



# The Flower of the Elite Troops

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In phases of awakening and fundamental change critics of the German military have continued to struggle against the mistakes and shortcomings of the past, while the ruling elites and the military were already creating a new ruling order. Michael Geyer

Napoleon's order to his elite troops to attack was always implemented as the very last thing. Only when the battle was as good as won, as at Austerlitz, or as good as lost, as was the case at Waterloo, would the Emperor risk his Old Guard. In the following century elites played the opposite role: orders to attack always reached them first. For this reason their way 'of establishing their truth' is 'the essential victim'.<sup>1</sup>

Italy's first Arditi, called the 'flowers of the elite troops' in their own anthem,<sup>2</sup> and in the rest of the army conversely the death company, were established on 1 October 1915 – only two months after the declaration of war on the German Empire – by Colonel Cristofaro Baseggio. The following April they were dissolved, after the company of volunteers lost 90 percent of its officers and men in the storming of Sant'Osvaldo.<sup>3</sup> The first German storm division, assembled in March 1915 by Major Calsow from former companies of sappers, fared no better: it had already been worn down in July.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, this lost troop, which entered the stage of the First World War as the reincarnation of the most modern infantries of the modern era, made history, and not just military history. The Arditi made up three quarters of the

troops with whom D'Annunzio occupied Fiume for 16 months. Consequently the name 'storm troop' was not first used by Corporal Hitler or Captain Röhm for their SA or their Saal Protection Troop, but was an elite status created by an order of Lieutenant-General von Falkenhayn applied to all divisions of the field army.<sup>5</sup> Until today, after a long journey from world war armies via storm battalions, Freikorps and SA to the Waffen-SS, peacekeeping measures and rapid deployment forces have become synonymous. Elite troops are stationed in Bosnia, etc.

## 1

As the flower-bedecked armies climbed into their railway carriages in August 1914 in order to keep to precise mobilization plans, there was still no talk either of storm divisions or Arditi. At least since Roon and Moltke had developed Carnot's revolutionary *levée en masse* into a military service in general quarters, the war machine seemed to have been subsumed into the machinery of the nation-state. Even imperial armies subscribed to the principle of giving equal weaponry at least to all infantry companies, if not to all kinds of troops. Democracy began with the breech-loader. Storm troops, on the other hand, were in all probability the sole occurrence of an autopoiesis which brought forth a new machinery of war both in and from the war. It was not invented by any ministry or general staff. Positional warfare, which Schlieffen's great plan of attack had changed or descended into after six weeks, was seeking its own demise.

That was difficult enough. The trench systems, reaching since October 1914 from the English Channel to the Jura and since June 1915 from Isonzo to the Tyrol, produced a no-man's-land between the fronts, which cost all attackers their lives.<sup>6</sup> For in the contest between technology and tactics, as Hans Linnenkohl called the First World War, weapons technology had won: machine gun nests and field artillery liquidated all lines of troops who had the boldness or orders to proceed over the 'zone of destruction'<sup>7</sup> called No-Man's-Land. By 1914 the machine gun, this 'implacable object' (Jünger 1932: 105), had lost faith with its original purpose of being brought to bear on masses with red, black or yellow skin;<sup>8</sup> it took aim at the infantries of its own inventors. (Something which neither Kitchener nor Schlieffen, the victors of Omdurman and Waterfontein, had reckoned with.) And because too the Poisson distribution of preparations for constant barrage which lasted weeks could never guarantee that a single enemy machine gun unit had not survived in some converted shell hole, the 14 British divisions which proceeded to the Somme in July 1916 lost every other man on one single day.<sup>9</sup> This mass killing in the firing line produced the units of

shock troops. Jünger's *Arbeiter*, the literary universalization of the First World War, rightly stressed that:

the bearers of a new fighting force only became visible in the later parts of the war and that their otherness was apparent in the extent to which the mass of the armies, formed according to the principles of the nineteenth century, began to decompose. And above all they are to be found where the specific nature of their age is particularly apparent in the deployment of military methods: in the ground and air squadrons, in the shock troops, in which the soul of the infantry, decaying and ground down by machines, gains new life. (Jünger, 1932: 107)

The Storm Division Calsow, which had suffered heavy casualties, found new heart under a new commander at a new front. Captain Willy Martin Ernst Rohr (1877–1930) boasted a career straight out of the copy book of the sociological elite. The former teacher at the Infantry Shooting School and company commander in the Garde-Schützen-Bataillon Lichterfelde (cf. Gruß, 1939: 20) loaded the lost troop into railroad cars, which only came to a halt in the wine villages of Oberrotweil, Bischoffingen, Niederrotweil, Oberbergen and Schelingen. Because only the Kaiserstuhl was good enough for a training ground for revolutionary infantry tactics. While 20 kilometres to the south-east, in the Main Post Office in Freiburg, a revolutionary philosopher was just starting service as a censor of military letters,<sup>10</sup> the model captain of Colonel Bauer was transforming the sunken roads and loess mountains of the Kaiserstuhl into a landscape of trenches. This simulated Flanders on the Upper Rhine was created by a war machine which was no longer interested in the mass armies of nation-states. For the first time the steel helmet replaced the *Pickelhaube*, and instead of the 98 rifle, which infantrymen had to shoulder as though on parade, Rohr's shock troops carried a light carbine.<sup>11</sup> Colonel Bauer, responsible in Falkenhayn's High Command only for storm troops and not, as later was to be the case under Ludendorff, for the entire war economy, presented to his elite troops weapons which no infantry had ever borne: the flame throwers perfected by Colonel Reddemann,<sup>12</sup> the light machine guns appropriated from the Czar's army (Linnenkohl, 1990: 179f.) and 3.7 cm storm cannons (209), and last but not least mine throwers developed from Rhenish metal – all were to be found at the Kaiserstuhl with Captain Rohr. This broke apart the weapons-technological unit called the infantry. A former battalion of sappers in infantry training with field artillery weaponry was from now on to be organized as a syndicate of variously equipped specialists.<sup>13</sup> Rohr's storm division, workers in the sense of Jünger rather than Bebel, consisted according to this principle of one staff, two companies of sappers, a vehicle company and a cannon division. 'In addition there were supplementary weapons: a machine gun train 250 (6 MG), 1 troop of mine throwers (4 light launchers) and 1 troop of flame throwers (4 small throwers).'<sup>14</sup>

Napoleon's campaigns could only cover Europe so comprehensively because his armies took seriously the army reform of 1792:<sup>15</sup> they were all divided into corps which were able to operate independently because they had at their disposal their own infantry, artillery and cavalry. The storm divisions of 1915 took this differentiation from the operative to the tactical level. Every single storm troop fought as an independent war machine, whose constituent parts or weapon systems were coordinated by wrist watches<sup>16</sup> and carefully thought-out scenarios. Portable mine throwers brought enemy trenches and barbed wire emplacements<sup>17</sup> under heavy fire, machine guns held those of the enemy in check, flame throwers destroyed last pockets of resistance – and all of this so that a couple of marksmen with carbines and hand grenades (grenadiers in the sense of the Second World War<sup>18</sup>) could safely cross the dead zone of no-man's-land.

