicii de la Weimar. Cu toate acestea, perioada cunoscută drept „anii 20 de aur” (*Goldene Zwanziger*) au facilitat o timidă relansare economică și socială, concomitent cu importul unor curente culturale de peste ocean, însă criza economică mondială care a urmat a avut darul de a inhiba rapid noile achiziții sociale. Generația „Hitlerjugend” avea vârsta de 7 ani când naziștii au preluat puterea în Germania, iar în 1939, când a fost declanșat cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial, viitorii recruți au Diviziei 12 SS împlineau 13 ani.

Al doilea factor de specificitate îl constituie aplicarea intensivă a programului de ideologizare colectivă promovat de Organizația de Tineret a Partidului Național-Socialist al lui Hitler. Conform acestei îndoctrînări, tinerii căpătau percepția unei Germanii idealizate înconjurată de forțe ostile care aveau să-i grăbească sfârșitul fatal; se consolida inversarea standardelor morale prin aplicarea ideologiei superiorității de rasă, concomitent cu începutul înregistrării primelor eșecuri notabile ale Wehrmachtului pe Frontul de Răsărit.

Al treilea factor de specificitate este strâns legat de perioada celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial în care Divizia 12 SS a fost înființată. Spre deosebire de camarazii lui din alte divizii și formațiuni ale Waffen-SS-ului, soldatul „Hitlerjugend” nu avea să cunoască perioada de glorie a marilor victorii repurtate pe cele două fronturi, în care trupele Waffen-SS își construiau temeinic reputația unor forțe militare de elită. Soldatul „Hitlerjugend” era chemat să salveze Germania din fața unui dezastru complet, iminent, sub formula angajării într-o încheștare epică denumită „războiul total” – *Totaleskrieg*.

Al patrulea factor de specificitate îl constituie situația disperată din localitățile Germaniei creată de bombardamentele susținute ale Forțelor Aeriene Regale și Americane. Cei mai mulți dintre viitorii recruți ai Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend” asistaseră cu ochii lor la distrugerea locuințelor, a orașelor cu străzi pline de corpuri mutilate, de incendii și alte scene oribile care în mod inevitabil avea să-i desensibilizeze emoțional. Concomitent cu distrugerea sistematică a țării, trupele Wehrmacht-ului înregistrau pierderi la un nivel fără

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precedent în istoria militară a lumii. Dorința de răzbunare pentru toate aceste suferințe era cultivată nu doar de ideologia omniprezentă, dar se inocula în subliminal chiar și în absența acesteia.

A cincilea factor de specificitate este suprapunerea dintre dorința de răzbunare și asistarea neputincioasă la sutele și miile de escadrole de avioane Aliate care zburau deasupra taberelor de pregătire din Belgia și nordul Franței spre Germania spre a dezlănțui focul și distrugerea. Tinerii recruți din Divizia 12 SS, cantonați la cazărmlile lor erau zilnic supuși la supliciul avioanelor inamice care se scurgeau inexorabil spre est, semănând moartea poate chiar în rândul propriilor familii; era o experiență traumatizantă caracterizată prin neputință, teamă, disconfort continuu și așteptarea înfrigurată a clipei confruntării cu inamicul necruțător, a momentului în care toate aceste „crime” puteau fi răzbunate. Se validează, astfel, teoria lui Leonard Berkowitz, conform căreia „agresivitatea este întotdeauna consecința frustrării”.

Aș șaselea factor de specificitate este dat de caracterul inuman, lipsit de orice simț al măsurii, al conflagrației; acuzați de inamicii lor drept exponenți ai unui regim criminal rușinos, soldații „Hitlerjugend” asistau cum, în numele civilizației și al eliberării de sub tirania nazistă, inamicii Germaniei nu manifestau nicio rețineră în a ucide populația civilă sub un covor de bombe. Nici în ce privește tratamentul prizonierilor de război germani care încăpeau pe mâna Armatelor Aliate lucrurile nu se prezentau mai bine: circulau, mai ales la începutul bătăliei din Normandia, o serie de zvonuri de front care devoalau un tratament inuman aplicat prizonierilor germani, îndeosebi a celor proveniți din Waffen-SS. Aceste rumori întregau tabloul propagandistic care abunda în exemple de torturi aplicate de către englezi, americani și canadieni prizonierilor de război germani care refuzau să răspundă în cadrul interogatoriilor. Dorința de anihilare reciprocă era evidentă.

Al șaptelea factor de specificitate se referă la caracterul defensiv al majorității operațiunilor militare în care au fost implicate unități ale Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend”: în mod constant copleșiți numeric și ca tehnică de luptă, soldații „Hitlerjugend” aveau de purtat un război de uzură, caracterizat prin teritorialitate, aspect ce avea să determine comportamente psiho-sociale specifice, în conformitate cu conceptul de „imperativ teritorial” enunțat de Robert Ardrey. Potrivit acestei teorii, instinctul de teritorialitate este un potențator de agresivitate și de atitudini lesne de etichetat drept „fanatism”.

Teza lansează ipoteza existenței unei stări de animozitate accentuată între canadieni și germani conservate în mod deliberat de către liderii militari încă din timpul Primului Război Mondial. Analizând anumite similitudini comportamentale dintre cele două conflagrații mondiale și extrăgând episoade din jurnale de război sau memorialistică, istoricul canadian Tim Cook devoalează aspecte care validează presupuziția unei stări mutuale de animozitate între cele două forțe armate. Între uciderea reciprocă a prizonierilor de război și practică sistematică de cele două armate antagoniste în timpul Primului Război Mondial și bătălia din Normandia trecuseră doar 26 ani, un răstimp insuficient pentru a relaxa tensiunile acumulate.

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Chestiunea mult disputată a eroismului versus fanatism este amplu analizată într-un subcapitol, pornind de la polisemantica termenului și utilizarea sa în scop propagandistic, politic sau istoric. Sunt trecute în revistă o serie de manifestări „aberrante” ale unor soldați „Hitlerjugend” așa cum au fost percepute de către martorii la evenimente, analizate și explicitate în raport cu specificul contextual. Este reluată discuția în jurul motivației primordiale pentru care soldatul obișnuit se luptă într-un război, indiferent dacă este de natură ideologică, religioasă sau politică și dezvoltată analiza percepțiilor care diferă din punctul de vedere al situării observatorului. Pe parcursul acțiunilor militare ale Diviziei 12 SS au fost înregistrate anumite fluctuații ale motivației combative, care, în cele din urmă, s-au reflectat în eficiența tactico-militară. Sunt enumerate și analizate aceste fluctuații, considerându-se elemente constituente ale „fenomenologiei Hitlerjugend”. Capitolul 5 se încheie cu un subcapitol alocat crimelor de război comise de soldați ai Diviziei 12 SS Blindate „Hitlerjugend” în timpul bătăliei din Normandia.

Capitolul 6 propune o abordare rar utilizată de istorici și anume, prin intermediul interdisciplinarității, recursul la analiza socio-psihologică a soldatului „Hitlerjugend” reprezentativ. Punctul de plecare al analizei îl constituie studiile experimentale realizate de Stanley Milgram prin care acesta a răspuns unor problematici legate de starea comportamentală a individului în cadrul unei structuri organizate; elaborând conceptul de „stare agentică”, ce survine atunci când o autoritate auto-reglementată modifică structura comportamentală a individului astfel încât să poată supraviețui și acționa în cadrul unui sistem ierarhic controlat. Prin inducerea „stării agentice”, individul este determinat să acționeze ca un braț obedient care aduce la îndeplinire voința altei persoane sau autorități. Experimentul Milgram a evidențiat conflictele complexe dintre supunerea față de o autoritate imperativă, abuzivă și absurdă și conștiința personală a omului. Desfășurat între anii 1961-1963 în cadrul prestigioasei Universități Yale, scopul final al controversatului experiment a fost acela de a afla toate motivațiile din mințile celor care au executat ororile din cadrul lagărelor de exterminare în masă din Germania nazistă. În continuarea studiului afectat soldatului „Hitlerjugend”, am făcut de asemenea recurs la instrumentele utilizate de Philip Zimbardo în cadrul experimentului său denumit „Stanford Prison Experiment”, prin care s-au elaborat cele două „stări”, sau tipuri de factori de presiune ce capacitează un individ să acționeze împotriva conștiinței sale sau a bunelor moravuri universale recunoscute: dispozițional sau situațional. În completarea aparatului analitic propus de cei doi cercetători sus-menționați, au fost luate în discuție teoriile lui Albert Bandura privitoare la conceptul „dezangajării morale” structurat în patru etape distincte care determină un individ normal să devină un instrument de obediență necondiționată în mâinile unui sistem politic criminal.

Deși nu foarte populară, metoda analizei psiho-sociale în abordarea istoriografică a fost totuși utilizată imediat după terminarea celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, un prim exemplu în acest sens fiind Gustave Gilbert, supranumit și „psihologul de la Nürnberg”. Un alt autor care a încercat să descifreze motivațiile intime ale acțiunilor criminale comise de unii funcționari din SS a fost Leo Alexander, fost șef al Consiliului pentru Crime

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de Război de la Nürnberg. Capitolul introduce cititorul în evoluția analizelor comportamentale și de caz, începând cu Eugen Kogon în primii ani postbelici și ajungând la concluziile lui Robert Gerwarth, Sönke Neitzel și Harald Welzer, în zilele noastre. În principiu, abordarea istoriografică în această speță constă în două direcții prin care se încearcă explicitarea psihologică a făptuitorilor: factorul „dispozițional”, sau înclinația nativă firească a individului de a induce răul, plăcerea perversă de a făptui acte criminale (în această categorie intrând și teoria lui Daniel Goldhagen care sugerează ideologizarea – anti-semitismul și teoriile naziste – drept factor primordial care ar sta la baza motivației individului) și factorul „situațional”, constând într-un cumul de elemente contextuale care exercită o presiune insuportabilă asupra individului, determinându-l să acționeze în postura de „stare agentică”.

Majoritatea comentatorilor, istoricilor și specialiștilor în problematica celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial promovează metoda „analizei dispoziționale”. Nu este și metoda utilizată în această lucrare de doctorat, unde am optat pentru recursul la „analiza situațională”, singura care răspunde unor rigori științifice indubitabile stabilite de cercetarea socio-psihologică modernă și demonstrată în cadrul unor numeroase experimente derulate de-a lungul anilor. Capitolul examinează „cultura abuzului” dezvoltată în cadrul mai larg al „culturii violenței”, intens promovată și implementată de sistemul național-socialist. Conform rezultatelor rezultate din experimentele lui Milgram și Zimbardo – și replicate recent la câteva universități de prestigiu din lume – s-a demonstrat că forțele situaționale puternice (sau factori contextuali) pot surclasa voința individului de a rezista; în cazul concret al soldatului „Hitlerjugend” tipic, problema „rezistenței” era deja tranșată într-o manieră categorică. Dezumanizarea colectivă a ocupat un loc central în viziunea lui Hitler indusă prin intermediul ideologizării insidioase și s-a manifestat concret prin identificarea unor categorii sociale și rasiale în afara sferei umanității.

În analiza psiho-socială propusă, lucrarea tratează chestiunea dihotomică reprezentată de caracterul uman în sine: deși imperfect, esențialmente blând și iubitor versus egoist și dispus natural spre rău (analiza lui Christian Jarrett). Condițiile în care generația „Hitlerjugend” – cea care a furnizat viitorii soldați „Hitlerjugend” – a crescut și a fost educată îndeplinesc condițiile „stării agentice”, în sensul în care factorii situaționali formidabili care au compus întregul mediu social au avut capacitatea de a crea o stare de excepționalitate ce a determinat o serie de comportamente specifice atât în primele linii ale frontului, cât și în spatele lui. Terenul „de joacă” al copiilor „Hitlerjugend” a fost războiul însuși, aspect care a înrăurit inevitabil și masiv tendința de dezumanizare a indivizilor încă de la vârste fragede, așa cum demonstrează și Katrin Schultz.

Lumea înconjurătoare a viitorului luptător din Divizia 12 SS „Hitlerjugend” prezenta elementele unei idiosincrazii sociale complete, în care rezultatele psiho-sociale ale unei copilării traumatizate nu întârziu să se manifeste. De pildă, impactul psihologic creat asupra copiilor care sunt victime ale raidurilor de bombardament au fost analizate de Anna Freud și Dorothy Burlingham; în fapt, aproape toți sociologii și psihologii sunt de

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acord că agresiunea armată și actele de violență extremă (ca, de pildă, uciderea unor apropiați) pe care copiii le experimentează conduc invariabil la simptome de afecțiuni mentale. În acest sens, simptomatologia psihologică juvenilă a fost studiată de Jon Shaw asupra unor copii din Orientul Mijlociu, afectați de războaiele curente. Abordarea continuă cu analiza din punct de vedere al perspectivei individuale și al celei de grup, sau de apartenență la organizație, elemente care prefăteză problematica complexă a obedienței față de autoritate. Mediul situațional în care a acționat soldatul „Hitlerjugend” reprezentativ se mai poate defini și ca o „conformitate față de grup”, adică un sistem de presiune socială cauzat de necesitatea acceptabilității, așa cum a fost conceptualizat de Solomon Eliot Asch; acesta ar fi un prim stadiu al „dezangajării morale”. Al doilea este reprezentat prin practicarea submisivă a obedienței față de autoritatea militară (în această speță), iar a treia etapă constă în inversarea normativă a sistemului de valori existent anterior. Ultimul stadiu care consfințește „dezangajarea morală” a individului este generat de așa-ziii „factori de mediu” și a fost demonstrat cu ocazia evenimentelor petrecute la Abu Ghraib, unde prizonieri de război irakieni au fost bătuți, violați și umiliți de către soldați americani (incluzând femei-soldat).

Prima – și cea mai dramatică – consecință a proceselor enunțate mai sus este reprezentată de „transformarea comportamentală”, conceptualizată și explicată de Albert Bandura.

