

Excerpts from the Memoirs

of

Werner Mork

“Aus Meiner Sicht (From My View)”

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Other selections from these memoirs in the original German text can be found
on the website of the German Historical Museum:

http://www.dhm.de/lemo/forum/kollektives_gedaechtnis/

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Frankfurt an der Oder

The train trip using the Wehrmacht travel pass would be the last one of this sort that I would take, but of course I did not know this at the time nor could I have guessed it as I made my way from Bremen toward the East.

The route took me through Berlin. I was horrified to see what had become of this city. I had visited there in 1939 and had really admired and enjoyed the beautiful city. I made that visit as a buyer for the radio retailer firm of Alexander von Prohaska, one of the most renowned names in the business. All of that was over and done with now and, apparently, forever.

I arrived in Frankfurt an der Oder. There no one was giving much thought to the Russians even though they were not too terribly far away. After a few days I found out what my assignment would be. Since I was no longer classified as 'Fit for Combat Duty' I would be going to school in Küstrin to train as a radio operator. After completing the training I would be assigned to a radio unit in the Homeland. From my personnel records it was clear that I had once been assigned to a Signal Corps unit. Now I was going to become what I had originally set out to become, a radioman. I saw this as a good thing. It was coming to me late, but not too late. It was lucky for me that I was still classed 'gvh' [Garnisonverwendungsfähig: Fit for Garrison Duty] and not 'vh' [Kriegsverwendungsfähig: Fit for Combat Duty], even though the doctor in Nauheim wanted to reclassify me. He did not get his way. At any rate I was still 'gvh' when I arrived in Frankfurt an der Oder.



Berlin in 1945



Marika Röck

I was prepared to wait out the end of the war in my own country, free from any possible assignment to combat duties at the front. That meant neither in Italy or the Western front or even the Eastern front. Now, of course I was in the East, but I was in the German East and I was finally about to become a radioman. Things were looking good for me and I was very optimistic about the rest of my time in the military. Clearly we were in the last months of the war.

While waiting for my assignment to Küstrin I spent my time in the barracks at Frankfurt an der Oder doing garrison duty. This was a 'sweet do-nothing' time for me. After work I could leave the base and stay out until reveille, and I spent a good deal of time at the movies. Even in January of 1945 they were still being produced. The theater was playing the latest film with Marika Röck, a wonderful singer and dancer. She enchanted audiences with the song, "[In der Nacht ist der Mensch nicht gern alleine...](#)" It was

already a very popular song.

Just before the end of the film, the theater lights went on, the film stopped. Feldgendarmerie [Military Police] and combat troops came on the stage and announced that all soldiers in the audience were ordered to immediately return to the base.

The soldiers in the audience were quite shocked by the announcement and no one could figure out what the reason for the order might be. Finally, we all decided that it must be some sort of false alarm or a drill. This would be typical of the army. Several of us, 'old soldiers,' not just me, decided not to rush out the way the MP's wanted us to do but rather to stay and watch the last of the movie before going back. When the show was over we made our way back to the base.

So, this "Fit for Garrison Duty Only" Private First-Class calmly strolled back to the barracks. Things there were *not* calm. In fact the place was the scene of mad activity and confusion. I had already been missed and was on the verge of being declared AWOL.

The alarm was not a drill. In the middle of the night a company was being assembled to be thrown at the Oder river in the Silesian district of Eastern Germany. The Russians had totally surprised us by advancing to the Oder and now there was imminent danger that they would cross the river with their tanks. It would be the first time they would be on German soil. This was not good news. All available German troops in the Eastern sections, like here in Frankfurt, were to be thrown together into companies and immediately engage the Russians.

I felt lucky not to be directly affected by all this. I was not classified as "Fit for Combat Duty." I went to the orderly room to make sure they were clear about my status. They told me that my classification meant nothing. Since way back in July, the SS Reichsführer Himmler had decreed that any soldier could be called to combat as needed regardless of classifications such as "Fit for Garrison Duty Only." Even soldiers with only one arm could be considered "Combat Ready."

There was nothing for it. I had to go to the supply room and draw combat fatigues, combat gear and get myself ready for the march. The supply room astonished me. Here it was, late in the war, in 1945 and the supply room was filled with brand new, never used uniforms of the very best quality. It was filled with the gear that was desperately needed by the German troops who had been fighting the Russians for such a long time. Here in this supply room in the Homeland was an oversupply of the very best gear that had been carefully preserved. It had been hoarded for an eternity as though it were being saved for the post-war period. Now, however, it had to be given up in order to meet this new threat. This surely was a disappointment for those who had managed to hold on to this treasure for so long. The new company being pulled together to meet the emergency would look crisp and smart as it headed to the front. The road to the front was not very long. The Russians were standing right at our country's border.

