

SS Artillery Regiment 27

27. SS-Frw.Pz.Gr.Div. „Langemarck“ (Flemish Nr. 1)

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At the beginning of October 1944, SS-AR 27/“Langemarck” began forming in Komotau, a small village on the fringe of the Erz Mountains along Autobahn Nr. 7, which led to Chemnitz. The nucleus for the regiment was the 88 mm Flak Battery from the disbanded 6. SS-Sturmbrigade „Langemarck,” which had been situated in the nearby town of Strichkow. Hundreds of Flemish refugees, mostly from para-military organizations, were assigned to the new regiment, but very few had had any experience handling artillery. Therefore, a comprehensive training program had to be undertaken. The first regimental commander was SS-Obersturmbannführer Schavabacher (sp.), who was succeeded in December 1944 by SS-Sturmbannführer Holger Arentoft.

The planned structure for SS-AR 27 was as follows:

Regimental staff and staff battery

- I. Abteilung (Detachment) with staff battery and three field batteries all equipped with six 7.5 cm anti-tank guns.
- II. Abteilung with staff battery and two field batteries, each equipped with six 10.5 cm field howitzers.
- III. Abteilung (identical to II. Abt.).
- IV. Abteilung with staff battery and two field batteries, each with six 15 cm field howitzers.

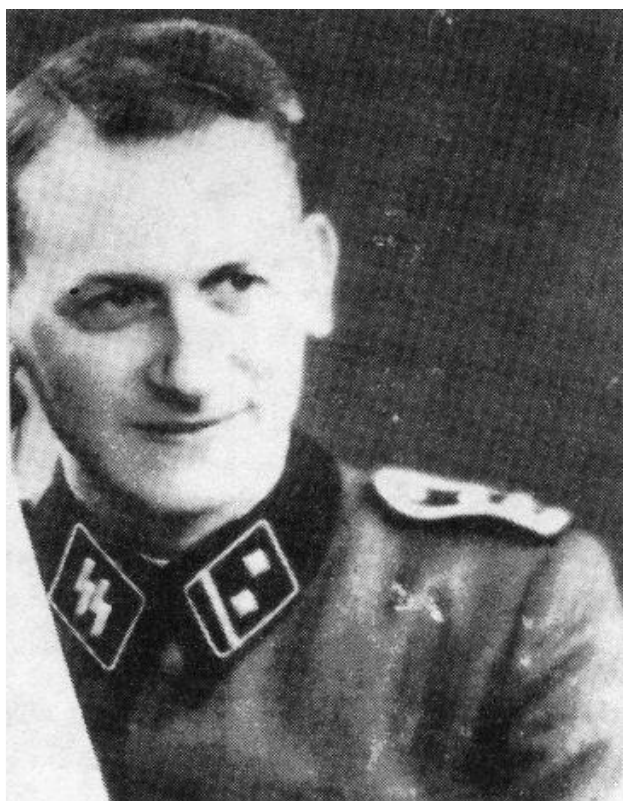
In sum total there were supposed to be five staff batteries and nine field batteries, but given the extreme armament shortages that existed at the time along with the pressing military situation, this was clearly an impractical arrangement.

The initial selection of Abteilung commanders looked like this:

- I. Abt. - SS-Stubaf. Felix Deron
- II. Abt. - SS-Stubaf. Jef De Bruyn
- III. Abt. - SS-Hstuf. Zink
- IV. Abt. - none listed



SS-Ostuf. Clem Meulemans, CO Light Detachment Staff Battery.



SS-Ustuf. Bert de Wit, CO 3rd Battery/Light Detachment.

It would appear that the formation of IV. Abt. never seriously got off the ground. In the course of October 1944, numerous Flemish officers, many of whom had arrived at the regiment from the Vlaamische Waacht (Flemish Guard - sort of a planned nucleus for a Flemish Army), and SS-Junkerschule „Tölz“ were sent to weapons training courses held at the SS Artillery Schools I and II in Beneschau near Prague. Major De Bruyn, the infantry commander of the Flemish Guard Brigade that had fought the „Allies“ during the withdrawal from Belgium and around Arnhem, transferred into the Waffen-SS at this time with the rank of SS-Standartenoberjunker (officer designate). He was soon commissioned a Sturmbannführer. Due to his experience with the Belgian Army Artillery he was penciled in to command first the II. Abt. and then the I. Abt. of SS-AR 27. he eventually ended up as a technical/tactical officer when the regiment was reformed for combat duty in 1945.