Thus the 'narrow, deeply ordered'<sup>19</sup> shock troop destroyed an entire chapter of the infantry rule book. The thick line of similarly armed companies, as it had been laid down since 1906, and had most recently been turned into the 'self-annihilation of the attacker'<sup>20</sup> under the mythic machine-gun fire of Langemarck, died a death as a theory. In October 1915 Rohr's division needed to move only 50 kilometres over the Rhine, to covert its manoeuvres from the Kaiserstuhl into the real situation of the Vosges and to be up in arms – and after only the 17th volley of the mine throwers the French occupiers of the Hartmannsweilerkopf surrendered one day before Christmas.

It was no wonder that Rohr's storm division turned into a storm battalion which became the favourite troop of the supreme commander, Crown Prince William of Prussia. The front itself had discovered a new elite and new tactics, which in turn served as a lesson for it. Because 'the operations of the storm division were nearly always successful with negligible casualties, the troop itself expressed the wish to be trained in this way of fighting'.<sup>21</sup>

On 15 March 1916 Falkenhayn issued the order:

The 'storm battalion' is to be used in attacks against difficult positions and in times of calm as a training troop. In order to make generally accessible the experiences of the storm battalion in the organization and deployment of a storm troop, two experienced officers (captains or older lieutenants) are . . . to be transferred to the storm battalion from all armies on the Western Front for a period of 14 days. . . . After the return of the officers and NCOs storm divisions are to be formed within the individual units. These divisions are gradually to be expanded, so that in due course all divisions are in a position to assemble for difficult attack operations a core troop consisting of selected and specially trained officers and men.<sup>22</sup>

For the first time in German military history a chief of general staff had altered infantry tactics in the middle of a war. Directly or indirectly, the training storm battalion trained lieutenants whose names have gone down in literary and military history: Ernst Jünger from Infantry Regiment 73, Erwin Rommel from the Württemberg mountain battalion, Felix Steiner from the machine gun

and marksman division 46, etc. The leadership of the First World War had been recruited.

In October 1916 Crown Prince William was already able to predict what the War Ministry only realized in August 1918: 'A fully trained infantry, supported by sappers and equipped with machine guns, light mine throwers and grenade launchers has in the end to get by without having troops from the storm battalions assigned to it.'<sup>23</sup>

But a fully trained infantry remained a pipe dream as long as the Supreme Army Command and Colonel Bauer, responsible for the storm troops, remained under the control of Falkenhayn. Only when, in August 1916, Hindenburg and Ludendorff took power, did the mid-war tactical change take place and also its essential precondition, changes to weapons technology. 'The 3rd Supreme Command completed the transition to machine-based warfare and thus to the industrialization of the conduct of war in Germany with a radicalism which must be viewed as unprecedented.'<sup>24</sup> The reason was simple: with equally unprecedented radicalism which to this day enthuses the US Army in its conviction for C4 (communications, command, control, computers),<sup>25</sup> Ludendorff through his endless phone calls listened to every wish of the army in the field. The General Quartermaster himself operated as technical feedback, made possible by the wireless radio of Dr Meißner's valve link-up.

The so-called Hindenburg Programme – his name, associated with loyalty to the Emperor, in effect hid the revolutionaries Ludendorff and Bauer – commanded a war economy in its original sense: the output of munitions doubled, machine gun production tripled, and the output of mine throwers increased one hundredfold.<sup>26</sup> Thus precisely the weapons systems, which the Crown Prince and his 5th Army had intended for a storm troop in the great trained infantry, went into mass production and to the front.<sup>27</sup> On 4 June 1917 the War Ministry was able to decree a new organizational structure 'which implemented the melding of the infantry with the MG weapon by welding the smallest infantry unit, the company, with the MG troop'.<sup>28</sup> Thus the basic secret of Rohr's storm battalion – 'the rigorous substitution of men by machines' – was elevated to the 'core of the new deployment principles of the German army in the field':

The weapon itself – the 'war machine', as it was called in the First World War – became the means and the starting point of military deployment and of the organization of military units. The movement of the lowest unit, the group, was determined by the firing properties and the protection of the machine gun. Its use depended on the interplay of related weapons, i.e. of artillery and the infantry grouped around the machine gun. Nowhere was this change in deployment more clear than in the new training regulations. Drill and exercise regulations were almost totally abandoned. Weapons training moved to the foreground in an imbalanced way and in direct contradiction to Wilhelmine practice.<sup>29</sup>

A war costly in materials replaced a war costly in human lives.

Happy times began for Captain Rohr, who had won all the way along the line. Only one month after assuming power, Ludendorff travelled to the army group of the Crown Prince, where the storm battalion received him in battle fatigues<sup>30</sup> as the 'favourite troop of the Crown Prince',<sup>31</sup> and the Quartermaster General saw 'for the first time a closed formation in storm gear with the eminently sensible steel helmet'.<sup>32</sup> Shortly thereafter all storm battalions – Rohr's being a significant exception – transferred from the sappers to the infantry.<sup>33</sup> The tactical innovations at the front were converted by the operations division of the Supreme Command, with Captain Hermann Geyer in command, into general fighting regulations. But above all, these innovations reached a level that prevented their inventors from continuing to be used as canon fodder. Under Falkenhayn, Rohr's storm battalion had been used – with little success and heavy losses – in the attack on the 'blood suction pump' of Verdun.<sup>34</sup> Under Ludendorff, however, this 'fundamental principle' – that troops were set up with the aim of their death – was 'increasingly lost sight of', to the remarkable regret of Colonel Bauer: the storm battalions 'were deployed as elite shock troops and then immediately withdrawn. But as the sharp end for the attacker came after the position had been taken from the enemy – counterattacks with heavy artillery fire – this kind of deployment gave rise to a deal of bad blood amongst the other troops.'<sup>35</sup>

The 3rd Supreme Command thus gave official blessing to all the demands made by Rohr since his deployment at Verdun. While the Italian Arditi had the battle task of holding on hard in the area that had been stormed until (if they were lucky) the ordinary infantry arrived in support,<sup>36</sup> German storm troops were 'withdrawn immediately after fulfilling their task, so that they would remain usable and fresh for further operations. They were therefore,' as Rohr's *Instructions for the use of a storm battalion* concluded, 'simply intended for attack, and not for holding positions.'<sup>37</sup> Just like their strategic successor in the Second World War, the divisions and armies of the Waffen-SS, Ludendorff's tactical fire brigade were given the most modern weapons, the longest time behind the lines and the most choice rations.