It was all over with the plan I had about getting a cushy job as a radioman inside Germany. The idea that my medical problems might get me discharged from the army was also over. Overnight I had become a simple infantryman like I had been before, if only for a very short time [See "The Battle of Ortona" on this site.] None of us knew what was going to happen next except that whatever it was it was going to be shitty. Old soldiers have a good nose for these things.

Our new unit was made up of soldiers thrown together in a pile, none of whom knew each other. We loaded into a train at the Gütterbahnhof train station in Frankfurt an der Oder and we were transported

to Glogau. On January 23, 1945 we got into Steinau an der Oder. We were totally engulfed in a cloud of gloom.

Steinau an der Oder

The Russians arrived at Steinau an der Oder and immediately crossed it with a spearhead of tanks. However, since the first group was only an advance unit, they quickly fell back to the other side of the river to await the arrival of a full tank regiment.

The German service units were totally surprised by the sudden arrival of the Russians and the garrison commanders at Glogau were greatly alarmed. There were no combat-ready troops there, because no one had reckoned on the Russians making a push in this area. This was considered a quiet sector. That would completely change in a very few days.

In the ensuing panic the commander in Glogau mobilized the students in the military school there. He charged them with marching to Steinau to engage the Russians and to wipe them out. They were considered to already be soldiers. These 'soldiers' were kids aged from 12 to 15 years old! They were outfitted with captured Norwegian single-shot carbines and sent to the Oder to face the Russians on the other bank.

What happened next was murder; clear and premeditated murder of children that the German leaders must be held responsible for. They sent these children to the new front on the Oder and drove them under the guns of the enemy. They knowingly sent these youths to their deaths. The servants of the Party and the Wehrmacht are guilty of the infanticide that occurred in Steinau.

The totally untrained non-soldiers were taken from their school desks still in their school uniforms, the so-called Hindenburg Memorial Uniform, with those laughable captured carbines and they were flung at the Russian tanks which quickly shot them to pieces and totally wiped them out. Now they lay there as corpses, pointlessly cut down in the midst of their childhood along with their belief in Führer, Folk and Fatherland. They were driven to their deaths by coldhearted criminals. There is no other word for the blaggards who were responsible for this crime. They were never made to answer for this criminal act.

It was war, after all, and in war desperate situations can arise that require sacrifice, even when children are involved. These were children who were in school to be modeled by the Wehrmacht to be dutiful soldiers who would follow a military career. The faculty of the school did nothing to protect the children from this insane order. As good subordinates of the Wehrmacht they helped carry out the death sentence. These were educators whom the parents entrusted with the care of their children. Indeed, to train them for a military career, but certainly not for full combat while they were still in their childhood. What kind of men were they who were responsible for these gruesome deaths? I can not understand it...not comprehend it.

When we soldiers arrived on site, it was a horrible and gruesome sight that unfolded before us. We were shocked at what our eyes revealed to us. It was a true slaughtering ground. Children were literally slaughtered here. For me this experience not only filled me with despair, but also finally decided me on the nature of this war. Even more I questioned the leadership of our country, the Party and the Wehrmacht as to whether this war was a necessary war, and whether their might not have been a lot more peaceful ways for the nations to resolve their problems without dragging the whole

population into war.

My point of view now is that war is murder. It never leads to a peaceful resolution of conflicts between nations. History has always been full of such examples, but no one seems to have learned anything from them and the insanity of war continues to be the last resort that they turn to. It does not matter what form of government is steering the ship of state whether it be a monarchy, republic, democracy or dictatorship all of them have throughout history used war in the same way. Their people were always ready helpers of the governments, like the people were in the Third Reich.

There is no nation in the world that does not have its soldiers. Armies are required for the national identity, national pride, the nation's self-assertiveness and sovereignty. Mankind has not been able to live without its soldiers, and we Germans rejoiced to see the German military commanders reinstated in the 1930's. Because of that we now had to bear what was to befall us. We were all ready to take to arms to resolve the nation's problems if it became necessary. Was there no other way for our so great Führer to right the wrongs of the Treaty of Versailles? Or was it truly impossible to do so because our old enemies were set against it? Who was really guilty for this insane murder of millions of people? Weren't we the people also culpable in accepting our leader's pronouncements that this war was necessary? Didn't we men have a real desire to prove ourselves brave warriors and great heroes? We didn't want to be a miserable pacifist; a cowardly sissy. No, not then not now not ever! But now after all the horror, can't Reason prevail and turn all mankind into pacifists? At that time looking at the bodies of the dead children, I could not guess how wrong I would be about how Reason would come to reign among the survivors of the war and the peoples of the entire Earth.