While other portions of the „Langemarck“ Division were rushed to the Eastern Front on an emergency basis, SS-AR 27 continued its training around Komotau until 10 February 1945. On this day the regiment left by rail to join the bulk of the „Langemarck“ Division on the Lüneburger Heath in Northern Germany. At this time the troop strength for SS-AR 27 was roughly 650 men, but this would be augmented in the days ahead by detached troops who were returning from various specialty (including signals) schools. Planned further advanced training with 10.5 and 15 cm field howitzers at the SS Troop Training Grounds „Bohemia-Moravia“ now had to be scrapped, due to the fact that most of the training personnel were being converted into combat troops.

On the Lueneberger Heath the detachments and batteries of SS-AR 27 were stationed in the following villages surrounding Visselhoevede: Wittdorf, Ottingen, Reipholm, Hiddingen and Jeddingen. The signals platoon was quartered in Hiddingen, while the regimental HQ was in Wittdorf with its staff battery (10.5 cm field howitzers commanded by Ustuf. Jos Meurens, a veteran of the old Legion Flandern), stationed in Jeddingen. While SS-AR 27 was in this area a British bomber crashed close to the nearby village of Geddingen. The crew members were killed on impact and they were given military burials by the Flemish SS men.



SS-Ustuf. Nest Osselaer, Orderly Officer, Light Detachment.



Flemish MIA: Emiel J.M. Carette. Born Antwerp, 6 March 1906; SS Pi. Btl. Dresden; missing 12 January 1945.



SS Legion Flandern on the Volkhov Front.

Towards the end of March 1945, SS-AR 27 was ordered to proceed by rail to the Oder Front where it was to join the rest of the combat ready portion of the 27th SS Division in Kampfgruppe „Langemarck.“ The regiment was still far from fully formed and was only about half-developed, with seven artillery batteries in shape to use, as opposed to the 14 intended batteries. Therefore, the regiment was reorganized into a more realistic format before it proceeded to the front. The combat structure of SS-AR 27 looked like this:

HQ and Staff

Commander: Stubaf. Arentoft

Heavy Detachment

Commander: Hstuf. Zink

Medical Officer: Ostuf. Dr. Moelaert

Supply Officer: Ustuf. Flor Stuyck

1st Battery: Ustuf. Haase

2nd Battery: Ustuf. Cesar Geerts

3rd Battery: Still in initial stages of formation

Staff Battery: Ostuf. Clem Meulemans

Armaments: 150 mm field howitzers, three per battery, horse-drawn transport.

One heavy howitzer battery, led by Ustuf. Karel Beeckmann was eventually fully motorized (possibly 3rd Battery?). It participated in the last defensive battles on the Oder and helped hold off the Soviets during the withdrawal to Schleswig-Holstein before surrendering at Eutin with all equipment still intact.

Light Detachment

Commander: First a Dane, then a Hungarian Sturmbannführer.

Tactical/Technical Officer: Stubaf. Jef de Bruyne, former CO of II.Bn./Flemish Guard. An ex-Belgian artillery officer, he would lead Wehrmacht and Labor Service artillery detachments and rocket mortar elements in the last days of the war.

Orderly Officer: Ustuf. Nest Osselaer

Signals Platoon: Led by a German Untersturmführer from 12th SS Pz.Div. „Hitler Jugend.“

Staff Battery: Ustuf. Jos Meurens

1st Battery: Ustuf. Rudy Berg

2nd Battery: Ustuf. Schoolmeesters

3rd Battery: Ustuf. Albert de Wit

Other Flemish SS Officers attached to SS-AR 27 at this time (positions unknown):

Ustuf. Bob Velleman

Ustuf. Marcel Elbers

Ustuf. Jans

Ustuf. Karel Beeckman



Flemish SS artillery „spotters“ in training at Knowitz Camp, Bohemia, 1944.



Flemish SS man somewhere on the Eastern Front.