În concluzie, motivele pentru care soldatul „Hitlerjugend” reprezentativ, sau tipic, a acționat așa cum știm, relevă mai degrabă o cauză situațională, decât una dispozițională. Fără a fi niște automate iresponsabile mânuite discreționar de către autoritatea nazistă, acești războinici au fost, totuși, produsul unui proces îndelungat, judicios și insidios de formare volițional-psihologică prin implementarea unor concepte rasiale și politice intens predate în cadrul cursurilor teoretice. Nu în ultimul rând, ei au fost oamenii epocii lor, ai sistemului în care au crescut și s-au dezvoltat moral și intelectual. În multe situații, concluziile tezei coincid cu teoria „banalității răului” enunțat de Hannah Arendt și se bazează pe experimente socio-psihologice care răspund tuturor exigențelor științifice ale disciplinelor alternative la care s-a făcut recurs. În vreme ce Istoria ne poate servi drept instrument de interpretare a contextelor sociale care au condus la un anumit deznodământ, psihologia este o știință care utilizează metode științifice vaste, cum ar fi colectarea sistematică de date prin intermediul experimentelor controlate – motive care justifică încrederea în experiența științifică și rațională a acestei discipline.

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CONCLUZII

Capitolul consacrat concluziilor debutează cu un comentariu larg asupra „provocării” istoriografice reprezentate de potențialul exploziv al temei alese; problematica Waffen-SS, departe de a fi epuizată, suscită încă, la aproape opt decenii după consumarea evenimentelor, emoții și abordări care pot vicia calitatea științifică a cercetării. În „Concluzie” sunt reluate comentarii sintetice asupra elitismului soldaților „Hitlerjugend”, asupra specificității proprii care a caracterizat cadrul de acțiune al acestora, asupra ideologiei aplicate, a fanatismului și, de asemenea, aduce în discuție supraviețuirea anumitor scheme de organizare post belice ale Waffen-SS-ului.

Toți soldații din Divizia 12 SS Blindată „Hitlerjugend” aparțin aceleiași generații de indivizi care au parcurs același traiect educațional, ideologic și militar. Anterior încorporării lor în Divizia 12 SS, acești tineri au fost formați după o schemă complexă: inițial membri ai Organizației Tineretului Hitlerist, au participat în mod repetat la activitățile cu specific militar derulate de așa-zisele „unități speciale” (*Sondereinheiten*), apoi au frecventat cursurile de instruire intensivă tactico-militară din rândul taberelor de pregătire (*Wehrtüchtigungslagern*). Excepți de la stagiul obligatoriu în cadrul RAD, au fost încorporați în una dintre diviziile Waffen-SS care avea să scrie o inedită pagină de istorie militară în faza finală a celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial.

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EXPERIENȚA PROFESIONALĂ

Perioada: 2005-2015 Conroy Homes S.R.L. (*New Estate Development*) - Manager
 2003-2005 Carter Films (*Professional Production for Film and Television*) – New Business Director
 1999-2003 Keel Serv S.R.L. (*Shipyards Activities*) - Administrator
 1996-1999 Mercury Research/Reivers of Tasset (*Team Leadership and Team Building Programmes*) – Training Manager

EDUCAȚIE ȘI FORMARE

Perioada: 2013-2015 **Diplomă de Master**
 Universitatea „Valahia” din Târgoviște, Facultatea de Științe Umaniste, specializarea: *Unitatea Istoriei Europene*
 2010-2013 **Diplomă de Licență**
 Universitatea „Valahia” din Târgoviște, Facultatea de Științe Umaniste, specializarea: *Istorie*

COMPETENȚE PERSONALE

Limba maternă
 Alte limbi străine cunoscute

Româna

ÎNȚELEGERE		VORBIRE		SCRIERE
Ascultare	Citire	Participare la conversație	Discurs oral	
Engleza	C2	C2	C1	C1
Germana	A2	B1	A2	B1
Latina				

Competențe informatice

▪ MS Office, Corel Draw, Corel Photo Paint, Photoshop

Alte competențe

▪ Managementul resurselor umane, coordonarea și predarea de module specifice de *Leadership Management* și *Teambuilding Development*. Organizarea și coordonarea de expediții alpine (component al Lotului Național de Alpinism și Escaladă în perioada 1989-1993, absolvent al Școlii de Escaladă pe Gheață din Ben Nevis, membru al Clubului Alpin Român, al British Mountaineering Council și al Clubului Alpin al Marii Britanii). Participant la expediții alpine în munții Alpi, Caucaz, Ben Nevis, Tien-Shan etc)

Permis de conducere

B

INFORMAȚII SUPLIMENTARE

Publicații

- **Mountaineering in Romania**, *Alpine Journal* 1993, London (Articol în anuarul Clubului Alpin al Marii Britanii, în care se expune o scurtă istorie a alpinismului românesc și o descriere a regiunilor de interes alpin din România);
- **Ecclesia Matrix**, Editura *Galaxia Gutenberg*, 2012 (Eseu istoric dedicat teoriei artei ecleziale și tranzitului de la stilul romanic la stilul gotic. Ca element de noutate, se susține sorginea cisterciană a artei gotice, combătându-se teoria potrivit căreia aceasta ar fi debutat ca rezultat al inovației din partea unor artiști medievali situați în afara spațiului eclezial);
- **„Eroicele lupte” de la Moreni**, *Magazin Istoric*, Mai 2012 (Articol dedicat evenimentelor din august 1944 în care au fost implicate trupele *Wehrmacht*-ului staționate la Moreni, în scopul protejării câmpurilor petrolifere și a capacităților de producție și forțe aparținând Corpului V Teritorial al Armatei Române);
- **Cistercienii – per visibilia ad invisibilia**, Editura *Galaxia Gutenberg*, 2013 (Eseu istoric dedicat reformei teologale apărut în sânul comunității benedictine, care a determinat formarea și consolidarea Ordinului Cistercian într-o congregație ce a remodelat întreaga structură eclezială a Bisericii Române. Ca element de noutate, se subliniază impactul major pe care l-a avut Ordinul Cistercian în Transilvania, rolul civilizator, precum și de impunere a unei culturi întemeiate pe filonul iudeo-creștin, având totodată meritul de a fi introdus pentru prima dată stilul gotic pe teritoriul României);
- **Gardă pentru Führer – Istoria Diviziei „Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler”**, Editura Eikon, 2017 (o istorie a „Gărzii de Corp” a lui Adolf Hitler, de la momentul apariției sale ca regiment de protecție al *Führer*-ului, până la evoluția acesteia într-o redutabilă divizie blindată, care s-a situat, până la sfârșitul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, în vârful elitei Forțelor Armate ale celui de-al Treilea Reich. Cartea enumeră toate campaniile și acțiunile politico-militare majore la care a participat Divizia LSSAH, analizând totodată episoadele controversate în care a fost implicată: crime de război, maltratarea populației civile din teritoriile ocupate, pe de o parte, dar și abuzurile comise împotriva prizonierilor de război proveniți din rândul Diviziei *Leibstandarte* de către Armatele Aliate și de către tribunalele militare instituite de acestea).
- Participarea la congrese și simpozioane ecumenice în Marea Britanie, Germania și Austria, în cadrul cărora s-au prezentat lucrări personale dedicate Istoriei Bisericii, crizei spirituale din sânul bisericilor tradiționale, hermeneutică imagistică etc.

Conferințe

LISTA LUCRARILOR PUBLICATE

- ***Ecclesia Matrix***, Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, 2012 (Eseu istoric dedicat teoriei artei ecleziale și tranziției de la stilul romanic la stilul gotic. Ca element de noutate, se susține sorgintea cisterciană a artei gotice, combătându-se teoria potrivit căreia aceasta ar fi debutat ca rezultat al inovației din partea unor artiști medievali situați în afara spațiului eclezial);
- ***„Eroicele lupte” de la Moreni***, Magazin Istoric, Mai 2012 (Articol dedicat evenimentelor din august 1944 în care au fost implicate trupele Wehrmacht-ului staționate la Moreni, în scopul protejării câmpurilor petrolifere și a capacităților de producție și forțe aparținând Corpului V Teritorial al Armatei Române);
- ***Cistercienii – per visibilia ad invisibilia***, Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, 2013 (Eseu istoric dedicat reformei teologale apărut în sânul comunității benedictine, care a determinat formarea și consolidarea Ordinului Cistercian într-o congregație ce a remodelat întreaga structură eclezială a Bisericii Române. Ca element de noutate, se subliniază impactul major pe care l-a avut Ordinul Cistercian în Transilvania, rolul civilizator, precum și de impunere a unei culturi întemeiate pe filonul iudeo-creștin, având totodată meritul de a fi introdus pentru prima dată stilul gotic pe teritoriul României);
- ***Gardă pentru Führer – Istoria Diviziei „Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler”***, Editura Eikon, 2017 (o istorie a „Gărzii de Corp” a lui Adolf Hitler, de la momentul apariției sale ca regiment de protecție al Führer-ului, până la evoluția acesteia într-o reductabilă divizie blindată, care s-a situat, până la sfârșitul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, în vârful elitei Forțelor Armate ale celui de-al Treilea Reich. Cartea enumeră toate campaniile și acțiunile politico-militare majore la care a participat Divizia LSSAH, analizând totodată episoadele controversate în care a fost implicată: crime de război, maltratarea populației civile din teritoriile ocupate, pe de o parte, dar și abuzurile comise împotriva prizonierilor de război proveniți din rândul Diviziei Leibstandarte de către Armatele Aliate și de către tribunalele militare instituite de acestea).

REZUMATUL LUCRĂRII DOCTORALE: THE 12TH SS-PANZERDIVISION “HITLERJUGEND”

The 12th Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” was one of the few Waffen-SS corps which extracted its *Mannschaft* from Hitler Youth Organisation exclusively. Membership to the newly formed division (initially assigned as ‘panzer-grenadier division’) was opened to young German males, with a minimum height of 170 cm, born in 1926 who, at the time of conscription, were 17 years old. The salient features of the World War II in Germany during 1944-1945 and, in particular, the specificity of the Invasion of Normandy were elements that influenced and shaped the Hitlerjugend fighters in a special way that was further explored in this research. The problems of this study emerge from the peculiar characteristics of this élite military unit of the Third Reich’s Armed Forces and strive to answer some specific questions of it. In order to understand the military achievements or the noticeable combat motivation of the young soldiers belonging to Hitlerjugend Division, we need to firstly describe the Hitler Youth’s spirit¹ and to identify those key issues that resulted into the creation of their special ethos. The youths of the Hitlerjugend Division were undoubtedly among the most relevant examples of a generation that grew and developed ethically, politically and ideologically in the purest spirit of National-Socialism and therefore this study also strives to answer whether the implementation of the entire palette of Nazi ideas resulted into a military machine that acted in a particular way, different from other Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht fighters. Did the National-Socialist system succeed or fail in the production of the best trained and ideologically suited warriors? In this line of logic, another subsequent question needs to be answered: had the National-Socialist dictatorship been able to successfully transfer the Nazi ideals into the Hitlerjugend soldier’s ethos? It is also to be further analysed whether, at the basement of what we commonly define the Hitlerjugend ethos, stands the Nazi propaganda alone, or the later development of war with its appalling atrocities inflicted upon the German unarmed civilians have also played a significant role in the creation of the typical Hitlerjugend soldier? Further questions on controversial matters need close examination: was their indisputable heroism an outcome of an insidious process of inducing fanaticism? How exactly their alleged fanaticism manifested and what consequences did it cause? How can we reconcile unquestionable proofs of fanatical behaviour with praised soldierly attitudes, comradeship relationships and other similar behaviours that animated these young warriors? And last but not least here opens the question of fanaticism itself: is fanaticism well described by popular approach that ‘one person’s hero is another person’s fanatic’ or the approach to fanaticism lay in more complex ethical context and must be applied accordingly? Since the ‘fanaticism phenomenon’ seems to have been attached particularly to Hitlerjugend Division perhaps to a much larger magnitude than to the case of other Waffen-SS formations, I approach this issue from different perspectives and therefore it will appear in several stages of our analysis dedicated to the typology of Hitlerjugend soldier. The question of fanaticism has been tackled in conjunction with a series of other peculiarities of the Hitlerjugend soldier, such as his battle performance, combat motivation and ideological

¹ By Hitlerjugend ‘spirit’ it is hereafter intended to define those morale (team spirit) and courage peculiarities such as: combat braveness, strength of character, stout-heartedness, determination of purpose, enthusiasm, dynamism, all of these being systematically fostered through Waffen-SS ideology (DD)

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acquirements; from the interplay of all these factors, the very issue of fanaticism, typical to Hitlerjugend soldiers to maybe a greater extent, can be studied thoroughly. Considerable historical literature was produced about Wehrmacht in general and Waffen-SS in particular. As Waffen-SS had been officially assigned as ‘the fourth branch’ of the German Armed Forces, many studies, reports and subsequent specific materials dealing with the history of Wehrmacht also include particular writings about the SS-armed wing. According to Samuel W. Mitcham and Gene Mueller², the present-day historians specialising on the Nazi Germany are generally divided into two opposite wings: the traditional or so-called ‘establishment historians’ who view the Waffen-SS as an indisputable criminal organisation whose members were, with no exception, or with a large majority, criminals by association, guilty by adhesion and war criminals by participation, and the other historians, so-called ‘apologists’ or ‘revisionists’, who hold on the idea that most of the Waffen-SS members were “Soldaten wie andere auch”³. Military historian Simon MacKenzie offers a newer classification of the revisionist range, from ‘extreme admirers on the fringes of far-right’, such as Richard Landwehr and Jean Mabire, to partisan authors, such as Edmund L. Blandford and Gordon Williamson and, eventually popular historians that are generally tempted to illustrate Waffen-SS in a positive light, such as John Keegan and Bruce Quarrie. Other popular authors like Herbert Walther and Tim Ripley are regarded by MacKenzie as being part of the ‘militaria category’ of non-scholarly, uncritical works⁴. Moderate historians trying to escape any classification as such, who admit that Waffen-SS was guilty of war crimes, nevertheless show reluctance in labelling the organisation on the whole as ‘criminal’ are also considered apologists. The question of polarisation in the field of interpretation and ethic judgement is further detailed in the final chapters of this work. The theme of the research was generally conducted following two mainstreams: highly descriptive, with a decisive emphasis on morale issues, ethical judgments on one hand, and pronounced investigative, analytical, detailed and focused studies produced by recent German historians on the other hand; the latter tackled the phenomenology of Waffen-SS considering a large palette of scientific research, using sociological and psychological instruments of investigation. First typology of approach is reflected in the majority of literature on Waffen-SS topics and includes a series of well-known military historians and other authors who produced large quantities of descriptive material which had a substantial impact on public by mainly popularising the subject of the Nazi Germany’s political army. Their work is generally inconclusive in socio-cultural analysis, lacking relevant in-depth investigation of the essential causes of the SS phenomenology. Subsequently, they fail to answer those key questions regarding creation, function, structure and organisational mechanisms of the totalitarian state which were required to secure and preserve its specific institutions that kept it standing strong.