How was it even possible that innocent children could be so thoughtlessly chased from their school desks and driven to their deaths? How had our country come to this? War is already inhumane, but at Steinau we lost the very last traces of our humanity. Also lost at Steinau was the last trace of my belief in the goals of our country and my patriotism. My break was final and forever. My complete belief system was destroyed by this war, both political and religious. It became crystal clear how as young men we had been influenced by a pack of filthy lies, and still were. I became very aware of my guilt and helplessness and the guilt and helplessness of us all. I became a pacifist that very day and I swore to myself that I would always be a pacifist. I have been faithful to that oath right to this very day.

Something else had grown very strong in me, my hate for the whole leadership of our country. Not only for our once so great Führer, but for all of the leaders who remained slavishly true to him. They remained true even now when it was abundantly clear to everyone that the war was coming to an end and the end could only be our total defeat. The defeat would mean the end of the Third Reich and that the 'Third' would also be the last Reich. It was all over, the dream of the 1000-year Reich.

We began to wonder what would happen to the country's leaders after the war. Would they get off scot-free and peacefully enjoy their pensions, or would they be exiled like Kaiser Wilhelm II? My wish was that those responsible would be hauled before a German court and in the name of the German people be made to stand trial for their crimes against Germany and mankind. It would be a trial where everything would be laid out on the table that had led to this war. All of the underlying facts would be mercilessly brought to light without regard to personalities, states, parties, military or politicians. Without deference to the politics of the participating nations, because none of them were fully blameless, with the possible exception of the Tribunal. I wanted to see a trial that would illuminate the crimes of all the states. The point of the trial would be to confront the entire world with the real truth about how the politicians bargained and lied. The outcome of such a trial could only be to make war impossible as people in the future would be unwilling to go along with it. I was preoccupied

with such thoughts even though it was clear that I was dreaming of a Utopia, and that people don't change. Even after experiencing the greatest act of mass murder of all times that goes under the polite name of the "Second World War" we all know that this will not be the last.

The children of Steinau an der Oder with their flintlocks were not able to hold back the Russians. They now lay as corpses on the battlefield. They were not the slightest impediment to the advancing tanks, not when they were alive and not now as corpses. The war in all its fury rolled over them without mercy, without regard and without humanity. Once again young men were pointlessly marched to their death, blinded by the Nazi ideology, just as the bloom of our youth during the First World War at Langemarck were pointlessly marched to their deaths as a sacrifice for the nationalism of the "Glorious Kaiser Era."

The establishment of military schools was not an idea that originated with the Nazis or the Wehrmacht. They had been established long before and already existed in the time of the Kaiser. My Grandfather Briem, was a student in such a school. His parents sent him to military school, as did many families, because his father had a connection to the army. After his graduation from the school he became a career soldier in the Kaiser's army. As it was in the Kaiser's time so it was in the Nazi era. The Wehrmacht had a great need for officers and non-commissioned officers trained to meet their needs and ready to answer the call. There was no shortage of candidates. Many good parents handed their sons over to these schools due to their reputation as exemplary institutions. They never imagined that their hopeful young offspring would be so senselessly used up as it happened here in Steinau an der Oder, in Silesia.

It is odd that in all the documentation I have read regarding these days in January 1945 and the reports of the Russian attack on Steinau I have never found any mention of the murder of these children. The Gauleiter of the Nazi party, the general of the local Wehrmacht divisions and the principals of the school all have this on their conscience. No doubt they think of it as a necessary measure that went 'unfortunately' awry.

On this day my break with the German leadership was final!

The Final Months – War on the Eastern Front

Our hastily assembled group was now on the bank of the Oder river. The majority of us were barely fit for combat, but at least it was a group of experienced soldiers. Nevertheless, we were not ready to defend a combat position. We did not even have one to defend, we had to build one first. The old soldiers in the unit had little experience in establishing defenses, that is to say, they had none at all. On the other bank of the river the Russian infantry was dug in and behind them were massed artillery, mortars, Stalin Organs [rocket launchers] and tank cannons. The Russian fighter planes saw to it that the heavy ground weapons made our poor little foxholes ripe for attack.



