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**A STUDY OF NAZI UTILIZATION OF MANPOWER FROM SCANDINAVIA
AND THE LOW COUNTRIES IN THE RANKS OF THE WAFEN-SS
ON THE EASTERN FRONT**

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**by
Charles W. Petersen
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In his book Mein Kampf (My Struggle), Adolph Hitler criticized the fallacious strategy of Germany's World War I leaders. He was most critical of their involvement in a three-front war, resulting in excess demands on German manpower. Yet when he became the leader of Germany, Hitler made the same mistake. The Reich (Empire) was fighting off major powers from three sides.

In order to augment the dwindling Nazi manpower supply, the Germans accepted large numbers of foreign nationals into their armed forces. This study will concern itself with a portion of these men--those from the Low Countries and Scandinavia--and their service in the Waffen-SS.

The Waffen-SS was the combat branch of the Schutzstaffel (protective squad). This elite branch of the National Socialist Party was designed for a special purpose. This was to insure the Nazi Party military support should the traditional services waver in their loyalty.

Under the aggressive leadership of Heinrich Himmler, the Waffen-SS expanded steadily and fielded full divisions, corps, and armies. It was in constant competition with the Wehrmacht (army) in seeking to draw qualified recruits for its ranks.

In 1940 Germany conquered many of the countries of

western Europe. In each of the defeated lands a few thousand young men desired to assist the Nazis in their goal of reshaping Europe. The Waffen-SS seized upon this willing source of manpower to form entire divisions of foreign soldiers.

There were many reasons why some men from the occupied lands chose to assist the Nazis in their military campaigns. For some men, it was opportunism. For others, it was to assure their small nations a respected place in German-dominated Europe. Still others desired to take part in the great crusade against Communism which Hitler commenced.

The military accomplishments of non-German SS soldiers were considerable. In the period 1941-1942 they helped spearhead the drive across the Ukraine and into the Caucasus Mountains of Russia. Combat between Waffen-SS soldiers and the Russians was most bitter, with both sides showing much cruelty.

During the great German retreat from Russia during 1943-1945, foreign troops of the SS often provided the strongest resistance against the Red advance. In the Donetz Basin and in Estonia they conducted particularly noteworthy defensive campaigns against the Red Army.

As Germany approached collapse, the position of collaborators who had joined the Nazis was not enviable. Foreign SS volunteers knew they could expect little mercy from either the Russians or their pro-Allied countrymen.

They therefore fought on desperately, hoping that secret weapons might still snatch victory from defeat.

In the final few months of the war, foreign SS troops formed a mainstay of the defense of Hungary and Germany itself. They achieved the reputation of being the most feared and hated troops that the Allies encountered as they pressed into Germany. German utilization of manpower from Scandinavia and the Low Countries in the Waffen-SS had been most successful.