In this respect, we in the storm battalions had one advantage; we constantly received supplements consisting of cheese, sausage or preserved meats. When parts of the battalion were deployed, the whole battalion received a battle supplement, and when the whole battalion was deployed, we received in addition an 'extraordinary big battle supplement'. . . . Apart from the food which was delivered, we could buy food and luxury goods in the shops and from the sutlers behind the lines. If the battalion was pinned down, like in Beuville, as much by way of food and luxury goods was fetched from the Belgian border towns as there was demand. And besides this, companies were able substantially to improve their rations by the use of the garden plots that had been allotted to them.<sup>38</sup>

It was no wonder therefore that from 1916 onwards the staffs no longer had themselves to comb their companies for likely shock troop material. Volunteers, who had to be not over 25 and single, reported voluntarily for a troop which was the envy of all others. The figure of the soldier-specialist, just as the project had envisaged multiplying, went in a series which worked towards the First World War. In 1941, on the left bank of the Pruth, both Italian war reporters and German tragedians had no longer any doubt that tank crews, whether from Essen or Charkov, all spoke the same technical language.<sup>39</sup>

It was not surprising either, therefore, that the storm battalions of 1916, over and above the pleasures they enjoyed behind the lines enjoyed one of the most future-oriented of all privileges: they were motorized. A troop which was to be thrown as an operational fire brigade at unforeseeable focuses and immediately withdrawn after completion of their battle orders blew apart the logistical framework of the First World War. Since Moltke's innovations of 1866 and 1870/71, it had remained the case that the railways were the sole mobilizing factor in war. So mobilization in August 1914 was as good as its name, and Ludendorff's strategic castling in winter 1917/18 from the Eastern to the Western Front succeeded. But when the troops had been unloaded and it was time for the transition from a mobilized strategy to mobilized tactics, everything seized up again in trench warfare. In the barely passable battle area of trenches, grenade craters and barbed wire fences attacks broke down, because the available carriers and horses could launch neither reinforcements nor artillery quickly enough to the front. The railway network on which the First World War depended logistically only went as far as the rail heads way back behind the lines. All the tracks in the battle zone, where they were most urgently needed, had been blown up or shot to bits by the enemies long since.

The readjustment from a railway war to a motorized war therefore began in the trenches of the First World War, in close parallel with the establishment of storm battalions. It included not only the famous tanks, which appeared for the first time in the Battle of the Somme, but above all completely inconspicuous lorries, whose number on the Allied side eventually reached into the hundreds of thousands, and on the German side 40,000 after great efforts by Ludendorff's 3rd Supreme Command.<sup>40</sup> The *Blitzkrieg* of 1939, a systematic yet half-hearted attempt to transfer all logistics from the railways to motorization,<sup>41</sup> cast its shadow ahead of itself.

But all of the motorization the First World War had to offer was to the advantage first and foremost of the storm troops. Hardly had a vehicle (training) company been established than Captain Rohr claimed their entire vehicles for 're-provisioning with equipment, munitions and food'.<sup>42</sup> The railway wagons which



had transported Rohr's battalion back in 1915 to the Kaiserstuhl could resign from service. The same fate befell the first storm-panzer-vehicle-division, composed of British booty tanks and German copies – Crown Prince William ensured as usual that the brand new weapons be 'loaded for Storm Battalion No. 5 (Rohr)'.<sup>43</sup> Finally in summer 1918, as the deployment of the American Expeditionary Corps put the seal on Allied superiority and storm battalions were like the fire brigade rushing from one blaze to another, the transport to and from locations in 'speedy lorries' had become commonplace.<sup>44</sup>

Wagner's Valkyries, this first storm troop of military and operatic history,<sup>45</sup> owed their superhuman speed to the optical trick of a *laterna magica*, which (at the Bayreuth premiere) projected horses as clouds on the horizon of the stage. The Valkyries only achieved technical positivity with the Otto motor: a form of locomotion, based on the model of the storm, put an end to marching as the millennia-old essence of all infantry. Storm battalions belonged (and still do) on tanks, lorries or jeeps.

## 2

Arditi – as they were defined by the Comando Supremo in a secret circular which, according to the letter head was never to reach the very front line – are fundamentally men thrown around. The throw sends them to the place the text of the order was never to reach. 'Offensive tasks', which could however also be read as 'transports', 'throw them into desired places at the front, preferably though at the flank or even to the rear of enemies' who have penetrated on to Italian territory.<sup>46</sup>

No different from German storm battalions, Arditi in this sense of being thrown in become essential to lorry crews. The infantry might continue to suffer on manoeuvres from practising parade-ground or forced marching and to tolerate the opposite, complete immobility, in the trenches – the Arditi were way beyond these archaic means of movement.

On 10 November 1918, the day of the great Allied victory celebrations, Mussolini only had to climb on one of their 'lorries' to celebrate the Arditi as the 'wonderful warrior youth of Italy'. (The lorry which was to bear his corpse in 1945 to Milan had not yet been built.) While Mussolini's motorized dais proceeded across Milan from the Monument of the Five Days to Garibaldi's statue, the man who was to commission the first European motorways was proclaiming the common will of Fascism and Arditism: 'All the ills standing in the way of a Greater Italy' were to be 'destroyed' with the Arditi weapons of the 'bomb and dagger'.<sup>47</sup> And, almost as though the metaphor of the way were to be



translated in an automobilist plain text for his listeners, the venerable Agnelli, lord of the Fiat works, spoke from the same lorry platform as Mussolini.

But the fronts had already been clear in the war. The Arditi with their privileges, which freed them from any service in the trenches and extended from special rations to model barracks, stood on one side, and the infantrymen and the wretched on the other. For in contrast to the German Empire, which Ludendorff, Bauer and Rathenau were systematically undermining with their revolution from above, the no less youthful kingdom of Italy remained as intact in its power politics as it was old-fashioned. Consequently, it was mainly violent criminals who volunteered for Arditi companies<sup>48</sup> and who turned once more to their professional skills during the retreat from Isonzo, when the discipline of the Italian army had in any case collapsed. At the end of 1917 the complaints of pillaged farmers in the Veneto left the Comando Supremo with no other choice but to intervene in their very own creation and to ban prisoners from a career in the Arditi – at least as a general rule.<sup>49</sup>

The wretched, against whom Mussolini's welcoming speech had made the Arditi mobile, were therefore always powers of state: from the Minister President to the military police. And their powerlessness in blocking the way to a Greater Italy followed from the simple fact that Arditi were basically motorized. Even the famous scene, when four Arditi allegedly advancing to the front line shot their carbines at the Carabinieri, with the result that the authority of the military police literally fell to ground,<sup>50</sup> could only result from the fact that those heroes were not marching but 'rushing in a lorry to the front line'.<sup>51</sup>

The *Marcia su Ronchi* was therefore only a logical continuation of well practised logistics. While writers like Marinetti saw reason to complain bitterly about the 'arduousness' of their journey to Fiume ('between woods and the shores of the Mediterranean'),<sup>52</sup> D'Annunzio's Arditi covered the stretch once more in lorries, armoured vehicles and tanks. After Guido Keller, flying hero and so-called missions secretary of D'Annunzio, had heard after the midnight arrival in Ronchi that the lorries urgently needed for the rapid transport of troops had not arrived, 'he disappeared with a handful of the others [Arditi] into the night, to reappear a few hours later with 26 vehicles, which he had stolen from a vehicle park only a few kilometres away'.<sup>53</sup> And because the railway line from Trieste to Fiume was ignored, a strategic operation ran its course perhaps for the first time in military history on the model of coming *Blitzkriege* and armoured personnel carrier divisions.