"Stalin Organ" Rocket Launcher

Even though our company was made up of 'old soldiers' we really didn't have a good, functioning command in place. There was no coordination between the groups and their supply lines, there was no real leadership in the company and no esprit de corps among the men. We were all strangers to one another as was usual in such hastily assembled ad hoc outfits. We were doomed to failure, and just being used as a stopgap measure without any regard for what would happen to us. We only had light weapons like the 98

K carbine, some machine pistols for the group and squad leaders and a few light MG-42 machine guns. We were supposed to use these to stop the Russian tanks. This was the conundrum for us, we were to await the arrival of the German tanks, but there weren't any. What came instead were a small number of Panzerfäusten

[grenade launchers] that we couldn't do much with. There was talk of a division coming to the sector that we would join but it never turned up.

Command was entrusted to a handful of Lieutenants who pretty much left things to the sergeants and non-coms to handle without showing much initiative or responsibility on their own.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-H28150
Foto: o. Ang. | Februar 1946

German Soldiers Armed with Panzerfäusten Anti-Tank Weapon

Besides a few platitudes they did not have much in the way of orders to give us, only the usual slogan, that the position was to be held "at any cost" to the last cartridge. This is what the GRÖFAZ [Acronym for 'The Greatest Field General of All Time' i.e. Hitler] always ordered. But it did no good, the Russians crossed the Oder anyway and we fell back without waiting for orders from above. When it became clear that our current position was hopeless, one or another of our leaders would give the order to fall back to the next point and dig in again. It was exhausting to try to dig a

foxhole using an infantry spade, in part because the ground was half frozen, but mostly because as soon as we had a usable foxhole the Russian tanks would come into sight. The sight of a T-34 always spread anxiety and fear. Behind these tanks were hordes of Russian infantry walking as though it were a stroll in the countryside. They would roar out a “Hurrah.” The once-proud German “Hurrah's” were no longer to be heard.

It had been a hard Winter with a lot of snow and frost, but in the past days some thawing had set in rendering the Silesian lands heavy and mushy. This made the digging more and more difficult to the point that we could not see how we were going to dig out a hole for protection. That was also my case since I was not at all used to doing such things. Most of us were not trained infantrymen, we had not learned how to use the entrenching tool. We also did not know how to dig a proper foxhole. With great effort I only managed to toss a couple shovel's full of mud then I was done. I could barely move because my boots were encased in mud. The Silesian earth stuck fast to our boots.

A few days after the horror in Steinau we fell back toward Glogau and halted in a tiny village. The village, whose name I have forgotten now, had been hastily abandoned by the German inhabitants overnight. They joined one of several treks made up of Silesian Germans who were trying to flee the advancing Russians. Unfortunately, the opposite occurred. They treks made an easy target for Russian dive bombers and tanks.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1970-072-09
Foto: o. Ang. | 1945 Februar - März

Silesian Germans on the Trek to Avoid the Russians

We took over the empty houses in the town and stayed the night there. The houses were searched for any foodstuffs left behind. This was not plunder, this was a necessary self-provisioning because we had not been issued hardly any rations. At any rate it was better for us to have the food rather than the Russians who would no doubt be here in only a few days. As we searched for food many also kept an

eye out for other valuables. Our motto was, "If not us, then the Russians, so better us!" German soldiers could be that way also.

In the night we were able to get a little sleep and we were hoping for a few more hours of peace and quiet. However, first thing in the morning the outpost guards reported that the Russians had been on the move under the cover of darkness and had reached our perimeter. One could hear the sound of the tanks not too far off. Supposedly, some tanks had moved past the village in a wide arc around us. That could mean that, for us still in the village, we were lost and would have to surrender or die. We couldn't do anything to defend ourselves with only a few rifles and machine pistols. Our odds of surviving a fight were miniscule, pretty much nil. That meant we could resist as long as possible then either end up dead as a dormouse or 'only' wounded and a prisoner of the Russians. Even laboring under these certainties there was no panic. Somehow we took it fatalistically as we faced our unavoidable destiny. We all knew our situation and that there would be no help coming to rescue us. We would just have to wait and see how this crappy situation would play out.

We readied ourselves for the inevitable. That meant destroying all of the personal items and documents we had on us. I had to part with several things that I had carried with me for years. Letters, photographs and other mementos of happier times were destroyed, including my little camera that I had also carried with me for all those years. None of this was to fall into Russian hands. These personal items had been my long-time companions and now they were over and gone. All of our things were tossed into the fireplace and burned. The only thing kept was the Soldiers Payroll Book. It was important to have this with you as a POW. It contained your identification, distinguishing marks and marital status among other bits of information. We also tried to hold on to our wristwatches. We hid them on ourselves in the hope that the Russians would miss them when we were searched!!