² Samuel W. MITCHAM, Gene MUELLER: *Hitler’s Commanders and German Bravery in the Field, 1939-1945*, (Havertown, PA, USA, Pen and Sword, 2014), 298

³ “Soldaten wie andere auch” is the syntagma and title of Paul Hausser’s book, last published in 2005. He was a prominent Waffen-SS general (Generaloberst der Waffen-SS) and the architect of what was to become the specific Waffen-SS battle strategy (DD)

⁴ Simon MACKENZIE: *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era: A Revisionist Approach*, (New York, Routledge, 1997), 87

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Amongst most prolific authors of this kind are: Charles Messenger, biographer of some famous Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS personalities and high ranked officers, such as Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt, Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel and General der Waffen-SS Josef (Sepp) Dietrich, as well as crucial campaigns of the World War II; Michael Reynolds, biographer of notorious SS-Standartenführer Joachim Peiper and author of a vivid description of I SS Panzer Corps in Normandy and the course of battle; Marc J. Rikmenspoel, the first author who produced a complete Waffen-SS encyclopaedia; Charles W. Sydnor with his relentless judgement on ideological objectives of Germany and how they were fought for by one of the deadliest SS divisions – “Totenkopf”; Gordon Williamson’s investigation on Hitler’s elite army doubled by a reasonable examination of the SS origins, units and main battles, as well as short biographies of some of the Waffen-SS leaders. Williamson is also the author of a rich collection of interviews which he had obtained from former Waffen-SS veterans and recollection of their controversial facts, all gathered in “Loyalty is my Honour”. The list includes furthermore dozens of authors, whether historians, journalists or private researchers, who had provided their own interpretation and descriptions of the military campaigns whose protagonists were the Waffen-SS units: Gerry Villani, Jochen Böhrer, Jacques Delarue, Adrian Weale, George H. Stein and many others.

The second methodological pattern was followed by a series of professional researches and historians who tackled the subject of the Waffen-SS by making a full use of all scientific instruments that enabled them to approach it from social, cultural, anthropological and ethical perspective. The following authors produced valuable historical writings, bringing further in-depth analysis on the SS-State and its coercive institutions: Hans Buchheim, Martin Cüppers, Antony Beevor, Bastian Hein, Chester Wilmot, Bernd Wegner, John Keegan, René Rohrkamp and others. The list is completed by personal accounts and memoirs which, apart from legitimate doubt with regard to accuracy of the facts and subjectivism of the interpretation, give however a wide palette of personal views as eye-witnesses of the phenomenon: Johann Voss, Hubert Meyer, Leon Degrelle, Kurt Meyer, Paul Hausser and others. As one may have expected, the German historiography on the issue of Waffen-SS is remarkably undertaken and consists not only in descriptive flow of events and comprehensive histories of the entire SS army, but also in in-depth analysis on its structure, personnel, organisation and leadership. Many of the studies examine the background of collaboration between high ranked structures of the Waffen-SS and Heer High Command, the sharing and co-ordination of competences between the two organisations, how political ideology and race propaganda inflicted upon their own troops outburst inner self-denial amongst officers, non-commissioned officers and ordinary soldiers. It is the case of Jürgen Förster’s recent work: “Was wäre die Waffen-SS ohne den Generalstab gewesen? Zur strukturellen Zusammenarbeit von Heer und SS, in: Michael Jonas u.a, (Hg.): Dynamiken der Gewalt Krieg im Spannungsfeld von Politik, Ideologie und Gesellschaft. Festschrift für Bernd Wegner”, published in 2015. Gerhard Rempel’s “Hitler’s Children”. The Hitler Youth and the SS” published in 1989 gives a full insight descriptive history and attached analysis on the organisation of the National-Socialist Party’s youth

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associations; examining the relationship between the leadership of The SS and Hitlerjugend, Rempel concludes that this coalition led to a formidable achievement of National-Socialism, by winning young passionate energy that was brutally and indecently used. The initial political and military success of the Nazis is regarded as a logical result, once the youngest generation of Germany unconditionally and enthusiastically submitted obediently to Hitler's cause. Gerhard Rempel previously brought relevant historical facts which he had extracted from available documents in the archives regarding the recruitment methods and regulations and the special role of SS-Obergruppenführer and General der Waffen-SS Gottlob Berger in transforming the Hitlerjugend Organisation into an exceptional selection base for Waffen-SS recruitment offices: "Gottlob Berger and Waffen-SS Recruitment 1939-1945, in: Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen 27 (1980). One of the most comprehensive in-depth analyses on Waffen-SS organisation, personnel and social structure originate from René Rohrkamp's works: "Weltanschaulich gefestigte Kämpfer. Die Soldaten der Waffen-SS 1933-1945. Organisation – Personal – Sozialstruktur" published in 2010 and "Die Waffen-SS im letzten Kriegsjahr. Personalwesen und Sozialstruktur" released two years later. After introducing the key questions (the problem of the study) and methodology used, René Rohrkamp drills the reader into specific issues of a military organisation and the actual viewing of the 'Waffen-SS als militärische Organisation': *eine Organisation ist ein soziales System mit überdurchschnittlich spezifizierter Zielbestimmung und überdurchschnittlich spezifizierter Struktur* (the organisation is a social system with an above-average specified target definition and above-average specified structure)⁵. As far as the typical Waffen-SS soldier is concerned, René Rohrkamp builds up his study around a few key questions: who would become a member of the Waffen-SS? What is the social profile of the candidate? Were there any social traits known in the Waffen-SS? In which proportion the person's social profile was reflected in the Organisation's purposes? Were any of the tasks specific for military activities, such as efficiency, discipline and commitment mirrored in the social background of the Waffen-SS members?⁶ Apart from analytical comments, the study contains a large number of charts, diagrams and tables, all dealing with death percentages at certain time and geographical areas, recruitment variations, timescale between medical examination and admission to Waffen-SS, comparisons between awarding military decorations to Waffen-SS and Heer divisions, comparative tables showing the educational background of soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers from Waffen-SS and Heer, suicide and suicide attempts, desertions etc. Eventually, a detailed chronological table of the events, covering the entire history of the Third Reich with a special focus on SA, SS and Waffen-SS organisations is appended to the study. An opportune new study on Waffen-SS was published in 2014 and represents a fresher insight into the topic. The work is signed by three outstanding German experts in the topic: Jan Erik Schulte, Peter Lieb and Bernd Wegner with their study "Die Waffen-SS. Neue Forschungen".

⁵ René ROHRKAMP: "Weltanschaulich gefestigte Kämpfer". Die Soldaten der Waffen-SS 1933-1945. Organisation – Personal – Sozialstruktur, (Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2010), 41

⁶ *Ibidem*, 47

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New key questions are addressed with regard to the history of the notorious Hitler's political army and focus on new research topics, such as the role of female personnel within the Waffen-SS and how motivation of foreign volunteers (*ausländische Freiwilligen*) was built and preserved at a high level at all times.⁷ Special analyses are devoted on volunteers originating from Yugoslavia, Romania, Estonia, Denmark and Norway. The contribution of certain Waffen-SS units in running and executing the Holocaust is also assessed. One of the most appreciated historical writings ever produced on Waffen-SS is perhaps "Hitlers politische Soldaten. Die Waffen-SS 1933-1945" published in 2008 and belongs to the reputed expert and historian Bernd Wegner. This book is practically comprehensive and covers all essential issues: Ideology (an in-depth background is given focusing on nationalism, authoritarianism and militarism, followed by a close analysis on specific SS concepts such as "Lebensraum", "Heerenshaft", "Germanische Frühzeit, Rassen Konzept und "Weltanschauung"); Organisation (from early SS small formations through "Röhm-Putsch" and reorganisation of the "Reichsführung-SS" and organisation of the *Totenkopfverbände* to the setting up of the *Junkerschulen* and final militarisation of the SS); Training and Education (critical examination of the learning plan within the *Junkerschulen*, standardisation of military concepts specific to Waffen-SS, forming the operational units etc.); Social Structure (regional recruitment offices and their operational methods, confessional and NSDAP allegiance of members, the "Führerkorps" of the Waffen-SS); Expansion (specific problems, solution for continuity regarding principles of volunteering, Waffen-SS losses, shortage of military commanders, especially non-commissioned officers, General Staff positions).

The historiography on Waffen-SS is enriched by a number of books written by a prolific French historian, Jean-Luc Leleu who published both in France and Germany. Jean-Luc Leleu wrote his PhD Thesis "Soldats politiques en guerre: Sociologie, organisation, rôles et comportements des formations de la Waffen-SS en considération particulière de leur présence en Europe de l'Ouest, 1940-1944" under the supervision of professor Bernd Wegner from Universität Bundeswehr in Hamburg and thus became one of the best-known non-German historians specialising on Waffen-SS matters. In his PhD Thesis, Jean-Luc Leleu retrieves some of the main topics of his co-ordinating professor with a special focus on Waffen-SS divisions which fought on the Eastern Front: "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler", "Totenkopf" and "Das Reich". Among his best known works appeared in Germany are: "Imaginiert Feind, erklärter Feind. Die Wahrnehmung der Waffen-SS durch die westlichen Armeen im Verlauf des Zweiten Weltkrieges in: Jörg Echternkamp (Hg.): Militär in Deutschland und Frankreich", published in 2012. He is also the author of a comprehensive study in French language, "La Waffen-SS. Soldats politiques en guerre", which he published in 2007. Another non-German author whose work was released in Germany is Carlo Gentile: "Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Partisanenkrieg. Italien 1943-1945", book that was published in 2012.

⁷ The foreign volunteers' motivation and commitment were arguably higher, in some respects, than those of Waffen-SS members of pure German origin, considering the last days of Battle of Berlin, when French SS "Charlemagne", and the soldiers of "Nordland" divisions formed the core of the last resisting units fighting for Germany. (DD)

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Consulting a collective biography was a relatively facile task, since the history of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” represents a rather narrow pin-hole in the historiography. Unlike in other related topics, identifying a number of relevant biographical subjects proved to be fairly accessible. We have constantly feared of creating a ‘patchwork of individual stories’, thus leaving the reader with some doubts as to why these particular experiences have been combined⁸. Once the biographical subjects have been identified, their biographical data had to be assembled consequently, and this proved to be a more challenging task, due to the large amount of written literature and recorded testimonies. Retaining a sense of balance between collective biography and other better-represented sources has been the most ticklish point. Another difficult task in using collective biography reasonably has been represented by personal experience that was uncritically accepted. On the contrary, my permanent effort was to preserve a clear, analytical view on the biographical subjects and to provide critical discourse analysis on their own comments. The actual use of biographical methodology in the present study has restricted itself to a kind of knowledge about the past and it has never been intended to replace other historical sources inherently more trustworthy.

Uncritical usage of either biographical or auto-biographical sources disqualifies any historian; therefore any study must be accompanied by a complex research of the background, triangulation with other available evidences and checking for both internal and external consistency. In this line of logic, within the methodology used hereby in order to produce this Thesis, multi-disciplinarily sciences have been also utilised: socio-linguistics was employed in order to analyse the etymology and ethical background of the phenomenon of fanaticism; anthropology has been applied to closely examine certain sets of habits established during the childhood development stages of the future Hitler youths; sociological methods have been used in order to connect their individual lives with the socio-ideological patterns that shaped their latter behaviours and, eventually psychological instruments have been availed in order to define and explain their personal identity and its subsequent dilution into group.

The archival investigation has mainly developed around the four major sources of military documents: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, Vojenský Historický Archiv – Military History Archives (VHA) in Prague, Library and Archives of Canada (LAC) in Ottawa and Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (BA-MA) in Freiburg im Breisgau. It is generally agreed that History has proven frequent deviations of the official records from the actual truth. The process was named ‘productive myopia’ and has been defined as an intentionally guided narrative destined to serve certain ideological or political aims⁹. The documents containing written, direct and clear orders cannot be subject to later changes, unless a perverted interpretation of the issues occurs; when it comes to description of the pursued military mission in a war journal, the accuracy of the narrative content may often suffer inherent ambiguity. A written order represents

⁸ June HANNAM & Karen HUNT: *Socialist Women, Britain 1890's-1920's*, (Routledge, London, 2002), 12

⁹ Joe SACCO: *Productive Myopia: Seeing Past History's Spectacle of Accuracy*, (Journal of War & Culture Studies, Volume 8, 2015), Issue 4

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the expression of an assumed, planned and justified will in relation to a future action, whereas the war diary provides the ‘post-factum’ narrative of the actions resulted from previous orders. Depending on how things were organised, delegated, conducted and eventually executed, the account of a war journal can be adjusted, summarised or even changed in order to ‘pimp up’ the actual reflection of its content for posterity. Even primary sources may lack of essential information: for instance, none of the German documents of the military archives that were revised for this Thesis contain the slightest broad hint to misconduct toward prisoners of war, nor mention anything about the episodes in which unarmed prisoners were shot or mistreated. The Allied archives present a similar approach in this issue. The *Kriegstagebücher* describing the five stages of the Battle of Normandy contain little to no allusion at all regarding actual defeat, other euphemistic terms being preferred, such as ‘tactical retreat’ or ‘adjusting offensive’¹⁰. It should therefore be not surprising when Canadian or British war diaries describing the same battle sequence offer rather different versions of what had actually happened on the battle-field than their equivalent German *Kriegstagebüch*, however the latter seems to have provided more accurate reports on losses in human and technical forces, movement of the troops and ammunition expenditure. The narrative of a war journal addresses to future readers, military or not; sensitive matters may well be considered when drafting them into the official issue. Some researchers proceeded to analyse the accuracy of the information given in the war diaries which served as the basis for the most of data in the battle-fields and concluded that many of the reports had, in fact, rarely covered a conflict comprehensively and objectively.