Only the target of the operation would not cooperate. The port of Fiume was no trench system like in Flanders, no tunnel network like in the Dolomites. As soon as the liberating army had lived up to its name and made Fiume a liberated

town, there was nothing left to storm. Arditi and legionnaires were reduced to festive inactivity and the battle order which, in contrast to German storm battalions, decreed that they dig-in in the regained territory until the arrival of infantry reinforcements. But this battle order had not foreseen that their own infantry would not arrive as envisaged as a merciful relief but as an opponent. On 24 December 1920, the *Natale di Sangue*, the Arditi encountered their usual enemy: the naval guns and Alpini of their own state. Guido Keller, because he had not wanted to be bureaucratized even by his own Comandante,<sup>54</sup> fought the advancing Alpini with a bamboo stick as the only weapon allowed in this fratricidal war;<sup>55</sup> the Arditi of the Commandant's Guard surrounded D'Annunzio's palace with improvised trenches, lines of barbed wire and barricades, until any storm troop tactics had been turned into trench warfare. That Bloody Christmas ended with 203 dead legionnaires.<sup>56</sup>

In other words, Fiume had suspended Arditism. A whole army had frozen in the pattern of a world war which was now over. D'Annunzio's great promise that 'the victorious army, being pulled apart by traitors and wreckers would . . . reconstitute itself, heal, rise up and burst out in flame'<sup>57</sup> in Fiume's 10 legions became an all too literal reality.

The *Draft of a new organization for the liberation army*, written by Captain Giuseppe Pfiffer and signed by D'Annunzio, is the photographic still of such immortalization. Just like storm troop lieutenant Ernst Jünger, whose *Training regulations* of 1922 prepared the Imperial Infantry for anything but the future *Blitzkriege*, D'Annunzio's *Army organization* laid down the state of tactics and weapons technology of 1918. The only assumption is fixed positions in positional warfare, whether on the Isonzo or in Fiume, the only task the transition to movement. Its solution amounts to recasting an entire army as a storm troop. While in the Italian army of the world war there were no more than 50,000 Arditi, the *Army organization* makes all 7000 activists under D'Annunzio's control in 1920 into Arditi.<sup>58</sup>

Because storm troops, in contrast to the old infantry, are specialist workers in weapons systems, the *Army organization*, in addition to the futuristic love of metal, assembles any given unit around its particular equipment. And because the waging of battle is a shock troop exercise on a large scale, the companies of privates in all legions were armed like the Arditi: with machine guns and hand grenades, machine pistols and flame throwers, not to mention the ever-present dagger as the trademark of the Ardito. But because the legion – according to D'Annunzio's poetic and etymological insight<sup>59</sup> – connotes as such an elite, then particularly generalized elite troops, as constituted by Fiume's *Army organization*, must in their turn select out elites. The name *Hilfskompanie* (auxiliary

company) is pure understatement, because this company represented in fractal repetition the independently operating legion along with all its weapons systems – but as a ‘doomed troop, who threw itself into destruction in order to turn the tide of battle’.<sup>60</sup>

Arditi, as has been said, were thrown into battle. And as long as no *Natale di Sangue* threatened destruction, this process of throwing in excluded to a certain extent marching like that of the infantry. Even the existence or availability of a vehicle park raises the concern that of all the kinds of sport, which the *Army organization* compelled its legionnaires to undertake,<sup>61</sup> only one would involve the practice of company marching.<sup>62</sup> All other kinds of sport follow training principles which had been tested for Arditi since 1917 in Sdrizza di Manzano and Borgnano, and which established locomotion from then on only as an existential ‘liminal situation’: sprinting and cross country,<sup>63</sup> climbing and jumping, rowing and swimming.<sup>64</sup> In just this way weekend warriors (as Heiner Müller called them) pursue their sports south-east of Riejka to this day.

But above all ‘the legionnaires’, as Captain Host-Venturi credited his teams, ‘have given one sport such an impetus that it [. . .] has become a town institution’ in Fiume: ‘football’.<sup>65</sup> Two centuries after *calcio*<sup>66</sup> in Florence had died out, team sport seemed to be in vogue again. According to the views of military scientists of 1939, football is based ‘less on individual performance than on the way the entire team plays together, and on the subjugation of personal interests to those of the team’.<sup>67</sup> The ball is therefore not only round: it is the weapon around which storm troops or Arditi have to gather. Not for nothing, as the counter-espionage of the French 6th Army ascertained, did Rohr’s storm batallion indulge itself in football games every other evening, ‘which officers joined in’.<sup>68</sup>

All so-called team spirit – this along with the ‘familiar *Du*’ form of address practised between the ranks<sup>69</sup> – stemmed from D’Annunzio’s Fiume or Rohr’s Kaiserstuhl. In any case the no less soldierly men, whether during the march on Rome or on Freikorps engagements east of the Elbe, hardly took with them the tough character of drill determined by the grammar schools and cadet institutions of the turn of the century. The lessons absorbed by a new elite – the systematic, weapons-technical as well as sporting reinforcement ‘of the much-discussed “camaraderie of the front”, that apparently classless unity of soldiers at the front’ – were ‘too deeply ingrained to be explained in terms merely of social psychology as “male fantasies”’.<sup>70</sup>

‘The applied physical exercises of the storm batallions,’ decreed their Nazi historian, ‘formed the basis for the military sports movement after the world war. Viewed chronologically, the exercises were carried out according to the same views in the *Stahlhelm*, the League of Front Soldiers, the Reich Board of Trustees

for Youth Fitness and in the sections of the Party. The SA sports badge is founded on the same principles.<sup>71</sup>

Felix Steiner, commanding general of the III SS-Panzerkorps, stated even more sweepingly that the shock troops of 1917 had, with their 'idea of spontaneity, of swift attack, of the automatic hand in handiwork' 'put the elite in the place of the masses'.<sup>72</sup> In the sense of the mass oratory of Hitler or Röhm, the SA could not for this reason lay claim to be their 'successors'. Only the 'shock troops of the Waffen-SS' could '17 years later' come into consideration as the 're-birth of the idea'.<sup>73</sup> 'Comradeship' between officers and men, 'athletic training' in an obligatory basic training, 'working together in a shock troop, in which machine gunners, sharpshooters, grenade launcher crews and grenade throwers worked together like in a well-oiled machine'<sup>74</sup> – all these were the regulators of the Waffen-SS, whose origins lay in the shock troop tactics practised by their trainers themselves.<sup>75</sup>

'Bright sunshine'<sup>76</sup> lay on the camp at Munster, as Steiner's regiment, the Waffen-SS unit Deutschland, practised for the real thing on 19 May 1939:

After 20 minutes the fighting with live rounds began. Hitler was invited to retire into a concrete bunker, because the firing would take place over his head. When he categorically refused, he was led to a spot in front of the bunker, which at least offered him and those accompanying him makeshift rear cover. Now the artillery divisions began to let loose on the target of attack, a deep-lying trench system 300 metres from those viewing. The heavy infantry weapons joined in. Heavy machine guns firing indirectly amplified the preparatory fire, while the light machine guns cut in in suitable firing positions and held down the enemy in the trenches while, under the cover of this thick fusillade, the first wave of around 60 storm troops pushed forward in the gaps between the light machine gun fire to the already wrecked wire barriers. They burst into passageways with explosive charges, and swept through these into the trenches at the very front, smoking out the enemy with hand grenades and were overtaken from behind by a second wave of shock troops, which then penetrated into the depths of the position with machine pistols, hand grenades and flame throwers, while the artillery's blanket of fire crashed down directly in front of them.