Even though there was no panic, there was already a feeling of uncertainty and defeat and everyone tried to make final peace with himself and his life. What was coming next could only be the end of us, for none of us believed that we would come of the POW camps alive. I harkened back to what I had seen at Baumholder. [Translator's note: *In the early days of the Russian campaign many Russian POW's were taken to a prison camp in Baumholder. The cruel commander of the camp had lost an arm on the Russian front. He swore that none of the Russian prisoners in his camp would leave there alive. They were starved and many were shot.*] I knew that, now that I faced a prison camp, I could not expect anything good to come from it. I took leave of everything that once had great meaning for me. Particularly difficult was letting go of the letters and poems from my time in Wiesbaden that had always been very special to me.

Now none of that existed any longer, the only thing that counted was our own survival, but none of us were very convinced of that possibility.

This war had made us realists and we understood that situations would arise that we could not change or even influence very much. A soldier had to come to terms with the fact that the possibility of losing his life was very possible, even probable, and although the knowledge of that weighed heavy, you simply had to deal with it. As we sat in this house the prevailing emotion was anger at our helplessness to do anything about what was about to overcome us, and also anger at our leaders who had brought us to this point. None of that did us any good as we sat here in the dirt in a hopeless situation. But in spite of everything there was still a tiny voice in us that gnawed at us asking if, indeed, we had done all that we could to help ourselves. This was a feeling that we soldiers had even in the toughest of times. It was not explainable, it simply came to us whenever the shit hit the fan [Kacke am Dampfen], as we used to say in Landser jargon. [Landser: common soldier; enlisted man]

As we sat there with our minds filled with these dark thoughts a soldier came in who had done some reconnoitering and he said that the Russian tanks were on the city streets, but their advance was hesitant. They were moving toward the houses very carefully, perhaps stalling until the main body of their troops arrived. He thought that under these circumstances there was a slight chance that we might be able to slip out before they arrived in force. We had to be bold, but taking this chance would be better than simply giving ourselves over to the Russians. We would have to stay off the streets and go through the gardens of the houses keeping a good distance from the main village streets. We could not wait another minute but had to move quickly to get out of the noose that was tightening. In adversity one grasps at straws so we decided to bet on being able to break out of the encirclement that would be completed very soon.

Very quietly and with extreme care we moved out of the house in single file through the gardens to the other edge of the village. We got there without being spotted by the Russians but then we had to cross an open field that was in the sight and firing range of the Russian infantry. We had the great good luck not to be seen, or if we were seen, perhaps they did not feel themselves strong enough yet to risk an attack. They may have wanted to wait until the rest of their unit joined them. It didn't matter how or why, the important thing is that we were out of the village and didn't have to cash in our chips. I regretted destroying all of my personal mementos, but one can not see into the future and that was the case here.

After a while we stumbled on a German outfit who couldn't believe that we had managed to get out. On a low rise the Landser began digging in. The company commander commandeered us on the spot and made us a part of his outfit. For him we were a welcomed strengthening of his unit, and he ordered us to immediately start digging in. We needed to establish a defensive position to (once again) halt the Russian advance toward Glogau. The Führer had just declared Glogau to be a stronghold. This apparently was the latest fashion in the art of military command. Several towns were quite simply named as strongholds and, therefore, must be held; by order of the Führer!

This was a totally hopeless effort, but in a few places it did stop the Russians from taking some towns. However, the Russians simply bypassed these towns knowing that sooner or later they would fall anyway. The presence of these strongholds did not influence the general advances of the Russian armies. Some enemy troops were tied up laying siege to the strongholds, but not enough to make a difference in the general progress of the troops. These 'Fortresses' were left under siege for so long that they eventually had to give themselves up. It was as I said, a hopeless effort, but since a few Soviet troops were tied up with the siege, it was enough to be seen at home as a successful result of the Führer's order.

We were now part of a completely unknown troop, but this sort of thing was quite normal at this time. There were always stragglers, real or not, that were incorporated into a passing company. We followed our orders and attempted to dig in. But the ground was in such shape that we could only manage to hollow out shallow troughs and not true foxholes. In the middle of this exhausting work we suddenly heard the unmistakable rumble that could only be coming from Soviet tanks. When we stuck our heads up we saw the T-34 tanks.