As far as the structure of this Thesis is concerned, it consists of three categories of narratives: the actual introduction, where the problems of the study are presented, along with methodology, resources used and related bibliography and previous research of the question; the descriptive chapters, all assembled in three Parts – where the history of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”, from its actual activation, through the military campaigns to the final surrender is all compiled and described and, eventually the conclusions chapter. Each Part of the Thesis contains two Chapters.

The Part I “The Jugend-Division” starts with “Hitlerjugend as a Youth Organisation of NSDAP” – that inserts the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” into the larger picture of National-Socialist totalitarian regime and dictatorial structure, and explain how the youth organisation was brought to existence. The section presents a detailed structure of the organisation: offices, departments and schooling institutions. A sub-chapter is dedicated to ideological training of the youths by observing a systematic approach to racial ideology and

¹⁰ **Vojenský Historický Archiv**, Praha: I./SS-Pz.Rgt.12. *Kriegstagebuch (KTB) Nr. 1* (06.06.1944-29.08.1944), passim; **Vojenský Historický Archiv**, Praha: II./SS-Pz.Rgt. 12 *Kriegstagebuch (KTB) Nr. 3* (06.06.1944-30.08.1944), passim; **Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg**: RS 3-12/40 (*Der Einsatz der 12. SS-Panzerdivision “Hitlerjugend” während der Invasionskämpfe in Frankreich von Juni bis September 1944*). Kurt Meyer, Generalmajor d. Waffen-SS a.D.; Hubert Meyer, Oberstlt. d. Waffen-SS a.D. unter Mitwirkung von: Hans Siegel, Major d. Waffen-SS a.D.; K. Goericke, Oblt. d. Waffen-SS a.D.; K. Kugler, Oblt. d. Waffen-SS a.D.), passim.

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political interests of the SS-State. A concise history of the actual organisation is also provided in the scope of introducing the reader within the background structures that played such decisive role in the formation of the future Hitler youths and subsequent Hitlerjugend soldiers. Also a sub-chapter consisting of war-duties description brings further details on the pre-military training of the Hitler youths. The following sub-chapter – “Hitlerjugend as a Waffen-SS Division” – is based primarily on archival material: orders, reports, letters and other documents issued by senior leaders of the SS and Hitler Youth, as well as on correspondence exchanged between protagonists of the Waffen-SS and newly created Grenadier, then Panzer Division “Hitlerjugend”. The Chapter benefits from archival material regarding the establishment of the division, as well as a complete list (which has been extracted from archives too) with senior SS officers transferred from other Waffen-SS divisions – mainly from 1st SS Pz. Div. “Leibstandarte – Adolf Hitler” – to 12th SS Pz. Gren. Div. “Hitlerjugend”. So, the strong bonds blending the two formations were highlighted. The section contains detailed information about the military training camps which were compulsory for all Hitlerjugend recruits and provide further description on the ideological training of the youths. The following Chapter of Part I – “Preparation for War” – analysis the entire process of warfare training that was delivered in the military camps of Belgium and northern France. This section reconstitutes the activity of the units as they were extracted from subsequent war diaries from January 1944 to May 1944, just a few days before the outbreak of the Invasion of Normandy. The last sub-chapter refers to the deployment in Normandy and the taking of defensive positions in the expectation of the enemy landing. The last sub-chapter – “Division’s Matters” – provides a detailed insight on the daily routine of the division – material which is unique of its kind, as far as our research revealed so far. *Alltagsgeschichte* – daily administrative and military training programme is hereby detailed, with unpublished aspects of individual as well as group aspects. Evaluation reports, penalties, medical situations are also examined in order to complete the general every-day life of the divisional units prior to battle engagement. This section brings new, unpublished information regarding the inner life within the Division’s units, which serve in the reconstruction of specific relationship developed between different ranks, the impact of the ideological and military training upon individuals and actual atmosphere which can describe best typical Hitlerjugend ethos.

The Part II – “Hitlerjugend Division at War” – consists of two Chapters: “Battle of Normandy” and “Last Operations”. Part II tackles the main military operations in which units of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” played their direct role: the Chapters covers all the five sequences of the Battle of Normandy, from June to September 1944, the Ardennes Offensive in December 1944, and the Hungarian Front in March-April 1945, ending with final surrender of the Hitlerjugend Division to U.S. Army in May 1945. In order to re-compose the military actions of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”, I have relied mostly upon official military records of the units, rather than on related literature. I have therefore used Hitlerjugend Division’s unpublished military records, most of which were identified in the American, Canadian, Czech and German military archives. The information gathered was available in the forms of *Kriegstagebücher*, *Tätigkeitsberichte*, *Befehle* and other

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related documents produced by either German higher ranked officials who had performed their military duties as commanding officers in the Hitlerjugend Division, or by authorised persons whose assignment consisted of writing down war journals. Without neglecting related historiography which I used alternatively with military files, I have chosen to create an idiosyncratic overview of the 12th SS Division's strategic operations using a German viewpoint most of the times. By doing so, I have attempted to establish an innovative method of research where accurate reports and inaccuracies alike are used together in comparison with alternative historiography available in order to extract as much true information as possible and to reconstruct the actual chronicle of the Hitlerjugend Division. As far as the “Last Operations” Chapter is concerned, unlike in the situation of the Normandy Campaign, only a few military archives were available, as neither *Ardennenoffensive* nor *Frühlingserwachen* operations were recorded in such a vast and various manners as the Invasion of Normandy.

The Part III – “Hitlerjugend Soldier” – consists of two Chapters: “Typology of the Hitlerjugend Soldier” and “The Hitlerjugend Soldier's Portrait; Psychological Perspectives”. These sections comprise underlying analysis of the Hitlerjugend typology, ethos, defining behaviours, psychology, battle performance evaluation, combat motivations etc., using the tools of inter-disciplinary such as socio-historical, anthropological and psychological instruments. The first Chapter “Typology of the Hitlerjugend Soldier” analysis the impact and outcome resulted from the Nazi ideology inflicted upon soldiers; furthermore, it brings into discussion the so-called ‘divisional pattern’ – on what extent its young recruits serve as a relevant example of a generation fully developed, educated and gown in the National-Socialist spirit. The battle performance and combat motivation fluctuation of the Hitlerjugend soldiers are examined considering a large palette of peculiarities typical to that moment in time and place; the German-Canadian combat legacy along with the question of heroism versus fanaticism are also discussed and analysed. A full sub-chapter is allocated to the issue of the war crimes: combat environment, conditions, motives and consequences in the entire economy of the battle. The following Chapter of Part III – “The Hitlerjugend Soldier's Portrait; Psychological Perspectives” – involves an innovative methodology of research, where the Division's subjects are analysed using modern psychological analysis techniques updated and replicated recently by reputed specialists and psychology institutions. The need of psychological approach had been manifested initially as a sort of desire to explain whatever it seemed impossible to explain, then it became a constant preoccupation of historians; for instance, Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer book “Soldaten”¹¹ represents one of the very few and recent historical studies in contemporary German historiography scientifically supported by a professional psychological approach. In order to create a complete portrait of the Hitlerjugend soldier, several aspects were considered: the idiosyncratic world of the German young generation of the time, psychological outcomes resulted from traumatic childhood

¹¹ Sönke NEITZEL & Harald WELZER: *Soldaten. Protokolle von Kämpfen, Töten und Sterben*, (Fischer Verlag, 2011)

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environments, individual and group perspectives, obedience to authority issues, behaviour transformation aspects, and the impact of propaganda.

Primary sources that have been searched in order to reconstruct and reproduce the actual history of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” could be found in the military archives of USA, Canada, Great Britain, Germany and Czech Republic. A considerable amount of written records were available at National Archives and Records Service Administration (NARA) in Washington, DC. As the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” surrounded to U.S. Army in April 1945, all documents of the division (War Diaries, Battle Orders, Administration Documents etc.) were taken in the American custody; only a small amount was later returned to Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, after they had been microfilmed. A considerable amount of documents of some leading Waffen-SS units remained to this day in the Military History Archives in Prague, covering tactical operations of no less than 16 divisions and units.¹² Below, a brief summary of the microfilmed materials that were used for writing this study:

National Archives and Records Service Administration (NARA) in Washington (Microfilmed at Alexandria) no. 27: Miscellaneous SS Records: *Einwandererzentralstelle, Waffen-SS und SS-Oberabschnitte*. A large content has been overviewed and subsequent selection had been made in order to extract whichever material needed for reconstruction of the Hitlerjugend Division history:

- *Befehle und Berichte der SS Pz.-Pionier Bataillon 12/12. SS PzD “Hitlerjugend”*; Reports and orders pertaining to administrative, medical, personnel and motor transport matters”; all documents of this file offered a relatively complete overview on the actual Division’s everyday life, providing relevant information about shortages, specific difficulties in ensuring certain spare parts of transport vehicles and other related issues.
- *Rechtlinien und Berichte des Oberbefehlshabers West, AOK 15*. Directives and reports concerning intelligence service, control of the civilian population in France and northern Belgium, activities of the Flemish and Walloon guard units, fighting against French resistance movement, counterintelligence activity and enemy propaganda”; the documents of this file reveal the specific activities of the resistance groups acting in the occupied territories under direct or in-direct supervision of the British Intelligence, along with recommendations and orders regarding the methods to be used by German

¹² Historický Ústav ČSA/VHA – Vojenský Historický Archiv, Praha contain the following inventory of the Waffen-SS units: 1. SS-Pz. Div. “Adolf Hitler”, 3. SS-Pz. Div. “Totenkopf”, 4. SS-Pz. Gren. Div. “Polizei”, 5. SS-Pz. Div. “Wiking”, 6. SS-Gebirgs Div. “Nord”, 7. SS-Friewilligen-Gebirgs Div. “Prinz Eugen”, 8. SS-Kavallerie Div. “Florian Geyer”, 9. SS-Pz. Div. “Hohenstaufen”, 10. SS-Pz. Div. “Frundsberg”, 12. SS-Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”, 13. SS-Friewilligen-Gebirgs Div. “Handschar”, 15. Waffen-Gren. Div. der SS (lettische Nr. 1), 17. SS-Pz. Gren. Div. “Götz von Berlichingen”, 18. SS-Friewilligen Pz. Gren. Div. “Horst Wessel”, 20. SS-Waffen Gren. Div. (estische Nr. 1) and 23. SS-Friewilligen Pz. Gren. Div. “Nederland” (DD)

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authorities dealing with these events, without provoking civilian population and avoiding degeneration of the overall atmosphere.

- *Befehle, Berichte und Anordnungen*. Orders, directives and reports pertaining enemy propaganda, the dropping of ammunition and equipment to enemy agents in Turnhout area, Belgium, 19th September 1943. Defence and protective measures in the Buron area, France, 2nd July 1944. Disciplinary, intelligence and supply matters, military security, defence and enemy agents, saboteurs and terrorists, (as they were defined by German occupation authorities). Inventories of ammunition, weapons, equipment, motor fuel and vehicles”; documents of this file bring into the light additional information regarding the resistance movements, also deals with the situation of fuel, ammunition and logistics supply.
- *Tagesmeldungen, Vernehmungen, Gefechtsberichte: Le Mesnyl-Patry und Cheux, 26. Juni 1944; Besondere Anordnungen für den Ic Dienst, Ausbildung und Tagesmeldungen. Unfallmeldungen und Truppenarztberichte*. Orders and reports concerning the inspection of the division by the Reichsjugendführer Baldur von Schirach; contribution of RM 892,548.26 to Hitler in honour of his birthday; troop discipline and entertainment”. The documents of this file cover the Reichsjugendführer von Schirach visit to the divisional Headquarters at Beverloo, Belgium from 5th to 7th December 1943. The information contained in this document is of great importance, as it offers a vivid description on the actual organisation of the panzer-regiments, reconnaissance battalions, pioneer battalion and other units of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”. It also provides detailed information regarding Baldur von Schirach’s visit, the programme which he attended, military exercises and special dinners organised in his honour. The Reichsjugendführer’s visit was in fact the only one that he paid in order to see his former Hitler youths now under the Waffen-SS ranks.
- *Besondere Anordnungen für die Versorgung und Personal Listen*. Special supply directives and listings of SS personnel showing promotions, decorations, training, identification tags and transfers”. Documents of this file complete the general overview on Division’s everyday life.
- “War Journal (*Kriegstagebuch*) about transfer from Soest, Westphalia to Gross Königsdorf, Eifel, 17-22 November. Movement to Gleul area for training and preparation for the Ardennes offensive, 24 November-14 December 1944”. Also a register of officers and strength and casualty reports; although limited in quantity of information, documents of this file give the only bits of information regarding the preparation of the *Ardennen Offensive*.
- *Karte-Aufmarsch III/PzArt Rgt. 12/12. PzD “Hitlerjugend”*. Map showing the assembly area, south of Caen, in preparation for the defence of Normandy; unfortunately, all existing maps in the archives are hand-drawn and look clumsy and partially unreadable.
- *Namentliche Aufstellung und Beurteilung*. Lists, appraisals of SS personnel for SS leadership, instructions governing activities of the firing range; Ia KTB Nr. 1, I/SS PzGr Rgt. 25/12. PzD “Hitlerjugend”. War Journal concerning training and alert exercises in the Autheuil, Chambray and

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Jouy-sur-Eure area, southeast of Caen, 1st May-1st June 1944. Movement towards Caen, 1-5th June; offensive engagements in the Caen and Cambes areas, 6-10th June; defensive operations in the Fontenay-le-Marmion, Grainville, Cheux, Esquay-Notre-Dame, Carpiquet, Epron and La Folie areas, southwest and west of Caen, 11th June-4th July 1944; also a register of officers and strength and casualty reports; documents of this file offer heterogeneous information about the last military exercises before the Normandy landings, followed by brief reports and descriptions covering the first stage of the Battle of Normandy.