Barely four months before the start of the Second World War, the Waffen-SS therefore continued to pursue the storm troop tactics of the First.<sup>77</sup> (Guderian's armour and radio techniques were absent.) But the recognition of this gave the messenger who had made it to 'guest observer' no pleasure. 'Hitler, who had been fired over by all weapons, did not say a word. He probably recognized from the example he had just seen that his image of a conventional troop of guards was "destroyed"'.<sup>78</sup>

## 3

On 14 August 1916 Rohr's storm battalion tried out on its exercise grounds at Beuville a strategy, which March 1918 was to raise to the strategy of the entire Ludendorff offensive. The Kaiser's personal press reporter Walter Bloem – before the *Soul of film*<sup>79</sup> rose up in him in the after-war period – stressed this much:

It was an attack of the storm battalion against an enemy marked with discs, during which live ammunition was used, even on the part of the artillery put at their disposal for the exercise. The combination of both weapons was to be demonstrated, the pushing forward of rolling artillery fire, the task of the storm infantry to follow it close on, even at the risk of losses from friendly fire. This task was carried out with such guts by the selected men, who had been drilled for special purposes for weeks, that a couple of soldiers were actually wounded in the process.

Then Captain von Rohr<sup>80</sup> introduced a number of NCOs and men who had distinguished themselves in the last deployment of the battalion, and the Kaiser, in a splendid mood, handed out Iron Crosses of both classes.<sup>81</sup>

So 1916 and 1939 saw one and the same scene, one and the same manoeuvre. But what put the warlord of 1916 into a splendid mood, ruined the mood of the warlord of 1939. William II saw the first version of the curtain of fire, which the German Army was to put its last but misplaced hope in one and a half years later. Instead of an outdated and dreamt-of personal guard, Hitler saw the same thing.

The curtain of fire as a concept goes back to General Nivelle, the French supreme commander of 1917;<sup>82</sup> as a tactic combining infantry and artillery on the other hand, it goes back to the Russian–Japanese war, like so many innovations of that century. Not for nothing did Italy's Arditi import wherever possible Japanese martial arts<sup>83</sup> (and, like Keller, bamboo sticks). Because what artillery curtains of fire produce for an army's own infantry is kamikaze. A third of all Japanese losses at Port Arthur arose from friendly fire.<sup>84</sup>

But the curtain of fire alone, as Captain Meyer would say, was the only possibility for an *attack in positional warfare*. To begin with Colonel Georg Bruchmüller, the person responsible for artillery in Supreme Command, synchronized the curtain of fire with the weather forecast to maximize the effect of gas grenades.<sup>85</sup> Second, as in Steiner's manoeuvre, the curtain of fire began directly before the attack by storm troops, avoiding the kind of prior warning which constant barrages gave.<sup>86</sup> Third, the advance of the curtain of fire occurred, unlike the British barrage at the Somme, not according to a fixed timetable laid down by the general staff, but rather as a variable dependent on reports back or feedback given by the infantry storming the lines through aerial observer or radio.<sup>87</sup> Fourth and finally, everything depended on pinning down enemy machine guns which had survived the artillery bombardment in trenches or shell holes: these had always made infantry attacks fail. The key to the entire

Ludendorff offensive was to become a 'principle', which the plan of attack was always to be based on:

The principle, that *infantry while attacking must run into their own artillery and mine-thrower fire*, which had been trained for in the storm battalions so successfully, must become common practice for all infantry. It requires reckless courage and superior morale, because a number of losses by our own artillery fire have to be accepted. But this action makes close quarters fighting with enemy infantry and machine guns much easier. Thus the total losses will be substantially lower. We must use all means to help foster understanding in the infantry for this. *This must be made possible. The energy of the infantry attack and its success depend largely upon this.*<sup>88</sup>

When *storming positions*, the important thing is to use to its greatest effect the preparation by the artillery and the support of fire. *When storming, the infantry must be standing in the enemy position at the same time as the last artillery rounds and mines fall, and subsequently must follow straight on from their own curtain of fire*, so that the enemy has no time to get out of any surviving dug-outs or to make itself ready to fight in any other way.<sup>89</sup>

The Ludendorff offensive of March 1918, an unfeasible and daring *attack during positional warfare*, was nothing other than the transference of storm troop tactics to his own field army. Top-down logic, which had led from the independently operating Napoleonic corps to the technologically advanced and independent storm battalion, came back bottom-up. And thus the 'guts', which in 1916 only Rohr's 'hand-picked teams trained for weeks for special purposes' had generated, became general battle orders,<sup>90</sup> which the operational division of supreme command communicated to the troops 'down to the last detail'.<sup>91</sup> Storm Battalion No. 5 had 'become the mentor of the modern tactics of the entire German Army'.<sup>92</sup> After half a year of exercises and rearming, 56 of a total of 192 divisions stood ready as shock divisions to 'run into their own artillery and mine fire' on the morning of 21 March 1918. Only through death did the infantry become a shock troop and thus a killing machine.

After large initial successes and breakthroughs of 50 kilometres, the Ludendorff offensive came to a standstill and failed strategically. Storm troop tactics simply could not be extended to a whole country. But one consequence of this failure is that the *Struggle as inner experience (Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis)* continued straight away. Jünger's narrator remains at the start of the Ludendorff offensive until the very last page, and makes absolutely no mention of its result.<sup>93</sup> This is the origin also of a philosophy, whose originator must have known very well about it, because he himself had participated in the Ludendorff offensive (along with its pedagogy right down to the last corporal).