What happened next was a small miracle. They had a completely free path to our positions on this little rise. Either they did not see us, or they decided to leave us for the infantry that followed them. The company commander whispered the order to get out of here as soon as the coast was clear. In front of us were the tanks and behind us were the infantry. Gone were our heroics. The only thing left was the

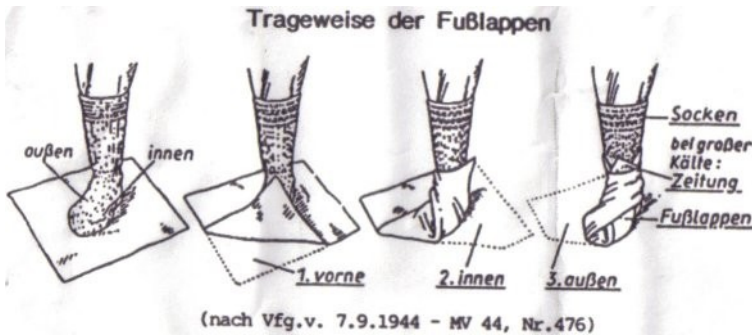
hope of our possible escape.



Russian T-34 Tank

No one spoke anymore about “holding out at all costs.” The sight of Russian tanks still triggered feelings of angst and fear, especially when you had no anti-tank weapons to speak of at your disposal. As the tanks rolled by and actually got ahead of us and with the infantry behind us we were only at a short remove from them. We turned our attention back to our current position on the little rise and realized there were only five of us left here. The others had already moved out and simply left us here in our shallow trenches. There was nothing for it but to quickly make a break for safety. We were the last to make the attempt to get out of this tight situation with our skins intact. There were no German soldiers to be seen anywhere, the sound of the tanks was getting louder and we could hear the cheers of the Russian soldiers. It was not good for us to be alone on this hill with only a vague notion of where we should go to escape. We figured the best way to go would be toward the west in the hopes of running into other German units. There were just five of us, all strangers to one another as was typical of such units that really weren't 'units' since there was no unity or sense of being a team. The only 'togetherness' we experienced was being 'thrown together.'

We five Landser began now to move out as quickly as we could. The tanks were somewhat below us so we were out of their line of sight and the infantry behind the tanks had not reached our hill quite yet. This situation was changing rapidly so we took advantage of the cover we still had to start out running over the farmer's fields. The ground was thawing out and as we ran we sank in the mud and it was hard to pull one's self out.



Foot Wrappings

Of the five of us, I was the only one wearing jackboots, the so-called “Knobelbecher.” On my feet I wore foot wrappings rather than socks as was the usual practice when wearing boots. The others were wearing tieshoes that worked better in muddy terrain. It did not go as well for me. My boots sank down in the mud and stuck there. When I pulled my foot out, the boots stayed where they were. So there I stood in a muddy Silesian farmer's field bare footed on

the cold, wet ground. This was a very bad state to be in. I wanted and needed to get out of there, but I couldn't go on without my boots. It was so hard to pull the boots out of the mud that I tried using my rifle to pry them out. That was a really stupid thing to do. All I succeeded in doing was to get my rifle stuck in the mud right up to the trigger guard. My 'comrades' were nowhere to be seen, they had kept going. My calls for help went unanswered. Either they did not hear me or they didn't want to hear me. This wasn't really surprising, in these times it was pretty much every man for himself.

Only with a great deal of effort did I finally manage to get my boots out of the mud, but they were not usable now because they were full of mud on the inside. There I stood, alone and deserted in a heap of misery. I was a poor soldier standing on the earth of Silesia, German soil that had been conquered for Prussia by 'Old Fritz,' [Fredrich the Great in 1745] and I had no idea what to do next. I knew what I *should* do, I needed to get out of here right away to avoid falling into the hands of the Russians. I quickly decided to sling my muddy carbine around my neck, grab a boot in each hand by the loops and head out over the cold, muddy ground in the middle of Winter in the footsteps of my comrades who had run off and left me. I was the very picture of a “Soldier of the Sorrowful Countenance.” [Translator's note: A reference to the “Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance,” i.e. Don Quixote]

However, this running man was no knight, no hero, he was just a poor devil trying to save his pitiable life. After a few hours I finally came to a house standing alone in the flat farmlands. I was barefooted, but drenched in sweat. In the house I found my four 'comrades.' They were not overly surprised to see the state I was in, they were surprised to see that I got there at all.



Jackboots

[..to be continued..]