- *Ia, Bataillonsbefehle*. Orders relating to defensive operations in the Caen area, Normandy; also directives concerning administrative daily reporting matters”. Along with other related documents, this file has been used to reconstruct small military actions through analysing the content of the specific orders that had been given in the attempt of re-establishing the German strategic positions under heavy enemy fire.

The archival material available at NARA provides the largest collection of documents on the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”. All documents are in German and provide no description or summary in English, with some rare exceptions where hardly visible pencil handwriting notes, written on the main covers, give brief information about the file content. No other military archive in the world contains more comprehensive information on the division’s logistic, administration, supply and other specific issues. Nonetheless, as far as the War Journals (*Kriegstagebücher*) are concerned, NARA archives are rather devoid of this kind of materials. All documents are microfilmed after original papers found in German archives and, in general, offer excellent resolution documents that enable the researcher to zoom-in files so that missing text, unreadable sections or faulty parts of paper can be explored at magnified scale. This aspect enables even pencil annotations on certain files to be accurately read and offers additional enchantment to study the papers. Despite relatively small quantity of tactical operation reports, it must be said that that NARA contains sufficient material in order to reconstitute the unique atmosphere that shaped the Hitlerjugend warriors into unique soldiers belonging to a unique military formation. The documents dealing with discipline, penalties and punishments, administration issues, entertainment events, medical and tactical inspections made by high ranked Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS officers, preparation directives and other regulations establishing the pattern of relationship between superior officers, non-commissioned officers and their subordinates, all this information represents a generous platform from which pertinent reconstitution of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” becomes genuinely available and enables researchers to answer, at least partially, some of the problems of the study, as they had been enumerated in the first sub-Chapter.

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Library and Archives Canada (LAC) or **Bibliothèque et Archives Canada** (BAC) in Ottawa provided the following material:

- “12 SS Div (Hitlerjugend): Order for Initial Formation of an SS Pz Gren Div “Hitlerjugend”, Establishment o 24 Jun 43”; as the file designation title suggests, this document is the only material existing in the Canadian Archives regarding the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” which provides a few pages translated in English.
- “12 SS Pz Div in the Ardennes Offensive, by SS Maj. Gen. Hugo Kraas”; this document summarises the ‘Ardennen Offensive’ with a special focus on the operations where Hitlerjugend Division’s units played a more important role. Nevertheless, the report is extremely briefly-explained and lacks of essential strategic and military details.
- “Interrogation Reports: Interrogation of Josef (“Sepp”) Dietrich, Col. Gen. of Waffen-SS”; this is the only English-language material of the Canadian Archives in the subject of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”. As Josef Dietrich himself did not speak English, he had obviously benefited from translation service during the session of his interrogation. Therefore, the entire cross-examination of the senior Waffen-SS prisoner of war is thereafter edited in English.
- “War Diary or Intelligence Summary of 1st Battalion “Regina Rifle” Regiment (July and August 1944)”. As the designation name of the file suggests, this document summarises the specific intelligence operations conducted by the first battalion of the legendary “Regina Rifle” Regiment, during the last phases of the Battle of Normandy.

Considering the fact that Canadian Army was the main counterpart of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” during the first stages of the Battle of Normandy, the shortage of crucial archival material may seem surprising. With the only exception of Josef Dietrich interrogation report, all documents are in German and present themselves in the form of microfilmed materials. Canadian archives are the only place where a brief description of the ‘Ardennen Offensive’ can be found; it was produced by former Divisional Commander Hugo Kraas assisted by Hubert Meyer who subsequently developed it into more detailed report in his book on the history of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”. Like the microfilmed materials of NARA, all files available in the Canadian archives provide excellent resolution that enables the researcher to enjoy the comfort of using advanced technological tools in order to explore the papers in greater details.

Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg im Breisgau (BMF) offered only two folders in relation with the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”; it should be noted that German archives surprisingly lack relevant information on the issue of this study. The folders that were searched are:

- “RS 3-1—40: *Der Einsatz der 12. SS Panzerdivision „Hitlerjugend“ während der Invasionskämpfe in Frankreich von Juni bis September 1944*”; this large file comprehend massive information regarding the entire Battle of Normandy, as it had been recorded by a series of German units belonging to the 12th

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SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”. It also includes brief reports about specific war preparation exercises and manoeuvres of the Division prior to the Invasion of Normandy. The document consists of a collection of war journal reports and additional records.

- “RS 3-12-43: *Tagebuch des Divisionkommandeurs 12. SS-Panzerdivision „Hitlerjugend”. SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS Hugo Kraas, geführt von seinem o4, SS-Untersturmführer Heider für die Zeit vom 8. April bis zum 8. Mai 1945*”. This is a hand-written document and reveals aspects of the last days of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”. The last page was completed on 8th May 1945, at 08.00 hours, when the entire division had surrendered to the U.S. Army on the river Enns. It should be noted that this hand-written document (with pencil) can be approached with obvious difficulty.

Additionally, some information from **Bundesarchiv** Koblenz was used in this work: Persönlicher Stab des Reichsführers-SS.

Military History Archives in Prague or **Vojenský Historický Archiv**, Praha provided full combat reports on tactical operations during the Invasion of Normandy. The following inventory called “12. SS Panzer-Division “Hitlerjugend” (12. SS tanková divize “Hitlerjugend”) was searched in order to reconstruct the actual military combat actions of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”, during period June-August 1944:

- SS-Pz.Gr.Rgt.25: *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. (1.6.1944 – 26.9.1944);
- SS-Pz.Gr.Rgt.26: *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. 1, KTB – Anlagen (Nr. 1/6.6 – 2/20.6 1944);
- SS-Pz.Rgt.12: *Anlagen zum Tätigkeitsbericht* KTB Nr. 1 (6.6.1944 – 29.8.1944), KTB – Anlagen (Nr. 1-20), *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. 3;
- SS-Pz.Art.Rgt.12: *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. 2 (1.1.1944 – 31.5.1944), *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. 3 (1.6.1944 – 5.9.1944);
- SS-Pz.Pi.Btl.12: *Kriegstagebuch* (unvollständig);
- SS-Pz.Jäg.Abt.12: *Tätigkeitsbericht* (6.2.1944 – 9.7.1944), *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. 1 (10.7.1944 – 29.8.1944)
- SS-Flak.Abt.12: *Kriegstagebuch* Nr. 3 mit Anlagen (1.6.1944 – 5.9.1944).

In terms of the actual war operations during the Battle of Normandy, the Military History Archives of the Czech Republic offers perhaps the most detailed collection of War Journals covering main tactical engagements of the two panzer-regiments of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”, and also give access to important information regarding the specific actions conducted by its pioneer, Flak and *Panzer-Jäger* units. The materials not only illustrate the complexity of the military operations where parts of the Hitlerjugend Division were actively involved, but also provide an in-depth opportunity to enter the atmosphere of those critical and dramatic battle episodes.

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The Part I “The Jugend-Division – or ‘the Division of the Youths’ – provide a full introspective into the original structures of the actual Hitlerjugend Division, starting with the complex institutional network of the Hitler Youth Organisation of the Nazi Party and ending with the foundation of the 12th SS Panzerdivision.

The organisation chart consists of four main branches and can be summarised as it follows:

1. Hitler Jugend for boys aged 14-18
2. Deutsches Jungvolk (DJ or German youths) for boys aged 10-14
3. Bund Deutsche Mädel (BDM or League of German Girls) for girls aged 14-18
4. Jungmädel (JM or Young Girls) for girls aged 10-14¹³.

The *Reichsjugendführung* or RJF (Reich Youth Directorate) was responsible with the entire administration and policy of the Hitler Youth Organisation and was conducted by Reichsjugendführer, assisted by his Adjutant and Stabsführer (Chief of the Staff). The Reichsreferentin (for BDM) had under her control the League of German Girls and the JM (Young Girls) and responded directly to the Reichsjugendführer. The *Reichsjugendführung* consisted of five executive branches:

1. *Zentralamt* (Central Office)
2. *Auslands und Volksstumsamt* (from October 1944 until end of World War II)
3. *Kinderlandverschickung* (Relocation of Children to the Countryside)
4. *Kriegsbetreuungsdienst* (Service for Welfare)
5. *AH – Schulen* (Adolf Hitler Schools)

Within Greater Germany, the Hitler Youth was organised in sections which activated in all 43 regions, or ‘Gebiete’. Each of these regions corresponded to a Gau (district lead by a Gauleiter), with the exception of Gebiet Sudetenland and Gebiet Befehlsstelle Böhmen und Mären. Each Gebiet was led by a *Gebietsführer* (Regional Leader); the *Gebietsführung* (Regional Headquarters) was organised into *Hauptabteilungen* (Executive Sections), abbreviated to HA¹⁴ and acted similar to those of *Haupt-Ämter* (Departments) of the *Reichsjugendführung*. The *Gebietsführung* headed over the following departments:

- HA I Personnel
- HA II Pre-military Training and Sports
- HA III Ideological Training and Cultural Activities
- HA IV Social Duties
- HA V Building and Homes
- HA VI Legal Matters

¹³ Claudia KOONZ: *The Nazi Conscience*, (Harvard University Press, 2003), 27

¹⁴ Michael BUDDRUS: *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg. Hitlerjugend und nationalsozialistische Jugendpolitik*, (K.G. Saur Verlag GmbH, München, 2003), 243

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. The schooling system of Hitler Youth included the following scheme:

- *Gebietsführerschulen* (Regional Schools for Officers)
- *Reichsschulen* (National Schools)
- *Auslands- und Volkstumsamt* (Bureau for Foreign Affairs and Germanism)
- *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* (National Political Education Institutions)
- *Reichsjugendakademie* (National Youth Academy in Braunschweig)
- *AH-Schulen* (Adolf Hitler - Schools)

Since the 12th SS Pz. Gren. Div. “Hitlerjugend” was set up, an elaborate military and ideological training programme was implemented to the recruits, in order to firmly give finishing touches to the previous Nazi instruction that had been completed in the Hitler Youth Organisation. The initial Waffen-SS soldier was designed to be hard, unemotional and fanatically devoted to the cause of National-Socialist Germany. The SS warrior had to be unquestionably obedient (just like his counterpart from Wehrmacht) and to be aware of the ideological component of the struggle he was involved in. Loyalty to Adolf Hitler was the core of the SS ethos, moreover this fidelity paid an even more importance to Hitlerjugend-division due to the fact that in the entire Waffen-SS structure of 38 divisions, there were only two having the Führer’s name in the military designation of their units: 1st SS Pz.Div. “Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler” and 12th SS Pz. Gren. Div. “Hitlerjugend”.

The National-Socialist doctrine was intended to completely replace any religious beliefs and was subsequently pursued in a form which resembled another kind of deism. In particular, the SS-Organisation encouraged the practice and approach of the old Nordic paganism myths; its members were hinted to gradually abandon their Christian values. Unlike Wehrmacht, the Waffen-SS units had no military chaplains, despite a series of recently revealed statistics¹⁵ which indicate a significant number of SS soldiers who preserved their Christian faith. Therefore, we can conclude that SS-Verbände has never achieved its purpose of creating a non-religious organisation, if it intended to do so at all; after all, the ‘SS-Order’ had been planned to act within a sort of ‘ethnotheism’ new-religion, as we will see in the next Chapter. The Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler’s ideal could never been largely implemented to even those Waffen-SS units formed exclusively from pure German ethnics. Actually, whenever these divisions could take opportunity, they requested military chaplains from neighbouring Heer units.

Since 1939, the actual state of war in Germany urged for a series of additional responsibilities on the Hitler Youth Organisation. Manpower shortage caused the establishment of the *Kriegseinsatz* (War Emergency Office), whose tasks consisted in fire-fighting, relocation of the civilians and removal of the casualties. Hitler

¹⁵ **René ROHRKAMP:** *Weltanschaulich gefestigte Kämpfer. Die Soldaten der Waffen-SS 1933-1945. Organisation – Personal – Sozialstrukturen*, (Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, Paderborn, 2010), 541

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Youth personnel had to often work as street cleaners, postmen, mail clerks and were involved in several war charities, including the evacuation of children from bombed areas.

In the *Kriegsbetreuungsdienst* (Forces Welfare Service), Hitler youths carried out duties as writing letters and sending parcels to the front, as well as running canteens for Wehrmacht personnel and entertaining soldiers in hospitals.¹⁶ The Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW or German Army High Command) called for volunteers from Hitler Youth Organisation aged 17 and, to make it attractive, offered futile privileges such as wearing of the Hitler Youth armlet on the left upper arm of the uniform's tunic, along with designation of 'Kriegswilliger' instead of the common 'private'. A Hitler youth supporting the armed forces in every way was also entitled to receive Wehrmacht medals for outstanding performance. A significant number of Hitler youths of an older age (not beyond 17) served as armed forces auxiliaries defending their homeland or home town. The Hitler youths – Luftwaffenhelfers were anti-aircraft auxiliaries, mainly formed of volunteers from AH-Schulen (secondary school levels) who had been delivered an appropriate anti-aircraft training prior to being assigned as Luftwaffenhelfers. Their Hitler Youth uniforms were supplemented by Luftwaffe boots, a *Stahlhelm* (steel helmet) and other necessary equipment or accessories. Hitler Youths – Marinehelfers were Navy auxiliaries who volunteered for specific duties within the Kriegsmarine (German navy) in the coastal areas and who followed a similar assignment procedure as the Luftwaffenhelfers.