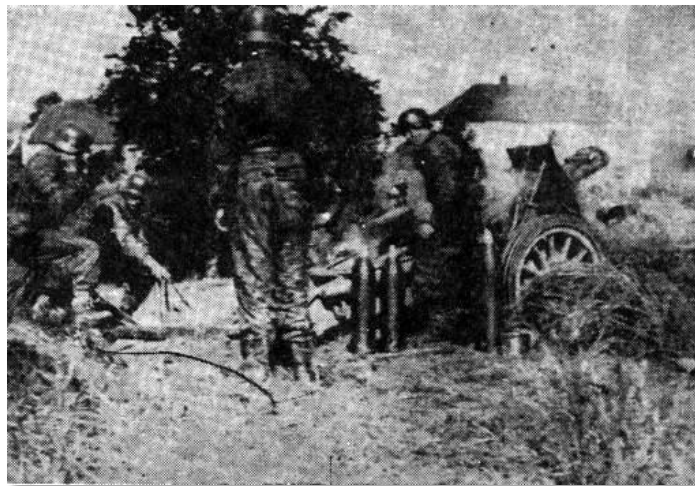
At the end of March 1945, the make-shift SS-AR 27 left Visselhoevede by rail for Angermuende, where it disembarked sometime later and proceeded to the vicinity of Schwedt on the Oder. The only weapons transported with the regiment were six light field howitzers and two heavy field howitzers; other weaponry was supposed to be provided from depots near the front.

The Light Detachment/SS-AR 27 took up positions in early April 1945 in a triad of villages, Bartz, Tantow, Greifenhagen, near Mescherin. The HQ Staff, staff battery and supply section were all quartered in Tantow. As of 10 April 1945, the Heavy Detachment/SS-AR 27 was situated around the town of Damitzof. During this period of time, the Oder River Front was still quiet.

The storm broke loose on 16 April 1945, when the Soviets began their great spring offensive: objective Berlin. For a few days only minor inroads had been made across

the Oder, with the most serious penetrations coming on 20 April. Two days later the entire front collapsed and the Reds began advancing at will. The artillery pieces of the Flemish SS batteries had the grand total of about 20 shells each to expend and once these were gone, the weapons had to be spiked (the exception apparently being Battery Beeckman, which kept on functioning). With their weapons gone the troops from the Light Detachment/SS-AR 27 were converted into instant infantrymen. The Heavy Detachment, led by Battery Beeckman, seems to have remained intact.

SS-AR 27, or what was left of it, subsequently retreated to the west through Sommerfelde, Radikow, Tantow, Starkow, Penkun, Schmoell, Prenzlau and Neusterlitz. On 24 April 1945, Stubaf. Arentoft relinquished his command to an unknown German Stubaf., a purely superficial gesture at this juncture! SS-Artillery Rgt. 27/"Langemarck" Division surrendered to American troops at Schwerin on 3 May 1945.



„Langemarck“ light artillery in action.



**SS-Artillery Regiment 27/"Langemarck"
Order of Battle and Field Post Numbers, December 1944**

Regimental Staff and Units [05 814]

I. Abt. with 1st-3rd Batteries [07 534]

II. Abt. with 4th-6th Batteries [06 939]

III. Abt. with 7th-9th Batteries [06 124]

IV. Abt. with 10th-12th Batteries [07 944]

Principal References

- Vlaanderen in Uniform, Vol. 7 by Jan Vincx.

- Vlamingen Aan Het Oostfront, Vol. 2. §



Flemish volunteers for the „Langemarck“ Brigade in training.

The Flemish W-SS volunteer, SS-Rottenführer Firmin Van Belle, a tank driver in SS-Pz.Rgt.2/2nd SS Pz.Div. „Das Reich“ was murdered by the so-called „resistance“ while on the last day of his home leave at Schoten, Belgium on 3 September 1943. He was a veteran of the hard battles at Kharkov and Kursk but still could not escape the bullet of a cowardly terrorist!

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One of the volunteers in the first contingent of recruits to join the SS Legion „Flanders“ was Emil Pallemans. He was born in Antwerp on 28 March 1918. After distinguishing himself during the early actions of the Legion and being decorated with the Iron Cross, 2nd Class, the Infantry Assault Badge, and the Winter 1941/42 medal, he left for his first home leave in the summer of 1942. Immediately after his return to the Legion on the Leningrad Front he was killed by a Soviet sniper on 4 August 1942—an all too familiar story!

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