In summer 1918:

Heidegger was deployed as a member of the Front Weather Station 414 in the operational area of the 1st Army on the western front. This unit was under the command of the Army Weather

Station of the 3rd Army: its position, to be more precise, was in the Ardennes near Sedan. Its main task in the battle of Marne-Champagne (which began on 15 July 1918) lay in covering the left wing of the 1st Army, which was to push forwards towards Reims. The meteorological services had been set up to support the use of poison gas with weather forecasts.<sup>94</sup>

In summer 1923, Heidegger accepted the call to Marburg, but not without taking with him against his philosophical opponents ‘a storm troop of 16 people’.<sup>95</sup> In spring 1927, *Sein und Zeit. Die erste Hälfte* (Being and time. The first half) appeared.<sup>96</sup>

*Dasein* (existence), which is concerned with its own being (*Sein*), abjures as is well known the name ‘Mensch’ (person).<sup>97</sup> It is always thrown into a world which it must bring into existence. The totality of *Sein*, which *Dasein* has to be, is still outstanding – ‘death is, as the end of *Dasein*, at its own end in the *Sein* of the person existing [*der Seiende*]’.<sup>98</sup>

If *Sein und Zeit* dared the ‘existential [*existenzial*] proposal of an actual *Sein* to death’, then philosophy stands before literally unheard-of questions: ‘Is the proposal of an existential [*existenzial*] possibility of such a questionable existential [*existenziell*] capability of *Sein* not an unrealistic enterprise? And it might require this, so that such a proposal may go beyond a merely poetic [*dichtend*], voluntary construction. . . . In essence, does *Dasein* throw itself into death in such a *Sein*?’<sup>99</sup>

The answer is yes. To cut the matter short and to make the construction as unpoetical as it is compelling, it only requires a Ludendorff offensive. Despite all accepted philosophy, death is not a category, but a Poisson distribution of all historical kinds of death. The ‘position’<sup>100</sup> alone, before which the supreme command stands in the strategic sense and philosophy in the existential, allows no doubt: before every possible attack lie a no-man’s-land and a curtain of fire which give the infantry no chance of survival. Events at the front, which Heidegger would call death, give ‘*Dasein* nothing to “realize” and nothing which itself it could actually be as a real thing. It is the possibility of the impossibility of any relationship to . . . any kind of existence’.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless the proposal, as Geyer committed it to paper in *Angriff im Stellungskriege* (Attack in positional warfare), has to overcome the sense of being thrown or the static position in the trenches precisely by having storm troops ‘run into’ the curtain of fire of their own artillery:

The more unclouded this possibility is understood, the more purely understanding penetrates into the possibility *as that of the impossibility of existence itself*. . . . By running into this possibility it becomes ‘larger and larger’ – in other words, it reveals itself as something which knows no measure, no more or less, but is rather the possibility if the immeasurable impossibility of existence. . . . This running forward makes accessible to existence the giving up of the self as the ultimate possibility and thus breaks apart any immobility on the existence which has been



achieved. *Dasein* protects itself, running ahead, from falling back behind itself and the capability of being which has been understood and from 'becoming too old for its victories'. (Nietzsche)<sup>102</sup>

Philosophy, instead of falling back behind Ludendorff's failed offensive, takes it up again. Every victory which did not occur remains relinquished:

Repetition is the express transference, that is to say, the return into possibilities of a *Dasein* that has been. The actual repetition of a possibility of existence which has already been – that *Dasein* chooses its own hero – is based existentially [*esistenzial*] in the resolution to run ahead; for in that resolution the very first choice is made, which makes things free for the struggling successors and the faithfulness to that which can be repeated.<sup>103</sup>

The Greeks may have read in death a guilt in nature, and the Christians a punishment from their God. But only with the philosophy of struggling successors is there no need to burden foreign powers with the end of mortals. Enemy cannons and machine guns have ceased their role as a cause of death since they were pinned down by the curtain of fire. The opposite is also true: because the tactics of one's own infantry and artillery arise from the same plan, which expressly 'accepts' 'a number of losses from one's own artillery fire', then running into the curtain of fire reveals itself as the '*most characteristic, most unrelatable, certain and as such undefined, unrepeatable possibility of Dasein*'.<sup>104</sup> In its inner turmoil of having to be a plan thrown together, Heidegger's *Dasein* displays the contest between tactics and technology, the generality and the work of the general staff, the shock troop and the supreme command.

Storm Battalion No. 5 has become a lesson not only for an entire field army, but also for its philosophers. And, unlike books, it has itself followed the law by which it was formed. In March 1918 Rohr was promoted to major,<sup>105</sup> in October 1918 (once more at the behest of the Crown Prince) he was ordered to Spa for the personal protection of the Kaiser. Finally, after the ceasefire, abdication and revolution, Storm Battalion No. 5 was absorbed into the Freikorps Hindenburg.

Translated by James Jordan

## Notes

1. Heidegger, Martin (1950) 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks' in *Holzwege*. Frankfurt am Main: p. 50.
2. Cf. [Padre] Giuliani, Reginaldo (1934) *Gli arditi*. 2nd edn. Milan: p. 1.
3. Cf. Cordova, Ferdinando (1969) *Arditi e legionari dannunziani*. Padua: p. 1f.
4. Cf. [First Lt.] Graf von Schwerin (1932) 'Das Sturmbataillon Rohr' in Paul Heinrici (ed.) *Das Ehrenbuch der deutschen Pioniere*. Berlin: p. 559.
5. Cf. Gruß, Helmuth (1939) *Die deutschen Sturmbataillone im Weltkrieg. Aufbau und*

*Verwendung*. Berlin: p. 152. (Schriften der kriegsgeschichtlichen Abteilung im Historischen Seminar der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin, Heft 26)

6. Despite newer works, cf. Fussell, Paul (1975) *The Great War and Modern Memory*. London.

7. Jünger, Ernst (1932) *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt*. Hamburg: p. 143.

8. Jünger, 1932; cf. Ellis, John (1975) *The Social History of the Machine Gun*. London.

9. Cf. Linnenkohl, Hans (1990) *Von Einzelschuß zur Feuerwalze. Der Wettlauf zwischen Technik und Taktik im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Koblenz: p. 272.

10. Cf. Ott, Hugo (1988) *Martin Heidegger. Unterwegs zu einer Biographie*. Frankfurt am Main, New York: pp. 85–7. Ott goes so far as to suspect that Heidegger's secret reading of their correspondence made it impossible for the Freiburg professors to stop his career (particularly the recall from Marburg to Freiburg).

11. Schauwecker, Franz (1921) *Im Todesrachen*. Halle an der Saal: p. 282. These and other irregularities were later to be made the norm for infantry by the Troop Office of the Reichswehr, under the overall control of Lieutenant Ernst Jünger: 'The rifle may be carried in open order as desired, if necessary hung around the body, but not borne on the shoulder. The rifle strap should generally be kept long. The bearing and movement of the marksmen are to be free and unconstrained.' (*Ausbildungsvorschrift für die Infanterie* (= Heeresdienstvorschrift No. 130). Heft 2. New impression Berlin 1934: p. 50). Finally in 1942 the Waffen-SS elevated the small-calibre storm rifle 44, the direct predecessor of the Kalashnikov, to the standard for today. Steiner, Felix (1963) *Die Armee der Geächteten*. Göttingen: p. 134 f.