In order to accelerate the pre-military training, the RJF decreed a certain number of Hitler youths to also attend the so-called *Sondereinheiten* (Special Units), where their basic training had to be supplemented by a preliminary knowledge of different specialisations of the military service: on the ground, in the air and at sea. It is approximated that, by the end of 1943, around 510,000 young boys¹⁷ have experienced the Pre-military Training Camps of the Hitler Youth Organisation. The *Sondereinheiten* covered the following areas of war craft:

- *Nachrichten-HJ* (Signal Service)
- *Motor-HJ* (Motorised Hitler Youth)
- *Marine-HJ* (Naval Hitler Youth)
- *Flieger-HJ* (Aviation Hitler Youth)
- *Streifendienst-HJ* (Patrol Service)
- *Musikzüge-HJ* (Band Platoons)
- *Gebirgs-HJ* (Mountain Troops Hitler Youth)
- *Feldschere-HJ* (First Aid Hitler Youth Units)¹⁸

¹⁶ SHAEF, 14

¹⁷ Hansjoachim KOCH: *Geschichte der Hitler-Jugend. Ihre Ursprünge und Ihre Entwicklung 1922-1945*, (R.S. Schulz Verlag, 1975), 371

¹⁸ SHAEF, 15-16

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In February 1943 representatives of the Waffen-SS and National Socialist Youth Organisation, the Hitlerjugend, initiated a planned operation of creating a new SS-Division by recruiting young members of the Youth Organisation. On 24th June same year, Adolf Hitler agreed on their joint recommendation and issued a subsequent order for the new division to be set up and thus start immediate military training in the Beverloo facility, north of Brussels.

The patron division was 1st SS-Panzer Division “Adolf Hitler” from whom the new SS-Division “Hitlerjugend” extracted most of the officers and the NCO’s. Some 50 officers from the Heer, who had previously been members of the Hitler Youth Organisation, were reassigned to the newly formed Waffen-SS division. Most of the enlisted men consisted of German young males born 1926 with previous military training. At the beginning of 1944, the 12th SS Panzer Division “Hitlerjugend” consisted of young soldiers who had only completed 18 weeks of specific military training.

Initially, “Hitlerjugend” was designated as the 12th SS Panzer Grenadier Division within the Waffen-SS, and then on 30th October 1943, General Hans Jüttner issued, on behalf of the Führer of the German Reich, the final order regarding change of designation from a panzer-grenadier division into a fully equipped panzer-division¹⁹. Since its deployment in Western France, the 12th SS Panzer Division “Hitlerjugend” has gone through a series of elaborated and systematic military training programme designed so that it could successfully meet the most severe war case scenarios, as the Allied invasion in Europe was a matter of time.

The formation of a new Waffen-SS division occurred soon after the recapture of the eastern Ukraine’s city of Kharkow, in March 1943, by the three divisions belonging to II SS Panzer Corps: “Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler”, “Das Reich” and “Totenkopf”. These three elite Waffen-SS formations had indeed spearheaded the entire offensive operation, but their success had its high cost in human lives: over 350 officers and 11,000 soldiers. Thus it became obvious that such great losses would lead to an immediate need for a new, fresh military source of manpower. Apparently, the initial plan to establish a new panzer division open to “Hitler Youth” Organisation membership exclusively came from Artur Axmann in January 1943²⁰ and was further proposed to Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler.

Hitler had though a series of reasonable questions regarding the pertinence of creating a new army corps based on the Hitler Youth Organisation resources. The situation of manpower was indeed desperate in Germany, as new volunteers in Wehrmacht began to be drawn from 17 years old, born between January and

¹⁹ LAC, Ottawa: File: 12 SS Div. (Hitlerjugend), Ref. No: RG24-G-3-1-a, Vol./Box number: 20531, File No: 981SSPzD12(D1), VS-Tgb.Nr. 1067/43 g./18.02.1943

²⁰ “Plan zur Aufstellung der Division Hitler Jugend”, February 1943 (NARA, T-175/70/6518ff)

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July 1926²¹. The propaganda minister, Goebbels, rejected this idea, pointing out the probability that enemies of Germany would see in this action a sign of the nation weakness and shortage of manpower²². St. Veith in Corinthia was chosen as a suitable facility where Napola (*Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* – National Political Institutes for Education in the Third Reich) courses were delivered to the new recruits for Hitlerjugend Division; Napola's main goal consisted in delivering “education of national socialists, efficient in body and soul for the service to the people and the state”²³. The person in charge with this task was August Heißmeyer, born 11th January 1897 in Gellersen; he was appointed SS-Obergruppenführer and Inspector of the National Political Institutes of Education and was responsible for Napola military training of the students. Heißmeyer played a quite unprecedented role in the Nazi Germany after the outbreak of World War II, when he set up a personal bureau called the “Dienststelle SS-Obergruppenführer Heißmeyer”. His office was delivering the educational courses all throughout the war; August Heißmeyer preserved his talents as public speaker and efficient entrepreneur after the World War II, when he became director of the German Coca-Cola bottling plant. He died in Schwäbisch Hall on 16th January 1979. Back in 1943, the facility of St. Veith was officially accepted as the main political and military training for the Hitler Youth volunteers on 8th April; Reichsjugendführer Artur Axmann sent a telegram to Himmler personally and suggested that according to Obergruppenführer Heißmeyer, St. Veith was the best option to be chosen as a Napola facility due to its large accommodation capacity of over 1500 people. In the same telegram²⁴, Axmann reiterated the idea of exoneration from the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* service all youths who volunteered for the Hitlerjugend Division and further demanded Himmler to personally take charge of making the necessary arrangements with the Reich Labour Service.

By 1st September 1943 over 16,000 recruits were gathered at Beverloo Training Centre (*Truppenübungsplatz*) in Belgium. Following the consecutively numbering system of the Waffen-SS, on 22nd October 1943, the division obtained number “12”, whilst its two panzer regiments were numbered 25 and 26. Many of the young recruits at Beverloo Camp were barely 17 years old, whereas others (specifically the 12th SS Pz. Regiment) were mustered in the French military training area of Mailly-le-Camp. On 30th October 1943, on behalf of Adolf Hitler, the order for the change of designation of the 12th SS Panzergrenadier-Division „Hitlerjugend“ into a fully equipped panzer division, was issued by General Jüttner. The first of the young volunteers of the 12th SS Pz. Gren. Div. “Hitlerjugend” arrived at Lichterfelde barracks with the beginning of July 1943; before the end of the month, they were about 10,000 young recruits ready for military training.

²¹ **Rupert BUTLER:** *SS-Hitlerjugend. The History of the Twelfth SS Division 1943-45* (Amber Books Ltd, 2003), 42

²² **Arno KLÖNNE:** *Jugend im dritten Reich. Die Hitlerjugend und ihre Gegner* (PappyRossa Verlag, München, 2014), 76

²³ **Christian SCHNEIDER, Cordelia STILLKE, Bernd LEINEWEBER:** *Das Erbe der Napola. Versuch einer Generationsgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, Hamburger Edition, HIS; Auflage 1. A, 1996

²⁴ **LAC,** Ottawa: File: 12 SS Div. (Hitlerjugend), Ref. No: RG24-G-3-1-a, Vol./Box number: 20531, File No: 981SSPzD12(D1), Reichsjugendfuehrungberlin den 8.4.43, 1500 uhr fsnr. 2265 – der reichsjugendfuehrer der nsdap

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An entire chapter is allocated to Division's everyday life, dealing with all issues that were typical for such military organisation: physical training, ideological courses, tactical exercises, evaluations, penalties and all sorts of administrative aspects. A special attention was paid to the spiritual matters gathered in the so-called 'ethnotheism' promoted by the Nazi ideology as the new Germanic religion.

Intensive military training began since January 1944 and was focused on specific problems such as: drill exercises, combat training, weapon's training as well as theoretical lessons on ballistics, shooting techniques, assault procedures, night exercises and playing sports. The ideological lessons were delivered one hour every week. The military training consisted of war-case scenario exercises (*Kriegsübungen*), involving full use of guns, machine-guns and heavy artillery. Specially designed exercises were intended to cover possible and imminent problems like: river crossing, repulsing an armoured assault, strategic engagement, shooting plan, delimitation of targets; all operations needed to be conducted against the strict combat standards that had been established by the Chief of Staff of the Hitlerjugend Division.

Deployment in Normandy commenced in April 1944, when the 10th SS Pz. Div. "Fruntsberg" started its re-deployment on the eastern front and had to be replaced by the troops of the 12th SS Pz. Div. "Hitlerjugend". The units were split in the area of Elbeuf-le-Neubourg and Louviers in order to guard the river-crossings over Seine River. As a result of the close inspection made by the "Hitlerjugend" Division's commander, SS-Brigadeführer Fritz Witt, a three-step plan had been put in place under supervision of OB West, the main objective being the defence of Caen area and Carpiquet airfield, where the Allied Expeditionary Force was expected to unleash its landing operation.

The readiness for battle of the 12th SS Pz. Div. "Hitlerjugend" was officially declared on 1st June 1944, after a 9-month period of intensive military training. During the Invasion of Normandy, the 12th SS Pz. Div. "Hitlerjugend" was part of the I. SS-Panzerkorps; its force included 2 panzer-grenadier regiments, 1 panzer-regiment, 1 panzer-artillery regiment, *Panzer-Jäger*, Flak, reconnaissance and pioneer battalions. Despite lacking of essential equipment, the Hitlerjugend Division exhibited yet a palette of formidable panzer formations whose tank models included "Mark III", "Mark IV", "Panther" and "Königtiger". The firepower of some of the models displayed exceeded any Allied armoured machine at the time and would prove undisputed superiority over its British and American counterparts like "Churchill", "Cromwell" and "Sherman".

In April 1944, the 12th SS Pz. Div. "Hitlerjugend" began its re-deployment from Belgium and Northern France to Normandy. This measure was decided in order to replace the Waffen-SS "Fruntsberg" panzer division in the area between lower Seine and Orne River. The 10th SS Pz. Div. "Fruntsberg" was in the process of deployment on the eastern front together with the II. SS-Panzerkorps. The relocation of Hitlerjugend division had to replace the regions formerly occupied by "Fruntsberg". Thus, the 12th SS. Pz. Regiment was deployed in the

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area of Elbeuf-le-Neubourg and Louviers, in order to settle in a favourable position to keep under control the crossings over the River Seine. Both OB-West and *Heeresgruppe D*, as well as General Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg were convinced that an imminent Allied invasion would soon occur north of River Seine. Following the same reasoning, the 12th SS Pioneer Battalion was deployed between Autheuil and Pacy, on both shores of the River Eure, while the 12th SS Flak-Abteilung had been established its batteries near Dreux airfield to defend it, should the situation call for it. In order to reinforce the troops of the 12th SS Pz. Regiment, the 26th SS Pz. Gren. Regiment was placed near Houdan, with its III. Pz. Battalion ready for action. In the meantime, the western regions of Bernay – Orbec and Viemoutiers were covered by the motorised units of the 25th SS Pz. Gren. Regiment. The 12th SS Pz. Jäger-Abteilung was located near Nogent-le-Roi, and the 12th SS *Aufklärungs-Abteilung* was deployed near Rugles. The supply troops were placed further south, around Mortagne and the divisional staff headquarters were established in Acon, near Nonancourt²⁵.

From August 1943 to June 1944, a brand new Waffen-SS division had been formed, organised and highly trained, following all existing procedures within the German Armed Forces. Its designated name was inspired from the Führer of the Third Reich. Would that be enough to strengthen the Reich's *Festung Europa* against the imminent Allied invasion? How would the inexperienced Hitlerjugend cadets be able to resist the overwhelming Allied countless armies supported by an unprecedented air force and powerful Navy forces behind? The following months would provide the answer in the form of one of the most terrible military confrontations in the entire history of warfare.

The Part II – The Division at War – describes and analyses all major military involvements of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”: from the Battle of Normandy to Ardennenoffensive and the desperate operations in the spring of 1945 against Red Army. “. Nonetheless, the research was not intended to reconstruct the complete and accurate course of all battle events in which its units were actively involved; all strategic actions described hereafter are almost exclusively based upon German unpublished accounts, most of which are to be found in American, Canadian, Czech and German military archives. These reports are available in the form of *Kriegstagebücher*, *Tätigkeitsberichte*, *Befehle* and other related documents produced by either former German senior personnel who had performed their military duties as commanding officers in the Hitlerjugend Division, or simply by authorised persons whose assignment consisted of writing down war journals. In spite of quite large historiography dedicated to the Normandy Campaign, I chose to mainly examine the information available in the German primary sources – the military reports, orders, journals and other related written material the actual frontline. Reassemble of the actual events, based on German accounts in the existing military archives only, represents an idiosyncratic overview of the 12th SS Panzer Division's military successes and failures alike from a German viewpoint exclusively. A presentation of German perception of the battles'

²⁵ Hubert MEYER: *The 12th SS. The History of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division: Volume One* (Stackpole Books, 2005), 47-49

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experiences brings in a sense of innovative drive, due to various reasons: in the first place, with the exception of former SS-Obersturmbannführer Hubert Meyer's exhaustive collection of documents, testimonies, memoirs and other official reports issued by commanding posts of the Division's regiments and other major units, all gathered in his unique-to-this-day chronicle of the Division, no other German account of the combat history of the 12th SS Pz. Div. "Hitlerjugend" has ever been available to the reader; in the second place, any omission, misleading report, incomplete story or even incorrect information apply all very valuable in recapitulation of what German standpoint represented in the of World War II (1944-1945) with regard to the entire war situation. For instance, it may prove correspondingly relevant and important for the reader to acknowledge the fact that none of the German accounts provides the slightest reference to any of the war crimes committed by Hitlerjugend soldiers; the crystal-clear details that are present in so numerous other descriptions of certain military actions invalidates the assumption that people responsible with writing these war diaries were not informed of what had happened. Such attitude indicates, beyond doubt, that a war crime was fully acknowledged at that time and whoever wrote down, or had decided what exactly would be recorded, was well aware of the gravity of such appalling actions. Missing crucial information from the official narratives disclose a certain level of concern of the senior officers that, possibly one day in the future, these crimes would be brought before justice. In the same way, accuracy of the reports reveals important aspects by which relevant conclusions can be drawn with regard to peculiar state of mind that characterised the general atmosphere within all ranks of the Division; at least but not last, the (in)accuracy of the reports can also indicate the degree of genuine self-assessment evaluation of the situations in which the units brought their contribution to all campaigns. All in one, entreating to German perception solely can potentially offer the opportunity to track a series of psychological, emotional, cognitive, imaginary and intellectual aspects which were only typical to Waffen-SS, with a special accent on Hitlerjugend Division.

