Guide to the
MS-197: Meine Militärdienstzeit
[My Military Service]

Jesse Siegel ’16, Smith Project Intern
July 20, 2016
Biographical Note
The presumed creator of this album is unnamed, but is referred to as “The Weimar Officer”, was called up in the winter of 1939, probably as a replacement officer for the 37th Antitank Battalion of the 1st Panzer Division. He passed through a period of training and bonding with his fellow soldiers at Mühlhausen, at either the General Fuchs Barracks or the Wendewehrstraße Barracks, before being sent to join his unit in the Eifel Mountains in March of 1940. He appears to have been part of the baking unit for the battalion. The officer then participated in the major events of the 1st Panzer Division’s long career: the invasion of France, the Battle of Sedan, the encirclement of Allied forces at Dunkirk, and the drive south that ended France’s capacity to fight. Later the unit was transferred East Prussia, taking part in the invasion of Russia, documenting the reception from locals, the destruction of Russian tanks, the harshness of the Russian winter. His tour included momentary breaks, such as a transfer to France and stationing in Greece in 1943. It is after his return to the Russian front that his pictures end, suggesting a very difficult two years during the German retreat from Russia, possibly now in a frontline role. He was imprisoned Graz, presumably after being captured in the 1st Panzer’s defense of the city in April 1945.

Historical Note
The 1st Panzer Division was among the first tank units created by Hitler when he repudiated disarmament in 1935. It would go on to play a key role in many of the major German military campaigns of the Second World War. The 1st Panzer Division was stationed in Weimar, part of the Ninth Wehrkreis (military district), that included Mühlhausen, where some of the division’s units, such as the 37th Antitank Battalion, were raised and trained. After participating in the Hitler’s gradual occupations in Austria, the Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia, the 1st Panzer first saw action in Poland in September 1939. Transferred to the French border, the division was part of the attack

---

through Luxembourg and the Battle of Sedan, as well as the Battle of Dunkirk in May 1940, before helping to defeat the Weygand Line in June. The rest of the division’s battlefield experience came on the Russian Front, joining Army Group North in its attack on the Baltic States in June 1941 before being sent to the battle of Moscow that winter. They remained on the Russian Front until being transferred for “resting and refitting” in 1943 to France, later sent to Greece to defeat the expected Allied invasion and were involved in preventing the defection of Italian forces there after Italy’s capitulation in September 1943. The 1st Panzer Division was sent back to the Russian Front, where it suffered heavy casualties in retreating from Russian forces, fighting in Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, and Austria. Much of the unit was destroyed at Szekesfehérvár in Hungary in January-March 1945, but remnants of the unit survived to retreat into Upper Bavaria and surrender to American forces in May 1945.2

**Scope and Content Notes**
The collection includes one photo album with 48 pages and 263 pictures, three missing, and two sheets of newspaper, one dated June 1, 1937, and the other dated November 21, 1937. Below is a list of the places visited by the officer in the course of the album that could be identified, and the images he included in the album, including their page numbers. Some of the images, particularly the tank picture on page 10 and the locations depicted on pages 42-43, may be chronologically out of order.

Mühlhausen, Germanz (1-2) Wittlich, Germany (3), Moseltal, Germany (4-6), Irzich, Germany (5), Zeltingen, Germany (5-6), Bernkastel-Kues, Germany (5), the Eifel Mountains, Germany (7), Boullion, Belgium (8), Chevenges (Cheveuges), France (9), Auxi-le-Château, France (9), Monument Aux Morts des Armees de Champagne, France (10), Châlons-en-Champagne, France (11), Besançon, France (11), Belfort, France (12), on the Loire, France (13), Paris, France (14-15), Versailles, France (15), Rastenburg, Germany (16), Wartenburg, Germany (17-18), Tannenberg Memorial, East Prussia (19-20), Tilsit, East Prussia (21), Tauragė, Lituania (22), Ostrov, Russia (23); Kalumus, Russia (24-26, 43); Chadovo, Russia (29); Kalininsky District (?), Russia (32); Kolesnikovo, Russia (37, 43); Loos, France (40); Graz, Austria (44)

**Pictures**
(All captions in bold are the original captions provided by the officer; all other captions and translations are provided by Jesse Siegel)

**Meine Militärdienstzeit vom 1.12.39—25.2.40. in Mühlhausen i. Thr.,** My period of military service from December 1, 1939, to February 25, 1940 in Mühlhausen in Thüringia: barracks with small monument in foreground (1), soldiers in wintercoats posing (1), soldiers posing with officer in front of barracks (1). **Die Stubenbelegschaft**, the room staff: am M. G., in the military area,

---


memorial (19). “Tannenberg-Denkmal” 1941, 3 photographs, two group photos (20).


Beim Getreide dreschen, at the grain threshing, 4 photographs (29). Backbetrieb: Fliegerbomben vorm Zelt bei „Norovselje“, aircraft bomb in front of the tent at „Norovselje“: 3 photographs of bomb crater in the woods (30), 1 photograph of tent (30). „Syenlangis“: baking machines on trucks, inside baking tent (30). Zerstörte russische Papierfabrik u. Elektrizitätswerk, destroyed Russian paper factory and power plant: 2 photographs (31), Gräber deutscher Soldaten, graves of German soldiers: 4 photos of German cemetery in Russia (31). Im Einsatz in „Kalinin“, in deployment in Kalinin: 1 photograph of bakery truck (32), 4 photographs of ruined factory and destroyed truck (32). Unsere Schriebstube—vor und—nach dem Beschuβ, our orderly room before and after the shelling: 2 photographs (33). Der Wagen brennt—unrettbar verloren, the truck burns—irretrivably lost: 1 photograph. In „Bolse-Selitsche“ auf Posten, in “Bolse-Selitsche“ at the post office: 1 photograph (34). Das Wasser-hol-Komando, the water carrying detachment: 1 photograph (34). A church in a Russian village (34). Unser Wagen ist eingebrochen vor „Jelkusina“, our truck is broken before “Jelkusina”: 1 photograph of broken truck, 2 photographs of Russian village (35). „Gersthina“, 1 photograph (35), „Graßnikolm“, 1 photograph (35). Knüppeldämme müssen hier helfen, the log causeways must help here: 3 photographs of soldiers cutting down trees (36), 1 photograph inside timber barracks (36), 2 photographs of road building (36). Hackenkreuzfahne in „Kolesnikowo“ und Bunker, swastika flag over Kolesnikovo and bunker: 2 photographs of flooded road and bridge (37), 4 photographs of bunker and defensive construction (37). Die aufgeweichten Straßen in Russland, the rain-sodden roads in Russia: 1 photograph of bus in mud (38). Bauern bei der Feldarbeit, farmers at the field work: 3 photographs (38). Fahrt nach Frankreich, Trip to France: 1 photograph of soldiers outside boxcar (39), 1 photograph of trucks parked by side of road (39). Freizeit-Gestaltung, free time organization: 3 photographs of soldiers

**Subjects**
World War, 1939-1945—Personal Narratives, German
Germany. Heer -- History -- World War, 1939-1945

**Series Description**

This collection is one series, consisting of one photo album with newspaper pages within.