12. Furthermore Reddemann, who interestingly came from the Leipzig Fire Brigade, is also thought to have been the originator of the term 'shock troop' (Gruß, *Sturmataillone*, p. 24).

13. This kind of specialization went even further with the shock troops of other states: the French Army no longer even expected general knowledge of guns and grenades (Linnenkohl, *Feuerwalze*, p. 211).

14. Gruß, *Sturmataillone*, p. 21. This corresponded to the organigram of the Italian Arditi: the 1000-man battalions consisted of 4 companies, each with 4 infantry trains, a machine gun and flamethrower department (Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 5).

15. Cf. Albrecht, Christoph, *Geopolitik und Geschichtsphilosophie 1748–1798*. PhD, Bochum: 1994: p. 179.

16. Cf. Gruß, *Sturmataillone*, p. 165 and p. 181.

17. Barbed wire, the Wild West measure of American ranchers against their cattle herds, had already been deployed in the Boer War against prisoners and the Russo–Japanese War against enemies.

18. Cf. Gruß, *Sturmataillone*, p. 80: 'At the suggestion of the Supreme Commander Mackensen on 12 March 1917 the teams [of the storm battalion] were called the Grenadiers (hand grenade throwers). Storm Battalion No. 5 (Rohr) and the Jäger-(Sturm)-Battalion No. 3 were excepted from this.

19. Cf. (Colonel) Max Bauer, *Der große Krieg in Feld und Heimat*, Tübingen 1921, p. 87f: 'The new element was that attacks were staged no longer in a broad line but in narrow, highly ordered troops. The troop was equipped appropriately for the task which awaited it. The principle of **equal weaponry for all infantrymen** was breached for the first time.'

20. Linnenkohl, *Feuerwalze*, p. 171.

21. Gruß, *Sturmataillone*, p. 26f.

22. Gruß, *Sturmataillone*, p. 152.

23. Quoted in Gruß, *Sturmataillone*, p. 48, cf. also p. 121.

24. Geyer, Michael, *Deutsche Rüstungspolitik 1860–1980*, Frankfurt am Main 1984, p. 102. Incidentally, Geyer emphasizes that he is not related to Captain Hermann Geyer.

25. Cf. Lupfer, Timothy T., *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War*. Leavenworth Papers, No. 4, Fort Leavenworth/Kansas 1981, p. 9: 'Besides

personal visits, the telephone was another major means of communication with the front line during the First World War. Ludendorff used it extensively and thought that it was good to use when personal visits could not be conducted. He also felt that the telephone had some value as a counter to the drawbacks of personal visits, such as false personal impressions.' Accordingly, the war was lost at the precise historical moment when military psychiatry allowed Ludendorff to 'free himself from the telephone' and 'place flowers in the room'. (Dr Hochheimer, quoted in Foerster, Wolfgang, *Der Feldherr Ludendorff im Unglück. Eine Studie über seine seelische Haltung in der Endphase des ersten Weltkrieges*, Wiesbaden 1952, p. 77f.)

26. Cf. Geyer, *Rüstungspolitik*, p. 102f., and Linnenkohl, *Feuerwalze*, p. 194f.

27. Cf. Berz, Peter, *08/15. Ein Standard des 20. Jahrhunderts*. PhD, Berlin 1996.

28. Cron, Hermann, *Die Organization des deutschen Heeres im Weltkrieg*, Berlin 1923: p. 49f. (Forschungen und Darstellungen aus dem Reichsarchiv, Pamphlet 5)

29. Geyer, *Rüstungspolitik*, p. 101.

30. Cf. Lupfer, *Dynamics of Doctrine*, p. 27.

31. Bauer, *Großer Krieg*, p. 87.

32. [General] Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen*, Berlin 1919, vol. 1, p. 208.

33. Cf. Cron, *Organisation des deutschen Heeres*, p. 47.

34. Cf. Gruß, *Sturmabteilung*, pp. 28–31.

35. Bauer, *Großer Krieg*, p. 88.

36. Cf. Comando dell' corpo d'armata d'assalto, *Norme per l'impiego tattico delle Grandi Unità d'assalto*, 1 July 1918, quoted in Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 3.

37. Captain Rohr, quoted in Gruß, *Sturmabteilung*, p. 45.

38. Senior Postal Director Nehr Korn (1937), quoted in Gruß, *Sturmabteilung*, p. 88. (The orthography has been retained.)

39. Cf. Malaparte, Curzio, *Die Wolga entspringt in Europa*. With a foreword by Heiner Müller, Cologne 1989: p. 23 and p. –1 [sic].

40. Cf. Cron, *Organisation des deutschen Heeres*, p. 141.

41. Cf. Van Crefeld, Martin, *Supplying War. Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*. Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne 1977: p. 143.

42. Cf. Gruß, *Sturmabteilung*, p. 45.

43. Gruß, *Sturmabteilung*, p. 101. The numeration of the storm battalions did not follow the chronology of their establishment, but rather the numeration of the armies they were allotted to.

44. Gruß, *Sturmabteilung*, p. 135. Cf. also v. Schwerin, *Sturmabteilung Rohr*, p. 562.

45. In relation to the etymology of storm troops, cf. also Wotan's historic task for his Valkyries:

‘Daß stark zum Streit  
 uns fände der Feind,  
 hieß ich euch Helden mir schaffen;  
 die herrisch wir sonst  
 in Gesetzen hielten,  
 die Männer, denen  
 den Mut wir gewehrt,  
 die durch trüber Verträge  
 trügende Bande  
 zu blindem Gehorsam  
 wir uns gebunden -  
 die solltet zu Sturm  
 und Streit ihr nun stacheln,  
 ihre Kraft reizen  
 zu rauhem Krieg,

daß kühner Kämpfer Scharen  
ich sammle in Walhalls Saal!

(Die Walküre, II 2. In: Wagner, Richard, *Die Musikdramen*, Munich 1978: p. 613.) A line-by-line commentary can be carried out in future studies.