As far as the unpublished materials are concerned, this Chapter used mainly sources of the Czech and Canadian military archives. The "Vojenský Historický Archiv, Praha" (Military History Archives, Prague) provided a large quantity of accounts that enables an accurate reconstruction of the main combat episodes in which all major units of the 12th SS Pz. Div. "Hitlerjugend" were involved: the 12th SS Panzer Regiment, 25th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 26th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 12th SS Pz. *Jäger-Abteilung*, 12 SS Pz. *Aufklärungs-Abteilung* and Staff Battalion. None of the military archives offer sufficient or, in some cases they provide no accounts whatsoever, information in connection with the role played by smaller units of the Hitlerjugend Division, such as the *Divisionsbegleit Kompanie*, the 12th SS *Panzerartillerie* Regiment, the 12th SS *Werferabteilung*, the 12th SS *Flakabteilung* or the 12th SS *Panzerpioniere* Battalion; considering the tremendous complexity of the Battle of Normandy and, on a smaller scale, of the *Ardennenoffensive*, it is logical to assume the crucial importance of these only apparently less engrossed battalions and companies in the entire economy of battles. The "Library and Archives Canada" (LAC) provides an exhaustive report on the Normandy Campaign (*Der Einsatz der 12. SS-Panzerdivision "Hitlerjugend" während der Invasionskämpfe in Frankreich von*

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Juni bis September 1944) produced by senior officers, all of whom were directly engaged in all combat operations of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” during the battles in France: SS-Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer, SS-Obersturmbannführer Hubert Meyer, SS-Sturmbannführer Hans Siegel, SS-Obersturmbannführer K. Goericke, SS-Obersturmführer K. Kolb, and SS-Obersturmführer K. Kugler. Although not so accurate as the *Kriegstagebücher* and *Tätigkeitsberichte* available in the “Vojenský Historický Archiv, Praha”, this report represents a useful chronological record of the main strategic activities, especially in relation with the activities of the so-called *Kampfgruppen*. “The Campaign of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” in France from June until September 1944” is also recorder in the German military archives, under designation number: “Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv”, Freiburg: RS 3-12/40. The same report is registered in the LAC as: *Record Group 24-G-3-1-a*, Volume/box number 20529, File number: 981SOM (D272) – *Questions answered by Kraemer and Bagerlein, 28th April 1944*.

The Normandy campaign was by far the most complex, long lasting and appalling soldierly action in which the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” has ever been involved during its entire military history. From June the 7th until August the 31st 1944, all units belonging to the 12th SS *Panzerdivision* had encountered every single kind of modern warfare attack that was available to Allied Armed Forces at the time: air-raids executed by enormous flying armadas of air-bomber and fighter-bomber aircrafts, heavy artillery fire unleashed by deadly cruisers and destroyers of the Royal Navy sealing in the English Channel, skirmish-assaults, charges executed by the best Allied tanks accompanied by all sorts of armoured fighting-vehicles, motorised infantry strikes, rocket hits, head-to-head bayoneted engagements, fire-throwing blows, partisans’ incursions, and not the last, sophisticated psychological combat operations. Yet, at the end of this gruesome campaign of reciprocal annihilation, the Allied troops which outnumbered their German opponents by three times (the total Allied strength is estimated to have numbered 2,052,300 troops²⁶ by end of August 1944, whereas the total of German forces that participated to the entire campaign is assessed at 640,000 troops²⁷) were inflicted with a relatively identical number of losses: around 230,000 casualties²⁸, versus more than 300,000 casualties²⁹ recorded on German side. The Allied Armed Forces also lost twice as many tanks as the Germans and almost two times more aircrafts. These figures mentioned, above all, offer a catch sight of battle effectiveness in ratio terms of the two belligerents. As always, accuracy and correctness are most desired, and one may reckon that this ratio should not be regarded as outstanding, considering that more losses are usually counted among the offensive troopers than among defenders. When it comes to the peculiar situation of World War II in general,

²⁶ **Stephen BADSY:** *Normandy 1944: Allied Landings and Breakout*, (Osprey Publishing, 1990), 85

²⁷ **Niklas ZETTERLING:** *Normandy 1944: German Military Organisation. Combat Power and Organisational Effectiveness*, (J.J. Fedorowicz Publishing, 2000), 34

²⁸ **Michael TAMELANDER & Niklas ZETTERLING:** *Avgörandets ögonblick: invasionen i Normandie 1944*, (Nordstedts, 2003), 341

²⁹ **Niklas ZETTERLING:** *Normandy 1944: German Military Organisation. Combat Power and Organisational Effectiveness*, (J.J. Fedorowicz Publishing, 2000), 32

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and of the Normandy campaign in special, such considerations should be tackled with increased prudence, given the absolute air superiority of the Allied attackers; on the other hand, one may well take into account the fact that most of the German troops deployed in Normandy were ordered to adopt ‘defense in depth’, or ‘elastic defense’ (in German Armed Forces, including *Bundeswehr*, this strategy is often referred to as *Verzögerung*) strategies which often brought the situational defenders in offensive positions. Such tactics almost always prove to be equally effective and resources consuming. All in one, Hitlerjugend soldiers seem to have provided the best they could in those circumstances which have already been detailed throughout this Thesis. In the pre-invasion bombing, some 12,000-19,000 civilians³⁰, mainly French, lost their lives, whereas during the Battle of Normandy almost 20,000 civilians³¹ were killed.

After a period of refitting, reorganisation, relocation and rearmament, the units of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” will be involved in what modern historians called ‘Hitler’s last gamble’³² – the Offensive of the Ardennes. However, the Hitlerjugend Division’s only glorious time – if there is any real military glory related to the 12th SS Division at all – had passed; never again, after the Battle of Normandy, would the units of Hitlerjugend Division be able to achieve their strategic missions at the same level of proficiency as they performed during the Invasion of Western Europe, in the summer of 1944. Nevertheless, what will become the worst of all situations would have to wait until the Spring of 1945. Until then, the troops of the 12th SS Pz. Division “Hitlerjugend” will become premier actors of one of the most savage fighting episodes of the World War II; according to Antony Beevor, the *Ardennenoffensive* would prove to be the ‘western counterpart of the Eastern Front’.

Although Hitlerjugend Division will never regain its toughness and military performance proven during the Battle of Normandy, it will carry out its tactical duties with determination until the very end of World War II; in the same time, its soldiers would never again be involved in atrocious actions of killing unarmed prisoners of war.

According to SS-Standartenführer Hugo Kraas, after the Falaise Pocket disaster, the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” had been severely damaged and subsequently required immediate reinforcement and full reorganisation. In order to make this process possible, the troops of the Division were moved in two consecutive regions: in the beginning of November in Sulingen area, West of Nienburg an der Weser, then in the region of Frechen – Bulheim – Grevenbroich, West of Köln, in North Rhine Westphalia. It was the location where the SS-

³⁰ **Antony BEEVOR:** *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy*, (Penguin Books, 2010), 498-500

³¹ **Edward FLINT:** *The Development of British Civil Affairs and its Employment in the British Sector of Allied Military Operations during the Battle of Normandy*, PhD Thesis, (Cranfield University, 2009; Cranfield Defence and Security School, Department of Applied Science, Security and Resilience, Security and Resilience Group), 336-338

³² The syntagm belongs to the famous British historian Antony Beevor’s book entitled *Ardennes 1944: Hitler’s Last Gamble* (DD)

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Obersturmbannführer Hugo Kraas took over the Division's command³³ on 15th November 1944. In his testimony which the former divisional commander produced in front of the U.S. Army officials (at Allendorf, on 1st May 1947), the SS- Obersturmbannführer declared that initial planning established the deadline for reinforcing and re-organising the division on 31st October, but that could not be achieved due to obvious reasons. Delivery with new weapons, armoured vehicles and military equipment was carried out until mid-December. In conformity with the commander's expertise, which was well known in the OKW, the 12th SS Division was far from capable of conducting a successful offensive. A series of reports were sent to the 6th *Panzerarmee* High Command in order to reveal the actual capacity of the division. After final agreement of the strategic plan conceived for the Ardennes, the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” was assigned as ‘prepared for defensive operations only’³⁴, with fragile capacities to unleash offensive operations. The secret order of the attack was issued on 9th December 1944 and immediately the *Operationsabteilung* (Operations Branch) of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” ordered the 12 Artillery Regiment to take positions. Marching was conducted during night-time only: in the night of 13-14th December, the division's units were marching in the Zülpich – Euskirchen – Weilerswist and in the night 14-15th December, the troops reach the region of Mechernich – Marmagen – Sistig and Kall. Measures were taken in order to delude the enemy intelligence, in this way several army radio stations had been left on their initial positions, so that the enemy could not foresee any movement of the German forces. Tanks, trucks and troops were sophisticatedly camouflaged during the traverse through the forests and villages of the Ardennes area. The next phase of the *Ardennenoffensive* consisted of several German attacks in the sector of Ourthe, near Sadzot, during the last week of December 1944. The last phase of the *Ardenneoffensive* consists of the battles for Bastogne in the beginning of January 1945; at that time, Bastogne was – and still is nowadays – an important cross-roads sector, a reason why around of the turn of the year 1944-1945 it became the core centre of the fighting.

Unlike in the Battle of Normandy, where relevance of the Hitlerjugend troops played a significant role within the economy of the war, the *Ardennenoffensive* did not test the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” to its highest performance, nor was it confirmed through its combat involvement. Only sporadic episodes of soldierly toughness had been flagged up, as it was the case with assaulting the Hill 510, in the last phase of “Unternehmen Wacht am Rhein”. Besides, the whole military operation failed at its core tactical sector, just as it had been noted by senior Wehrmacht strategists, such as Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt before the attack had even been launched. As the battles developed, all of these weaknesses were revealed and confirmed, including in the official records on battle of the 6th *Panzerarmee*. Concluding on these battle records, Hubert Meyer, former high officer within the ranks of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”, a number of

³³ LAC, Ottawa: “12th SS Panzer Division in the Ardennes Offensive, by Gen. Maj. Hugo Kraas”. Ref. No.: RG24-G-3-1-a, Volume/Box Number: 20523, File Number: 981SOM (D200)

³⁴ LAC, Ottawa: “12th SS Panzer Division in the Ardennes Offensive, by Gen. Maj. Hugo Kraas”. Ref. No.: RG24-G-3-1-a, Volume/Box Number: 20523, File Number: 981SOM (D200)

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four reasons³⁵, that had denied the *Ardennenoffensive* the slightest chance of positive outcome, appear to have played significant importance. In the first place, the initial artillery fire attack on 16th December 1944 displayed weak results and was by no means efficient. This happened due to lack of relevant reconnaissance reports about the enemy positions, moreover the German attack had somewhat been prematurely uncovered by enemy's intelligence. In the second place, as far as the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” units' impact was concerned, the use of only one Hitlerjugend battalion after the 277th *Volksgrenadier-Division's* attack had been stalled proved to be highly inefficient and insufficient. The operation's success was then depending on other groups and units' achievements; since the 12th *Volksgrenadier-Division* had failed to take positions at Losheimergraben, the *Kampfgruppe Peiper* was irremediably delayed, because it could not benefit from assault-gun brigade and artillery support. Another great disadvantage was created by the delayed start of the Hitlerjugend Division's attack against Bütgenbach estate on 21st December; the strike had been planned to be carried out through a total element of surprise, but this could not be achieved since the three participating divisions arrived at designated assembly location at different times. Further errors and contributing factors are still debated by military historians up to present-day. Hubert Meyer, the former Hitlerjugend veteran and so-called ‘official military historian’ of the 12th SS Division failed to also recognise³⁶ the outstanding resilience, stubbornness and well training of the American troops that behaved remarkably even in totally adverse situations where they had been taken by absolute surprise. In spite of its predictable end, the Battle for Ardennes proved to be yet another terrible episode of World War II; it was fought with ‘savage hatred’ on both sides³⁷ and involved more than a million men fighting against each other in an appalling conflict and in conditions that were often similar to those on *Ostfront*. The combat exhaustion was high among American soldiers with 8,000 cases of recorded ‘neuropsychiatric breakdown’ but none among the Germans who refused to acknowledge their condition. The savagery on both sides was dehumanising and manifested at an unprecedented level on the *Wesfront*; Beevor addresses both German and American courage – and war crimes – commenting that the Allied crimes have occasionally been underplayed or presented in terms of excusable revenge³⁸.

Commencing 30th January, the units of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” were embarked on trains and depart from Köln to Hungary, in the region of Győr (Raab – in German). The only accurate records of departure and arrival times, as well as the content of their shipment are available in the *Kriegstagebücher* (KTB) from the II. Battalion of 26th SS Pz. Gren. Regiment, and from Division's Escort Company (*Divisionsbegleitkompanie*). No other military archives contain relevant information regarding the move of Hitlerjugend Division from Germany to Hungary. Based on the above mentioned sources, we know that all units of the II. Battalion arrived

³⁵ Hubert MEYER: *The 12th SS The History of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division*, Volume II, (Stackpole Books, 2005), 362

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 363

³⁷ Clare MULLEY: *The Spectator Magazine*, 16th May 2015

³⁸ Nicholas SHAKESPEARE: *Ardennes: Hitler's Last Gamble* by Antony Beevor, *Review*, (The Telegraph, 26th May 2015)

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at Győr on 7th February, 15.30 hours, while the *Divisionsbegleitkompanie* reached the city on 9th February at 06.00 hours. The assembly area for the Division had been established at 20-40 km south-east of Győr. In order to secure the secrecy of the operations, new designation names were given to all units of the 6th SS *Panzerarmee*: for instance, the Hitlerjugend Division was re-named “Ersatzstaffel Wiking” (Viking Replacement Squadron) and its regiments were designated as *Baustäbe* (construction units). Thus, the 26th SS Pz. Gren. Regiment was now named “SS-Baustab 22”, whereas its battalions kept their numbers only.

Most historians regard the “Operation Spring-Awakening” (*Unternehmen Frühlingserwachen*) as the last major German offensive on the Eastern Front. The 6th SS *Panzerarmee*³⁹’s mission was to attack the Ukrainian 3rd Front commanded by General Fyodor Tolbuhin, aiming protection of the oilfields and refineries south-west of Plattensee⁴⁰. Once the breakthrough was achieved, the German offensive group had to push eastwards through the lines of Soviet 27th Army and reach Danube River. The plan also included the destruction of Soviet 6th Guard Tank Army and subsequently re-take Budapest, which had been occupied by Red Army on 13th February 1945. At the same time, *Heeresgruppe Süd* in co-operation with *Heeresgruppe Südost* was given the task of annihilating the Red Army forces that had taken positions between Danube River, Plattensee and the Drau.

The last offensive action of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” in the “Operation Spring-Awakening” consisted of the capture of the Soviet bridgehead near Ozora by troops of the 25th SS Pz. Gren. Regiment⁴¹. During the course of 18th March, the Hitlerjugend Division assembled near Falubattyán, 9 km south-west of Stuhlweißenburg. Between 19th-31st March, the 12th SS Division engaged rear-guard operations from Plattensee to the Reich’s borders. Sporadic combat episodes occurred on 20th March at Balinka, and the road from Bodajk-Balinka to Dudar-Zirc, where several companies of the 26th SS Pz. Gren. Regiment engaged short battles against Soviet armoured groups of “T-34” tanks⁴². During the night of 21st-22nd March, the 26th SS Pz. Gren. Regiment together with elements of the 3rd SS Pz. Div. “Totenkopf” moved into new positions near Bakonycsérnye and Szapár; in the course of 22nd March, the Red Army launched a wide attack on Hitlerjugend Division’s flank. Further dramatic encounters occurred between Hitlerjugend units and Soviet troops in Veszprem area, Penzeskut-Pusztá, Somhegy, Bakonybel and Koppany⁴³.

³⁹ The designation of ‘SS’ was added to the 6th Panzer Army after the Ardennes Offensive (DD)

⁴⁰ David HIGGINS: *Jagdpanther versus SU-100. Eastern Front, 1945*, (Osprey Publishing, 2014)

⁴¹ *Kriegstagebuch der Heeresgruppe Süd*; apud Wilhelm TIEKE: *Vom Plattensee bis Österreich: Heeresgruppe Süd, 1945*, (Selbstverlag, Gummersbach), 1975

⁴² Hubert MEYER: *The 12th SS The History of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division*, Volume II, (Stackpole Books, 2005), 429

⁴³ Hubert MEYER: *The 12th SS The History of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division*, Volume II, (Stackpole Books, 2005), 440-448

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The “Unternehmen Frühlingserwachen” came to a predictable end; despite some initial success against the Soviet Gran bridgeheads and later, during the offensive near Plattensee, the Hitlerjugend troops reached a level of overwhelming exhaustion. Yet, they were not spared from further fierce battles during the rear-guard operations in Hungary, Burgenland and Lower Austria. Unlike in the Normandy campaign, the troops of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend” were occasionally supplemented with some replacements, but they came from other branches of the Wehrmacht, even from Kriegsmarine, and had received no previous suitable training for infantry combat operations whatsoever. More than ever before, the Hitlerjugend units lacked appropriate supply services: for example, a number of formerly-motorised companies had to bring ammunition from Danube barges that had been unloaded in Melk to the front of horse carts and thus they had to fulfil their repair and supply duties.

On 7th May 1945, almost the entire Division advanced to the headquarters of the 6th SS *Panzerarmee* in Gresten, 9 km south of Steinakirchen, where the Chief of Staff, SS-Gruppenführer Fritz Krämer told the Staff Officer of the Hitlerjugend Division that Generaloberst Jodl, on behalf of Großadmiral Karl Dönitz, had surrendered all German Armed Forces to General Eisenhower in Reims, France. According to Eisenhower’s promise, all troops (of the Western Front) would have to cross the demarcation line between Soviets and Western Allies by 01.00 hours of 9th May; following this agreement, the Staff Officer was ordered to surrender to American 65th Infantry Division, located in Steyr on 7th May, during that afternoon. The Americans issued directives to the Division, according to which captivity would commence on 8th May 1945. A small team of negotiators was set up and consequently SS-Obsturmführer Hubert Meyer, SS-Untersturmführer Kurt Rinne and SS-Unterscharführer Helmut Schmieding (the last officer being the actual driver of the “VW-Kübelwagen”) were sent across Enns River in order to meet with the U.S. Army command post in Steyr. The American staff officers accepted the surrender of the 12th SS Pz. Div. “Hitlerjugend”, on 8th May 1945, when its troops would be allowed to cross the demarcation line from 08.00 hours until 24.00 hours; anyone arriving at a later time would have to go into Soviet Red Army captivity.

In the morning of 8th May 1945, at 04.30 hours, the Divisional Commander SS-Brigadeführer Hugo Kraas and SS-Obersturmbannführer Hubert Meyer started their last drive with the Divisional Staff and *Divisionsbegleitkompanie* via Amstetten to Enns; they stopped at approximately 1 km from Enns River, where they waited for the approach of Division’s columns. All regiments, battalions, companies and other smaller units of the Hitlerjugend Division marched before the Staff, mounted as if on a military parade. The last unit of the 12th SS Division – Ribbentrop Battalion – crossed the Enns River shortly before midnight, near city of Steyr⁴⁴. In the meantime, the surrendering troops had made camps in the fields and meadows next to the

⁴⁴ Hubert MEYER: *The 12th SS The History of the Hitler Youth Panzer Division*, Volume II, (Stackpole Books, 2005), 500-501

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road; the tanks, guns and all other vehicles had been assembled in separated sectors, assigned by American authorities.

The Part III – ‘the Hitlerjugend Soldier’ – consists of a series of cross-analysis from socio-psychological perspectives, considering the complex peculiarities created by political and historical context which shaped the characters of all children born during the Republic of Weimar and educated under the Third Reich. First and foremost, the impact and influence of Nazi ideology is analysed in the context of Hitlerjugend ‘ethos’ formation. This characteristic is then closely examined in what became one of the most relevant examples of a generation fully developed in the National-Socialist spirit subsequently transformed in the actual divisional pattern – yet another genuine peculiarity among the rest of the Waffen-SS large units. The unusual ferocity – even considering the World War II standards – that featured most of the combat episodes between Canadian troops and Hitlerjugend units is further approached in a sub-chapter analysis dedicated to Canadian-German combat legacy started from 1918 which lasted until 1945. The alleged heroism and alleged fanaticism of the Hitlerjugend fighting force is also tackled with detailed incursions into actual combat events and specific post-battle behavioural patterns that are sociologically, historically and psychologically approached. A full sub-chapter is dedicated to the war-crimes committed by military of the Hitlerjugend Division. The next chapter (no. 6) consists entirely of socio-psychological analyses of the idiosyncratic world of the Hitlerjugend soldier and the psychosocial outcomes resulted from traumatic childhood environments. Individual and group perspectives are also considered in the obedience to authority. Two famous experiments are hereafter used in order to explain moral disengagements; a newer, staggering study, that followed Milgram’s hypotheses, became known as ‘Stanford Prison Experiment’; it is yet another social psychology investigation conducted by Professor Philip G. Zimbardo. During this experiment, it was investigated how readily people would conform to the roles of both, guard and prisoner, in a role-playing experiment that imitated the prison’s life. The main goal of Zimbardo was to check whether the brutality displayed in most American prisons is due to the sadistic character of the guards (i.e., ‘dispositional’), or had it been caused by the entire prison’s environment (i.e., ‘situational’)⁴⁵. Similar method might prove successful in order to understand whether evil actions perpetrated by SS warriors should be regarded as a consequence of their personal inhuman character, or had it been fostered as a result of the entire Nazi system. Former president of the American Psychological Association, professor emeritus in psychology Philip G. Zimbardo produced a disturbing study which brought a significantly valuable addition to the literature of the psychology of violence. The conclusions derived from this experiment are of exceptional relevance in the particular case of Hitlerjugend-type of warrior. Philip Zimbardo’s remarkable experiment has been hereby used as a scientific tool for a deeper psychological analysis of the typical Hitlerjugend soldier. The scientist gathered his conclusions under the concept of the so-called ‘Lucifer Effect’. These resolutions offer a scientific and practical explanation of how certain environments can entirely

⁴⁵ Philip G. ZIMBARDO: *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008), 12

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transform one person's actions; this is important in assessing the soldiers' exceptional attitudes which they proved under exceptional circumstances. According to psychology scientists⁴⁶, the 'Lucifer Effect' is a transformation which can make an apparently normal, civilised, mild, well-educated person capable of committing atrocious acts. They are people who have no traumatic past, nor any disorder, yet can be themselves dehumanised under the influential power of a particular situation⁴⁷. Making up the 'Lucifer Effect', professor Zimbardo identified four psychological processes: the conformity with a group, the practice of 'obedience to authority', the moral disconnection and, eventually, the environmental factors. The Zimbardo's experiment has clearly shown how people who have no traumatic past, nor any psychological disorder, still can become dehumanised under the influential power of a particular situation; in the exceptional case of the Hitlerjugend generation, this assumption cannot be applied, as I have already expounded their peculiar environment.

The processes described above led to substantial behaviour transformation, largely analysed by Albert Bandura's theory called 'moral disengagement'. A considerable number of present-day historians and researchers seem to adopt a clear-cut dichotomy divided by an ethical line that separates good from evil. Although comfortable in the illusion that such a line constraints crossovers in either direction, this rather extreme method virtually forfeits the motivation to understand how perpetrators came to engage in what we commonly view as 'evil behaviour'. In other words, this situation can be translated by a limitation of the history itself to explain the inner psychological mechanisms that enables an individual to become a perpetrator. According to contemporary reputed psychologists⁴⁸, the human being is not born with natural tendencies toward good or evil, but is equipped with mental templates to do either. The human mind can adapt to virtually any known personalised circumstance in order to survive, to create and to destroy as necessary⁴⁹. Like any other human beings before them, the Hitler youth generation was born with the potential to be better or worse than anyone who had existed in the past. They had the gifts to be more creative and more destructive than their ancestors, or they could make the world a better place or a worse place than before. Sadly, by the force of circumstances, they were born under the 'sign of the evil' which took advantage from their human condition and their natural vulnerability toward situational pressures. They were educated to become the armed forces of the Third Reich and to subsequently create a world good and wealthy only for their superior race, fully devoted to National-Socialist ideals.

⁴⁶ **Anthony PRATKANIS & Elliot ARONSON:** *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, (Holt Paperbacks, 2001), 23

⁴⁷ **Anthony PRATKANIS & M.E. TURNER:** *Persuasion and Democracy: Strategies for Deliberative Participation and Enacting Social Change*, (Journal for Social Issues, 52 (1)), 187-192

⁴⁸ It is the case of **Erik Homburger ERIKSON** whose psychosocial analysis are gathered in *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (1958), *A Way of Looking At Things* (1995); **Heinz HARTMANN:** *Essays on Ego Psychology* (1964); **Helene DEUTSCH:** *Neuroses and Character Types* (1965), *The Therapeutic Process, the Self and Female Psychology* (1992) etc. (DD)

⁴⁹ **Roy F. BAUMEISTER:** *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*, (Holt Paperbacks, 1999), 178

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The Conclusions chapter begins with a commentary on the historiographical challenge linked with a sensitive topic such as the Waffen-SS phenomenology. Further comments are subsequently produced on elitism, peculiarity, ideology, fanaticism and post-war HIAG organisation – responsible with regaining certain social and economic rights of the former Waffen-SS fighters. The Hitlerjugend soldiers were indeed among the most flamboyant fruits of a generation fully developed and educated in the purest National-Socialist spirit. Whether or not the Nazi ideology succeeded conclusively to achieve the production of the best trained – military and ideologically – warriors remains a topic of further investigation, as far as the Hitlerjugend fighters are concerned. Based on a large amount of military files, related literature and other documents that have been used in the course of writing of this study, I came to a conclusion that Hitlerjugend units fought with a degree of ferocity and determination similar to other older Waffen-SS formations, even though Hitlerjugend Division had only been recently established. Nevertheless, most of the peculiarities I have identified and argued for in the lines of this Thesis, deal with personal background rather than with their soldierly attitudes and effectiveness; the latter came as consequences of the first. They seem to have fought similar to most of their Waffen-SS fellow soldiers from other divisions, they killed civilians and unarmed prisoners of war just like their companions-in-arms. They proved more or less the same resilience and weaknesses. Yet, History preserves their iconic image as fanatical, super-indoctrinated, blue-eyed, and blond-haired Nazi Aryans, who fought under the symbol of one of the most infamous politico-military élite forces ever – the 12th SS Panzer-Division “Hitlerjugend”.

The last chapter of the Thesis is the *Appendix* – consisting of the German military glossary, the ranks of the Waffen-SS, various organisational charts of the German Armed Forces, Order of the Battle, a complete list of the Hitlerjugend Division compounding units and other official forms.

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