46. Cf. Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 2.
47. Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 22.
48. Cf. Giuliani, *Arditi*, p. 21.
49. Cf. Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 4f.
50. Cf. Pamela Ballinger, Blutopfer und Feuertaufe (Sacrifice of blood and baptism of fire). In this volume, p. 189.
51. Mario Carli, quoted in Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 5. According to this logic Guido Keller, who like no other represented Fiume's Arditism, died in 1929 in a 'tragica disgrazia automobilista' (Ferrari, Atlantico, *L'asso di cuori*. Guido Keller, Rome 1933: p. 163.) Means of death remain, particularly after the death of Ingeborg Bachmann, a desideratum of researchers.
52. Cf. Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso, Letter to Benito Mussolini, quoted in Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 51.
53. Ledeen, Michael A., *The First Duce. D'Annunzio at Fiume*. Baltimore, London 1977: p. 66. In this volume, Bettina Vogel gives a figure of 40 for the lorries.
54. Cf. Ferrari, *Asso di cuori*, p. 110.
55. Cf. Ferrari, *Asso di cuori*, p. 161.
56. Ledda, Elena, L'esercito liberatore. *Fiume. Rivista di studi fiumani*, NF 19, 1990: p. 21.
57. D'Annunzio, Gabriele, *Altri Tacchini*, ed. Bianchetti, Enrica. Milan 1976: p. 377.
58. Cf. Ledda, L'esercito liberatore, p. 3.
59. Cf. Gabriele d'Annunzio/Giuseppe Pfiffer, *Entwurf einer neuen Ordnung des Befreiungsheeres*. § 49. In this volume, p. 76.
60. *Entwurf* . . . , p. 79.
61. Cf. also d'Annunzio, Letter to Captain Nino Host-Venturi, 16 September, 1919, quoted in Ledda, L'esercito liberatore, p. 4: 'Grande sviluppo dovranno avere le esercitazioni sportive.'
62. Cf. Ledda, L'esercito liberatore, p. 8.
63. Ledda, L'esercito liberatore, p. 8, reports on prize competitions in 100 m and 21,000 m races, which the legionnaires in Fiume had to hold.
64. For futuristic Arditì there was, in addition to 'running and swimming', also 'flying' (L'Ardito Futurista - Manifesto [November 1919], quoted in Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 215).
65. Nino Host-Venturi, Letter to Gabriele D'Annunzio, 28 April, 1920, quoted in Ledda, L'esercito liberatore, p. 9.
66. Cf. Bredekamp, Horst, *Florentiner Fußball. Die Renaissance der Spiele: Calcio als Fest der Medici*. Frankfurt am Main, etc. 1993.
67. Gruß, *Sturmbataillone*, p. 130.
68. VI Armée, État majeur, 2e bureau, Annexe au Bulletin de Renseignements, *Le 'Sturmbataillon' Rohr à la date du 7 Août 1916*, quoted in Gruß, *Sturmbataillone*, p. 180. In the myth of the 'Frontschweine' (the lags at the front) the teamwork went even further: on Christmas Eve 1914 British and Germans (or, more precisely, Saxons) are said to have played against each other in football teams. Cf. Eksteins, Modris, *Tanz über Gräben. Die Geburt der Moderne und der Erste Weltkrieg*. Reinbek 1990: p. 177.
69. Gruß, *Sturmbataillone*, p. 140.
70. Geyer, *Deutsche Rüstung*, p. 100.
71. Gruß, *Sturmbataillone*, p. 131.
72. Steiner, *Armee der Geächteten*, p. 24.
73. Steiner, *Armee der Geächteten*, p. 25.
74. Steiner, *Armee der Geächteten*, pp. 91-97.

75. Cf. Steiner, *Armee der Geächteten*, p. 24 and p. 351.

76. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 May, 1939, quoted in Steiner, *Armee der Geächteten*, p. 108.

77. Cf. Geyer, *Deutsche Rüstung*, p. 101: '[The 3rd Supreme Command under Ludendorff and Hindenburg] changed the tactics and deployment principles of the German Army . . . so radically and decisively (in contrast particularly to the French Army) that it basically required until 1941/42 to work through all of the consequences.'

78. Steiner, *Armee der Geächteten*, p. 106f.

79. Cf. Bloem, Walter, *Seele des Lichtspiels. Ein Bekenntnis zum Film*. Leipzig 1922. Incidentally: on 7 October 1918 – just in time for World War – Storm Battalion No. 7 made its first training film (Gruß, *Sturmabteilung*, p. 120).

80. Gruß's back-handed commentary on this point ('Captain Rohr was not of the nobility,' *Sturmabteilung*, p. 56, note) only serves to make clear how the criteria for recruitment to the elite changed between 1914 (the Imperial Army) and 1939 (the Waffen-SS).

81. Bloem, Walter, *Das Ganze – halt!* Leipzig 1934, p. 229.

82. Cf. Linnenkohl, *Feuerwalze*, p. 272.

83. Cf. Cordova, *Arditi*, p. 3.

84. Cf. Linnenkohl, *Feuerwalze*, p. 39.

85. Cf. Lupfer, *Dynamics of Doctrine*, p. 45.

86. Cf. Lupfer, *Dynamics of Doctrine*, p. 44: 'The Germans wanted to avoid any prolonged artillery fire, for surprise would be lost and an artillery duel would develop in which the Allies, with greater amounts of munitions, would eventually prevail. Therefore, German fire had to be fast and accurate, and its mission was neutralization, rather than elusive and costly destruction.'

87. Cf. [Captain] Hermann Geyer, *Der Angriff im Stellungskriege*. In: *Urkunden der Obersten Heeresleitung über ihre Tätigkeit 1916/1918*, ed. Erich Ludendorff. Berlin, 2. Edn. 1921, p. 648, p. 659 and p. 671.

88. Geyer, *Angriff im Stellungskriege*, p. 672, cf. also p. 652. The Ludendorff offensive shortened the distance between artillery and infantry from 50 to 30 m and accelerated the curtain of fire to 1.5 km/h. The Red Army proceeded likewise in March 1945 on the Oder (Linnenkohl, *Feuerwalze*, pp. 272–4).

89. Geyer, *Angriff im Stellungskriege*, p. 657. The same principle pertained in the training regulations for the Reichswehr (*Ausbildungsvorschrift für die Infanterie*, p. 50).

90. Hitler commented on Steiner's manoeuvre at the Munster Camp: 'One can only do such things with specially selected people!' (Steiner, *Armee der Geächteten*, p. 106)

91. Lupfer, *Dynamics of Doctrine*, p. 46.

92. Von Schwerin, *Sturmabteilung Rohr*, p. 560.

93. Cf. Jünger, Ernst, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*. Berlin 1922: pp. 101–16.

94. Ott, *Martin Heidegger*, p. 104f.

95. Heidegger, Martin, Letter to Karl Jaspers, 19 June, 1923, quoted in Ott, *Martin Heidegger*, p. 122.

96. The following thoughts should be attributed to Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht from the winter semester we spent together in 1988/89, between palms in the lobby and iced-up motorways.

97. Cf. Heidegger, Martin, *Sein und Zeit. Erste Hälfte*. Halle 1931, 3rd edn: p. 46.

98. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 259.

99. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 260 and p. 266.

100. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 299.

101. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 262.

102. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 262–4.

103. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 285.

104. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 285f. Domenico Losurdo put forward the proposition that the

conception of death in *Sein und Zeit* had been derived from the First World War, thus countering unhistorical readings (*Die Gemeinschaft, der Tod, das Abendland. Heidegger und die Kriegsideologie*. Stuttgart, Weimar 1995). My only suggestion would be to replace the non-concept of 'war ideology' by documented plans of attack, and Heidegger's subsequent reference to the 'camaraderie of soldiers at the front' with the militarily well-defined 'running forwards towards death'.

105. Cf. Lupfer, *Dynamics of Doctrine*, p. 10, fn.: 'One important characteristic of the Imperial German Army was its extreme stinginess in promotions during the war. This army could not be accused of inflation of rank, unlike its World War II counterpart, the Wehrmacht.'

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